PANDEMIC RACISM

Describing and delegitimising discursive necropolitics on 'Africa' in Danish mainstream media during COVID-19

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Thesis Presented for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Psychology

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

January 2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am, first of all, grateful to the many black artists, authors and scholars whose creative and intellectual contributions have cultivated my awareness of racism over the years, as well as my commitment to its mitigation. I am grateful to all black researchers and activists mentioned in this study, as well as to black friends, colleagues and mentors—particularly Hawwa Nashfa, with whom it all began in Room 101 17 years ago—for their patience with me and for leading the way. I hope to pay some of their brilliance and efforts forward with this study.

I want to thank all the people who have made it possible for me to attend University of Cape Town and pursue my doctorate there, including those who secure, clean and care for my department everyday, as well as those who provide all students and staff with technical and administrative expertise. Thank you in particular to Postgraduate Admin Assistant Ms Rosalind Adams and Visa and Immigration Liaison Coordinator Ms Fiona Erispe for tirelessly tending to my many questions over the years—my work would not, in the most literal sense, have been possible without the two of you. Thank you for all your support and tenacity. You are the true backbone of UCT.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Dean of Humanities Assistant Professor Shose Kessi and Professor Floretta Boonzaier. Together they initiated the Hub for Decolonial and Feminist Psychologies in Africa at UCT. First, thank you for giving me the opportunity to situate my project at the Hub. It has allowed me to reflect on and from ‘Africa’ as a geo-specific ontology inherently and uniquely disruptive to colonial paradigms. Second, thank you for the financial support I received when you awarded me a bursary in 2020. It was crucial to my ability to push forward with my work. Third, thank you for your expertise on critical approaches to race and racism and for the salient work you do to challenge and expand not just the methods and praxis of the discipline of psychology, but your efforts to transform academia at large. Your

supervision has deepened the quality of my work and politics and it has been a privilege to experience your kindness and generosity—as scholars and as people. You set an example for a world where we can all be free.

Then I want to thank my family, past and present: Tak for alt. Jeg hverken ville eller kunne have gjort det uden jer. Særligt tak til Steen for din entusiasme og interesse i det her projekt—det betød mere end du aner—og særligt tak til mormor og Ebba og til Lone og Benjamin og Johannes for altid at have troet på mig og støttet mig i mine vilde idéer—det er en gave, jeg bærer med mig.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Sisanda, for the support and grace she has shown me—during this project and in life—and for all her magnificence. Ndiyabulela kakhulu, mntu wam. You were right, of course: Inkawu ityiwa ilila.

ABSTRACT

This is an interdisciplinary study that combines critical psychology with necropolitics, feminist, queer and crip theory, as well as linguistics through discourse theory and media studies through analysis of news articles to examine how everyday discourse contributes to practices of violence that continue to make race real. Its framework The theoretical framework of the study is necropolitics at large, Achille Mbembe's original necropolitical framework reworked through decolonial, queer and feminist critiques to create an eclectic necropolitical lens that is calibrated for the analysis of pandemic discourse. The main argument is discussed through the critical discourse analysis of Danish mainstream media's production of African figures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The study shows that necropolitical discourse of the black and African body and nation act as a constitutive supplement to the configuration and mapping of white bodies, white supremacy and national identity. These configurations are characterised by productions of 'Africa' as a death world, marked by suffering, unsafety and disease, which are produced and made comprehensible within white, nationalist formations of Denmark as a world of life marked by health, security and supremacy. This study concludes that the discursive creation of 'Africa' is co-constructed and intertwined with the creation of Denmark, suggesting that distinctions between mechanisms of exclusion and mechanisms of inclusion dissolve in ways that disrupt key epistemic assumptions of normative psychology.

Table of contents

1. Introduction

Note to readers: This statement and most of this work is crafted in the historical territory ||Hui !Gais—a toponym in the indigenous Khoe language that loosely translates to ‘where clouds gather’ and is the earliest recorded original name for the area known today as Cape Town (Hahn, 1881)—of the San and Khoekhoe and Khoe-San peoples and all its black descendants. As a white woman, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all the black and indigenous communities whose land I am a guest on and have tied my fate to and whom I stand in solidarity with. I encourage anyone who reads this and resides on their territories—or any other territories whose genocide and colonialism allow us to be there—to take action towards land reform and returning land to its rightful owners.

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Who gets to live and who gets to die when a pandemic ravages the world? Whose lives are protected and whose are expendable? Despite early hopes that COVID-19 would equalise the world—that it would “[travel] along the superhighways of the modern world and [cause] havoc in the Global North [and signal] the dawn of de-Westernization” (Vazquez (2020) as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), p. 366) and promote freedom across all strata of society—it has not. Labeled a ‘great equaliser’ (Galasso, 2020) in its early days, COVID-19 has been nothing short of a necropolitical force deepening old wounds and cutting new ones, distributing injury, violence, disability and death, as well as untold amounts of suffering, along all too familiar lines of race, class, gender, ability and citizenship. That inherently unequal societies produce unequal consequences

during a pandemic is neither new nor surprising. But what is different is the sheer and unprecedented scale of how COVID-19 has revealed and dispersed necropolitical structures in time and space, from macro- to microstructures, from institutional to everyday settings, resulting in what Whitney Pirtle calls “the cold, bare, and persistent ugliness of unequal death” (Pirtle, 2020, as cited in Pirtle & Wright, 2020, p. 168).

On March 13 2020, Denmark’s prime minister announced that Denmark would close its borders to all who did not already hold citizenship or residency in the country. “All tourists, all travel, all vacations and all foreigners who cannot prove a credible purpose of entering Denmark, will be denied entrance at the Danish border,” Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a national address as she appeared on every screen in pretty much every home (The Prime Minister’s Office, 2020). “The border closure will not apply to the transport of goods, including foods, medicine and industrial supplies. “[We] we will bring in ‘our’ military to help fight the spread of the coronavirus pandemic”, she added. (The Prime Minister’s Office, 2020)

As I watched this unfold, and as I have returned to this event and the ones that followed again and again, I noted that goods suddenly had more rights than most people. I noted that the militarisation of a health crisis occurred so swiftly in time as to collapse the two and make them, simply, two sides of the same coin. I wondered how we were meant to credibly entertain the idea that ‘our’ military, any military, can fight or protect us against an invisible and intangible virus and why it was medically necessary to close ‘our’ borders to a disease that was already spreading from within. I continue to think about how these questions seem circular, answering themselves, and appear premised on the collapsing of a crisis of health and border, a necropolitical sleight of hand, like that famous 19th century optical illusion where the image perfectly alternates between a rabbit and a duck, except this time it is the seamless pandemic alternation between body and nation, between securitisation and global health, between disaster and racism. Over the course of the pandemic, these are the constellations I have kept turning my attention to—how do politics of death shift, re-organise and intensify their techniques and mechanisms of regulation during a moment of global death? What does

it mean to produce discursive death under a global threat of death?—and which ultimately have come together in the shape of this doctorate study.

In March 2020, I was contacted by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and advised to leave South Africa immediately. I did because I did not know what else to do. It was a haunting theater of necropolitics in action. Traveling through deserted airports, there was an eerie sense of the quiet before the storm, a kind of watchful waiting.The Denmark I arrived in was in palpable disbelief, panicking. The South African geographies I got to experience during 2020—mostly parts of inner-city Johannesburg and its northern suburbs—seemed decidedly more *prepared*. Calmer, somehow. My South African partner found my remarks decidedly unremarkable. “Well, yes, of course we are calm. We, and by we I mean black South Africa, live under constant crisis. There is nothing new or even that urgent about this particular crisis. In fact, it feels further removed and less material than the deadly brutality we are visited by through engineered poverty every day. We will panic when COVID becomes as urgently dangerous to us as simply living as a black person in this country.” Her remarks resonate with Dionne Brand’s statement, brought forth by Hugo Canham (2021) in his paper, *Black Death and Mourning as Pandemic*: “I know, as many of you do, that I’ve been living a pandemic all my life; it is structural rather than viral; it is the global state of emergency of anti-blackness.” (Brand, 2020, as cited in Canham, 2021, p. 296) Canham examines the dimensions of black death through a lens of what COVID-19 means for those so intimately familiar with death and remarks: “Black bodies have been the site of devastation for centuries. (...) Africans were a convenient scapegoat [for COVID-19]. Those most loathed in society are seen as always already infected. What does it mean to always be infected by viral plagues? To always be death bound?” (p. 302)

Early pandemic developments in Danish mainstream media

At first, the discursive media performance across all outlets was marked by disbelief. There was no way Denmark’s sense of self, or European sense of self, could shift fast

enough to integrate that kind of blow to our national and supranational identities. There was something so shocking to the white audience, so haunting, so epistemically incomprehensible, about seeing death permeate ‘our’ part of the world, the ‘good’, the ‘better’ part of the world. For the first time in my lifetime, white media could not, at first at least, produce images of death that were assigned to ‘elsewhere’ and ‘other bodies’. They did not come from, could not be produced, in China—much as the media laboured to nationalise and racialise the virus from the onset and pin it on China in the first weeks of the pandemic. Photos of death and suffering came from Italy—and not just anywhere in Italy. The northern parts of Italy. The beautiful parts. The parts we know and travel to. The rich part of Italy. The part where we holiday and go skiing and drink good wine. Perhaps not a place we admire, but certainly a place we *romanticise*. A part, surely, inhabited by people with intact humanities and robust health care systems. To Europeans, this is *not* what Europe is like. To Danes, this is *not* what we understand Europe and ourselves and geographies that represent extensions of our lives to be like. If a part of Europe does appear to be like that, as it plainly did during the first months of the pandemic, then it is not the part that *we* belong to. If the part that appears to be like that grows, as it did during 2020 where more and more what we might call *ultra-European* countries—not just fringe states but those as central to the European imaginary as France and the UK—were devastated by the pandemic, the parts we identify ourselves with shrink. As though in a pre-emptive move, Denmark shrank itself to a single, national unit, casting off its European, Nordic and Scandinavian discursive identifications. Denmark’s relationship to the rest of Europe is curious and complicated.

From one day to the next, mainstream media saw an unprecedented explosion of media coverage on the pandemic and Denmark *itself* as a lone actor. Looking back, media coverage started out innocuous. The first article to appear in a Danish newspaper is a negligibly small story in the upper right-hand corner of a tabloid newspaper, Ekstra Bladet, on 12 January 2020 with the headline: “Man infected with mysterious virus dies” (Ekstra Bladet, 12 January, 2020). The article went on to briefly describe the situation in concise terms: “A 61-year-old man has died of pneumonia in the central Chinese city of

Wuhan during an outbreak of a new virus not yet identified. Seven other people are in critical condition." (Ekstra Bladet, 12 January, 2020)

There was bound to be a counter-reaction. There had to be. After all, white supremacy exists in service of itself and seeks, at all times, to uphold itself and restore, whenever challenged, and bolster its supremacy. Whenever threatened, the empire strikes back. So I waited for the backlash, some kind of counterreaction, a discursive attempt to restore equilibrium. Europe, even if it was that Europe and not 'our' Europe, even if national narratives in the media seamlessly started othering Italy, the UK and Sweden, there had to be a concurrent attempt at constructing worse scenarios elsewhere. The pandemic could not take its worst toll on Europe. That is unimaginable to white supremacy. As Politiken remarked in an article published on 19 March 2020: "Africa is yet not as hard hit by corona as Asia and Europe. To slow down the spread, several African countries have restricted air and ship traffic to Europe. It looks like the inverted world. Usually, it is us Europeans who fear an invasion of all kinds of danger from the south. Migrants, refugees, deadly diseases. Now it is Africa that is trying to protect itself against the coronavirus that, so far, has been ravaging Europe to a far greater degree than it is plaguing the African continent. Africans suddenly see Europeans as a threat." (Politiken, 19 March, 2020) If we are forced to admit that it is bad here, it has to be worse somewhere else. In May 2020, about six weeks after Denmark closed its borders and declared a state of emergency, the scramble for white supremacist resurrection started arriving on front pages of newspapers with all kinds of variations of the question: "Where is the African tragedy?" This is where I have trained my attention, at the arrival of the weaponisation of narratives of 'Africa' in service of the strengthening of necropolitics, whiteness, white supremacy and national identity.

Whilst all this was happening, I was working towards a doctorate on gender and everyday technologies in relation to race, nation, migration and politics of death, themes not often theorised as intimately connected to feminist politics and identity. I decided to shift my focus to how the pandemic revitalises necropolitics and instrumentalises racism in its constructions of white supremacy in Denmark, reflective of the desire to respond to

this stark moment in history by documenting it and using it as my thematic focus, and forms part of a sudden re-organisation of academic and activist practices and priorities in times of profound social change and public health crises. Not only does the pandemic present a unique media event and opportunity to map how white supremacist discourse attaches meaning and worth to different bodies and different geographies, and how 'disease' functions as a proxy for racism and acts as a constitutive supplement to nationalism, but I believe we—the academic community at large and anyone else in a position to feasibly do so—have a responsibility to respond to a moment of global anguish in which so our worlds, our bodies and lives are under direct threat. In times like these, which for some is not only in times like these but simply *always*, the act of critical re-imagination is essential for nurturing and sustaining both our disciplines and our communities.

Field of study

It is not uncommon for critical inquiry to examine discourses and practices around marginalisation in ways where the products—and not the producers—of oppression are held in tight focus. This can be observed, for example, in the fact that sexuality and research remained predominantly interested in understanding and contesting deviation—homosexuality and Michael Petersen (2012) calls "the perverse and the abnormal" (Petersen, 2012, p. 23)—for decades. It wasn't until Michel Foucault (1976/1994) published his seminal work, *History of Sexuality I*, which inspired both Judith Butler (1990) and Michael Warner (1993) to turn to analyses of heteronormativity and gender performativity in the 1990s, that queer theory started appearing. A similar trend can be witnessed within psychological research on race and racism, in which the black consciousness and the deadly effects of racism on black people have been studied for decades, whilst those who produce these effects and benefit from them have been largely ignored or theorised as above or beyond their implications.

This study wishes to contribute towards an interruption of that trend and trains its gaze on the out-of-frame configurations of power and operates from the political and

epistemic assumption that focusing predominantly on the effects of racism lays the burden of resolving issues of racial violence at the foot of the very people it devastates, whilst absolving and obscuring those it benefits. The result is a conversation where solutions to the root cause of systemic and interpersonal racism have been inadequate. It is another assumption of this scholarship that wherever there is devastation, there is benefit, and wherever there is loss, there is gain. Race and racialisation, thus, cannot be grasped fully by describing and analysing its destructive and negative aspects. It is necessary to investigate the productive aspects of violent racialisation and examine the ways in which what Foucault (1976/1994) refers to as mechanisms of exclusions produce positive spaces and thus how mechanisms of exclusion privilege and include certain subjects.

Just like sexuality research has seen a change in fields of study, it is this scholarship's intention to make a modest contribution to the effort to broaden the locus of interest within psychological research on race and racism from its effects to its origins and bring to the surface how systems—from entire nations to individual people—produce, benefit from and protect racism. This dissertation seeks to do this, first and last, in service of decolonial transformation and radical abolition of white supremacy. In order to grasp at white surpremacy, however, any analysis has to address and move through the effects of racism. The introductory events serve as an instructive point of departure. This study doesn't just take an interest in the frenzied fixation on closing borders and keeping Denmark 'safe' from the threat of outsiders as a mechanism of racist, moral panic. Rather, there is another level of analysis, which this dissertation takes a primary point of interest in: Namely what these prejudices—that seem to speak to the black body—reveal about Denmark and white bodies. With this study, I am interested in how public discourse secures national and white supremacy under the pretext of security and protection and national safety through the configuration of black bodies as symbolic battlegrounds for political domination, nation-building, virtue-signaling and warfare, and how these racist anxieties fuel the rise of a new Nordic—and more broadly *EU*ropean—neonationalism premised on the configuration of black figures as threat to white innocence and supremacy.

To refer to COVID-19 as a health crisis is to reduce what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) calls a "civilizational crisis" (p. 368) to one singular aspect of its vast and overarching reach. Much more than a health crisis, this study considers COVID-19 an opportunity to pursue what Moulay Driss El Maarouf,Taieb Belghazi and Farouk El Maarouf call "a critical ontology of the present" (2021, p. 71) and a crisis across all registers: Social, political, cultural, environmental, epistemic and ontological—a crisis of life and death that throws the politics that govern life and death themselves into sharp relief. Due to this study's interests in the political dimensions of COVID-19, this project predicates itself on a necropolitical and decolonial reading and interpretation of the pandemic—a perspective of and onto the pandemic that foregrounds unequal and hierarchical assignments and inscriptions of power onto global lives.

By bringing necropolitical and queer theory together to (re)imagine decolonial psychological research in the complex intersection of race, nation and pandemics, this study seeks to explore how Danish media's production of some bodies as valuable and others as expendable forms part of determining who are constructed as having the right to belong, and considers this line of inquiry important in uncovering interlocking practices of necropolitical dynamics. It also seeks to contribute towards a more detailed mapping of how variations in dominant racial antagonisms function in contemporary Denmark. The analysis I have pursued does not deal with legitimate medical or health concerns related to the virus, but looks at how COVID-19 spreads as a social contagion through mainstream media discourse, as I am particularly interested in some of the racialised forms the panic surrounding COVID-19 take in Danish media and how these media discourses reveal a racism that contributes to a strengthening of Denmark's nation-building project. The main argument of this doctorate is that a racialised pandemic discourse juxtaposes necropolitical productions of African figures as dying and African sites as worlds of death with biopolitical productions of Danish figures as living and Danish sites as worlds of life. The discursive production of African and Danish imaginaries are thus inextricably linked and function to protect white supremacy by disproportionately attaching COVID-19 to black bodies and nations through the

(re-)emergence of centuries-old tropes (see for example Flint & Hewitt, 2015) that portray Africans and their nations, cultures and behaviours as unsafe and diseased.

The following questions form part of what initiated the motivation for this exploratory piece of research: how do racist and colonial forms of discursive violence contribute to the (re)configurations and maintenance of the borders of a nation? What are the implications of these discourses for Denmark's nation-building project? How might pandemic anxieties reflect more than a legitimate health concern and, simultaneously, reveal a deeply held worry for the viability of white supremacy? How do disease fear and pandemic alarm also function as socially sanctioned ways of expressing concern for the imagined and real threats to a necropolitical world order? How does disease panic function as a white supremacist performance that changes over time and in accordance with the groups of people it attaches itself to?

Rather than emphasising visible and easily discernible violence, this project seeks to unearth the obscured and seemingly unrelated connections between everyday mainstream media discourse and a changing socio-political European reality, in which increasing populist–nationalist mobilisation (Vieten & Poynting, 2016) may be an extension—and perhaps the beginning of a consolidation—of configurations of racialised inclusion and exclusion. This project is an invitation to trace the powerful connections between race–body-nation entanglements and white supremacy, and to critique and describe some of the ways in which race *as a simultaneous process of nation* informs distinctions between who is configured as liberated or oppressed, healthy or diseased, civilised or uncivilised, innocent or aggressive, living or dying. This project theorises discursive narratives in mainstream media as a political performance and project that reaches far beyond the individual texts and far beyond race-body entanglements, as something that (also) influences national and European politics. It is a discursive performance that has implications for the right to body, the right to land and, in a last instance, the right to life itself.

So while my project pays specific attention to Denmark, this is why I see my research as ultimately relevant to our interconnected world and other anticolonial and developing

milieus in which efforts to understand the mechanisms that enact racism constitute a resonant mode of protest against an unequal and violent world system. In addition to drawing on established canon, throughout this study, I intentionally bring forward work by scholars on the fringes of the academy, as well as up-and-coming scholars to offer up another way of privileging knowledge. What we know, and what we choose to reproduce, what we enshrine as 'knowledge', as researchers, does not have to come from textbooks or geographies that have been passed down through colonial hierarchies of knowledge. We have a right to insist on the validity of knowing through different modes of knowledge, of knowing through new registers and new ways. This forms part of the everyday work of producing an alternative decolonial archive of knowledge through marginal research experiences that the colonial standards of academia have always sought to exclude from even reaching the processes that formalise it into what we recognise as 'real' 'knowledge'.

Research question

This project seeks to establish such knowledge through the overall research question:

> *How do discourses of the African body and nation produced by Danish media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 act as a constitutive supplement to the production of race?*

This study takes its interest in how necropolitical forms of violence contribute to the (re)configurations and maintenance of borders of race, body and nation. By appraising COVID-19 coverage in historically white and racially unmarked Denmark as a complex site of emotion where racist violence and supremacy may preside, this project opens up the possibility of asking new questions and configuring new understandings of the concepts governing violent racialisation. Writing about less overt sites of racist violence—what we might call the 'everyday' problems of racism—is a complicated task, but it is imperative that we engage the nature of racist violence in its totality.

Four explorative questions form the backdrop of the study. These are:

1. *What is the relationship between the production of race and nation?*

2. *What role do productions of 'Africa' play in the construction of a Danish imaginary?*

3. *How do configurations of race and racism strengthen and promote whiteness and national identity?*

4. *What implications do these configurations have for geopolitical mechanisms of racialisation?*

Specific aims

Through examining mainstream media's discursive productions of 'Africa' during COVID-19, and elucidating some of the connections between everyday discourse and their connections to larger political mechanisms of death and racialisation, this study aims to contribute to a more detailed investigation of regional variations in how racism functions by developing a Denmark-situated study of discursive necropolitics and racialisation. This project has two overall aims:

1. First, to expand the scope of critical psychological contributions to the study of race by examining how COVID-19 is operationalised to produce necropolitical discourse;

2. Second, to trace the implications of these productions and how they operate to shape racialisation and racial violence.

I pursue these aims by examining discursive configurations of 'African' nations and bodies in Danish mainstream media in 2020. Looking at how race has been configured

in mainstream media's coverage of the pandemic allows me to investigate how colonial forms of violence contribute to the (re)configurations and maintenance of the borders of a nation.

It is a core assumption of this study that the act of turning the study of racism onto these 'unmarked' and 'innocent' sites will unsettle an invisibilised norm enough to make it visible: To make visible how the effect of white supremacy comes to be situated by discursive performances, and how these same discourses contribute to the configuration and durability of white supremacy as a psychological and structural location of privilege. In this sense, the study forms part of an epistemic shift towards decoloniality in which the colonial gaze gets 'returned' and used to unsettle and decolonise historically 'unmarked' spaces of whiteness and white supremacy, as well as the discipline of psychology.

Throughout my study, I keep coming back to Zenzele Isoke's (2016) five basic questions that she urges contemporary scholarship on race and racialisation to think through carefully, as questions that have clear necropolitical debts and dimensions and which guide my analysis: "(1) Who gets to live, and who gets to die? (2) Who gets to live well, and who gets to suffer? (3) Who has the right to hate, and thereby the right to kill? (4) Which bodies are counted as persons, and which are counted among the (living) dead? (5) How do states, governments, civil society, media, popular culture, the technologies of everyday life, and theories of political and social life either contribute to or disrupt the practices of violence that continue to make race real?" (Isoke, 2015, p. 756)

The guiding theoretical framework is structured through the analytical strategy of a necropolitics at large (Sumba, 2021), which is a reworking and expansion of Achille Mbembe's original formulation of necropolitics, which theorises politics of death and how the power and capacity to decide who is worthy of life and who must be left to die get produced and maintained. Mbembe's concept builds on Michel Foucault's notion of biopower and biopolitics, which detail how state power is exercised through the regulation and management of life and living. From a necropolitical perspective, power

is not (just) expressed by assigning life to bodies and populations, but also by assigning death, with technologies of racialisation being used as the key mechanisms through which it is determined what bodies and populations are assigned to life and death respectively. By applying an approach of necropolitics at large, this study seeks to examine connections between everyday pandemic discourse and necropolitical productions of death.

Reflections on occupying a decolonial position as a white scholar

With this project, I want to call us into a decolonial tradition that understands and acknowledges and intervenes against necropolitical, racist and white supremacist violence beyond individually enacted, 'bad' behavior and instead, additionally, as mechanisms that are foundationally sustained by an atmospheric epicolonial brutality that upholds some lives as more valuable than others. I do not bring forward this project to diminish the urgency and importance of mourning and protesting the more visible and immediately harmful enactments of violence against black people, but to bring energy to the quieter, more invisibilised acts of violence—and to the anti-blackness that Desmond Cole (2020) describes in *The Skin We're In*—hiding in plain sight I do not call attention to necropolitics and its white supremacist implications because I think now is a time to focus on whiteness; it isn't. Yet if we hope to abolish the practices of violence that uphold race as real and dispense unequal life opportunities across its constellations, I assert with this study that we must examine how white supremacy and white violence function and by what means these strategies uphold and present themselves and what their effects are on our sociopolitical, cultural and psychological existence. Not through never-ending introspection among white people or through more corporate policies on diversity and inclusion or through the largely moral or philosophical recognition of white supremacy's brutality or even through the devastating effects of racism on those it terrorises, but also by examining it as a *political* problem in order to expose how epicoloniality (re-)produces and secures itself by replicating systems of power and exclusion. It is within these critical efforts this work situates itself.

As much as this is a qualitative study, it is also an epistemic exercise: An insistence on seeing and doing what knowledge is—and how we produce it—differently, and an insistence on taking to heart what Ruha Benjamin (2020) points out in the transcript of *Black Skin, White Masks: Racism, Vulnerability & Refuting Black Pathology* and seeing more of the same thing, seeing fewer distortions and instead reckoning honestly with what we are carrying and (re)producing: “One of the things that’s coming to light is how the global spread of a microscopic virus is placing the ravages of racism and inequity under the microscope. But the fact is, we don’t all see the same thing! Racism has a way of actually *distorting* our vision. Intertwined with many other forms of social domination, racism is mercurial, innovative, even viral.” (Benjamin, 2020, para. 12) Additionally, my work places itself within a dominant narrative in contemporary Nordic critical scholarship that concerns itself with the exposure and problematisation of the obscured, subtle violences in contemporary subjectivities (Roseneil, 2011).

This study also takes an explicit position of non-innocence, of implication. It is tense and complicated and sometimes paralysing, and on particularly strange days it can feel shameful and impossible and conceited, to do research on racism as a white person. I know now that if I am not feeling uncomfortable and vigilant and paranoid, then I have become complacent and I am no longer doing the work as well as I could. What does it mean to do research, in a scholastic tradition where producing reliable and valid data, which is code for simply being right about something, is heralded as the ultimate goal, where you know that by virtue of your positionality you will never be right and you will make continuous errors of judgment and analysis?

In *Silences in African history: Between the syndromes of discovery and abolition* (Depelchin, 2005), Jacques Depelchin describes how Africanist history—the one written by non-Africans who have 'discovered' that African people have history—positions itself as the 'discoverer' of the oppression and exploitation that African (and other) people have been resisting themselves for centuries. It is only once they discover it that it becomes real. This is also Africanist history's abolitionist aspect—abolitionists being the 'enlightened' Europeans who 'discovered' that slavery was bad, meanwhile slaves had

been revolting against slavery since its beginnings. This points to the problematic power relations of the beneficiaries of colonialism-capitalism being the discoverers of black people's oppression and that oppression only being acknowledged as real at that point and further, the Europeans being the owners of that knowledge.

It is also in acknowledgement of this dynamic that I offer up this study. Race and racialisation has been studied in thousands of books and papers across countless disciplines by brilliant minds. I will not make any commentary or analysis in this doctorate that has not already been made over and over by black scholars and activists for centuries. My race perception and analysis will never be as adept as that of black scholars, and all my work is indebted to the intellectual and cultural efforts of black academics and writers and thinkers and artists. I offer up this work, nonetheless, because it is my hope that white people, due to the very nature of how white supremacist dynamics and power function, may be receptive to these messages—or at least experience greater degrees of cognitive dissonance—when they come from another white person. Additionally, it is my ethical and political stance that the burden of redress does not lie at the feet of those that systems of injustice brutalise and that white people everywhere need to cede to black leadership and contribute to the abolition of white supremacy.

Citational politics

> Citation is feminist memory. It is how we leave a trail of where we have been and who helped us along the way.
>
> —Sara Ahmed (2015, para 5)

This project attempts to build on decoloniality’s ethics, legacy and genesis by seeking to encourage and amplify the most marginalised perspectives and approaches within contemporary decolonial trends. I seek to do that by theorising through contributions by

and on those whose lives are most marginalised by social systems. Sara Ahmed (2017) describes writing as creating a house and citations as bricks: They are what we build our theoretical house with. This project aspires to replicate Ahmed's citation policy during her writing and doing of *Living a Feminist Life* (2017). It is a policy reflective of Lorde's (1984) declaration in *Sister Outsider* that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house: To strive towards a citation policy in which no white men are cited.

By 'white men', Ahmed refers to Puwar's (2001) *somatic norm*, and to an institution, and the mechanisms for reproducing that institution—what she calls a citational relational (Ahmed, 2015). This is a very radical and imprecise citation policy. But the point of it is not precision. It is to transform the habits and norms and citational structures that produce what we refer to as disciplines. Actively bypassing 'white men' is reflective not just of Ahmed's feminist project, but decolonial sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel's (2007) call to "epistemologically transcend and decolonise the Western canon" (p. 211). Adhering to disciplinary canons in theorising and citation is an equally deliberate act of adhering to and reproducing a very particular—usually very male, very white and very epistemically violent—selection of bodies and concepts. There are some major exceptions to this, as I choose to include and draw on my intellectual debt to Norman Flairclough (1992, 1993, 1995) and his salient work on critical discourse analysis. Implementing a disruptive and transformative citational policy like this requires feminist collaboration: It requires finding and centring work by feminist, queer and marginalised scholars before me, work that has sometimes been marginalised, ignored or undervalued. It is a way to work against established canons in favour of plurality of knowledge, to chip away at old houses made up of male citations entirely, or perhaps to one day build a different house altogether, one that is made with different materials and one that has room for altogether different bodies and new voices.

Through this study, it has been my aim to add to that, and work towards a citational strategy that seeks to decenter whiteness in all secondary research. By secondary research I am referring to all summary, collection and synthesis of existing data and research that I will present in the following literature review. In order to achieve this

decentration, I employ a number of strategies created to push citational practices towards new syllabi and knowledges. For more explicit and in-depth reflections on positionality and power, as well as ethics, please see Chapter on Methodology.

As Ahmed herself notes (2015), this a position that can never be adhered to ‘fully’; it is one that has permeable boundaries. There are certain materials and histories I have needed in order to make some of my arguments. Indeed, it is a policy I have not been able to adhere to, but it is one I have strived towards and I have welcomed the fundamental ways in which it inevitably shifted, complicated and transformed my work.

Below I outline some of the strategies I have employed to achieve this decentration of whiteness and amplification of marginalised voices:

1. *Including a Citation Diversity Statement*

A recent practice that is emerging, to mitigate the challenges of inequitable citations that reinscribe violences of marginalisation and continue to exclude historically marginalised groups from academic knowledge production, is a so-called Citation Diversity Statement—a short paragraph that is included before the references section of an article where the authors consider their own bias and quantify the equitability of their reference lists. Zurn, Bassett and Rust (2020) describe it in their article, *The Citation Diversity Statement: A Practice of Transparency, A Way of Life*: “We, like so many, are troubled by the gender and racial disparities that have existed in academia for far too long. What will be required to right these wrongs against our trainees, in our fields, and throughout our world? What would a world of recognized minority leadership and scholarship look like? How can we contribute?” (p. 669, 2020) In lieu of a Citation Diversity Statement, I have included this section on citational politics and practices.

2. *Seeking out and prioritising research from the Majority World*

I seek out and prioritise research found in journals from and in the Majority World. To achieve this goal I have had to conduct creative searches for literature through, for

example, the platforms provided by The Journals Online Project (JOLs). JOLs was established in 1998 under the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information and has continued as part of the international development charity INASP (International Network for Advancing Science and Policy) and their Strengthening Research and Knowledge Systems programme. JOLs seek to “[provide increased visibility], accessibility and quality of peer-reviewed journals published in developing countries so that the research outputs produced in these countries can be found, shared and used more effectively” (Journals Online Project, 2020), which can be accessed here.

3. *Aiming to exclude theory on race and racism derived from studies on Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic population groups*

In 2008, Jeffery Arnett pointed out that the majority of articles in American Psychological Association journals were about U.S. populations when U.S. citizens are only 5% of the world's population (Arnett, 2008). He argued that the discipline of psychology had no valid reason for universalising and generalising their findings to global populations. This led Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan (2010) to examine inherent biases in psychology studies with population groups from what they called Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic contexts, and coined the acronym WEIRD. They found that "96% of psychological samples come from countries with only 12% of the world’s population" (Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010, p. 63).

This is not a new discovery. The white, industrialised and harmful bias embedded in the field of psychology, and the violent practices and consequences of psychological research, has been extensively pursued and critiqued by scholars from the Majority World. According to critical decolonial psychologist Wahbie Long, he beginnings of this debate can be traced all the way back to the sixties and seventies in which American, European and “so-called ‘Third World’ psychology” (Long, 2013, p. 5) questioned the social and political relevance of psychology. These efforts continue today with scholars of critical and decolonial psychology (see Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018) for a historical

overview and counter-centring of decolonial feminist psychology in Africa) tracing the historical assumptions of the discipline that have served to legitimate systems of slow and fast violence, slavery, colonisation and white supremacy.

When collecting literature, I thus reflect on the following questions: Who are the authors? What are their backgrounds and identities? How many parts of the WEIRD acronym apply to the populations groups that are studied or form the basis of the theoretical concepts I am examining?

4. *Citing oral histories*

A final exciting strategy I have come across—one I have not had the chance to make use of myself but which deserves mentioning—is the possibility of recording and acknowledging oral histories through recently developed citation templates for oral teachings. A lot of indigenously held knowledge and knowledge systems are passed on through oral teachings and histories that are not necessarily reflected in a written database. Until recently, it has been a challenge to adequately acknowledge and include the unrecorded oral teachings of indigenous communities and knowledge keepers, as traditional frameworks of academic citation privilege written sources over personal communication. In 2021, Lorisia MacLeod, a librarian, developed citation templates for oral teachings by Indigenous communities and were adopted by the American Psychological Association and Modern Language Association. MacLeod's templates can be accessed online.

In order to uncover the interlocking forms of racialisation that operate within Danish mainstream coverage of COVID-19, this study relies on necropolitical theory refracted through queer and crip theory to produce a lens adequate for the analysis of COVID-19 as racism. All theoretical interventions are attentive to how race and body thinking are co-imbricated in disciplinary and necropolitical forms of power within white societies. The central principle of this doctorate, that whiteness configures 'African' figures as

close(r) to death to better imagine itself as life, is pursued through a necropolitical strategy of analysis in particular.

Notes on terminology

In the following section, I detail some of my considerations around terminology and present reflections on specific terms. Below, in alphabetical order:

'Africa'

My data is thick with productions of the African continent as a single unit, with 'Africa' as a country. As an intervention against this, I put 'Africa' in single, empathic quotation marks. This is both to highlight that the production of 'Africa' in Danish media is a discursive reduction that is organised around white supremacist and necropolitical logics, not a real geographical location. I use the quotation marks as scare quotes to highlight that the word, 'Africa', is being used in inaccurate and harmful ways, and to repeatedly contest the white idea of 'Africa'.

black and white

I use the term 'white' in reference to all subjects who benefit from racialisation. I use the term 'black' in reference to all subjects who are terrorised and dehumanised by racialisation. In Denmark, that encompasses Muslims and Inuit Greenlanders.

I do not capitalise either 'black' or 'white' to signify, in line with efforts of South African scholars, that it is a social construct and political identity. According to Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo (2020), in the South African context, "'black' (lower case) invokes black consciousness and can be used to describe people of African, Indian, and mixed heritage and descent. While drawing on the South African political connotation, we recognize that the politics of capitalization are reversed in the US context, where 'Black'

(capitalized) is used to signify political identity and racialized history as distinct from the politics of whiteness." (p. 280-281)

Epi-colonialism and late-colonialism

I use the terms epicolonialism and late colonialism interchangeably. By using the pre-fixes epi- and late. I want to draw attention to how that which is readable as colonial does not necessarily have a linear history and suggest that we continue to live through new iteration of an old system of global colonialism. This is particularly pertinent from a Danish vantage point, as there is nothing post-colonial about Denmark's colonialism. It is still alive and well as Denmark unapologetically retains its sovereign power over Greenland.

Majority World and Minority World

I use the term Majority World and Minority World to describe what is often otherwise referred to as the Global South and the Global North. Majority World is an alternative term for Developing World, Global South, or Third World. It describes African, Asian, South and Central American and Caribbean spaces and locales more geographically accurately and it is, in my view, less pejorative than other terms. Similarly, I use the term Minority World to describe what is more commonly referred to as the West or the Global North. Again, this is an act of intentional reframing, one I believe is more accurate than references to north and south, and it draws attention to the inherent injustice and inquiry of the global numerical minority.

Structurally embedded advantage

I will not be using the terms 'allyship' and 'privilege' throughout my study. Instead, I have chosen to opt for terms such as 'solidarity' and 'structurally enabled and embedded advantage' to shift away from oppositional framings and towards language that foregrounds our interconnected experiences.

Western Asia

In the few instances where it is applicable, I use the term Western Asia rather than the politically and culturally loaded and ambiguous ‘Middle East’, a term that is not just geographically incorrect but mired in racist philology.

Lastly, I would like to encourage anyone reading this dissertation to practice the act of becoming critical readers who view the language of our everyday as powerful and central in shaping not just epistemics, but our very ontologies. Words are an active tool for reshaping reality and discourse does not only work to narrow our conceptual horizons, but also holds the potential, ontologically, to re-image and, indeed, reassert and reconstruct how things could be.

Structure

This conjuncture is pursued first through situating the background for this study followed by a comprehensive literature review of scholarship on both necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), emerging applications of the necropolitical framework to pandemic questions, necropolitics and gender (Islekel, 2022; Puar, 2007), precarious and ungrievable life as it has been developed by Judith Butler (Butler, 2004, 2009, 2016). Secondly, I will foreground necropolitical theory in reworked versions with examples from media discourses sourced from a systematic review and analysis of media coverage of COVID-19 and ‘Africa’ and its necropolitical implications.

I do not utilise Mbembe’s necropolitical framework in its original formulation, as I do not concern myself with formulations or sites of literal dying. Instead, I will be drawing on some of the reworkings and expansions of the understandings of necropolitics by mapping and examining the everyday necropolitical discourse on ‘Africa’ in the current COVID-19 pandemic. By drawing on news media representations, this study will provide a conjecture that argues for the importance of everyday discourse in the production,

maintenance and strengthening of necropolitical dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is my argument throughout this study, as is being increasingly theorised by applying Haritaworn, Kuntsman and Posocco (2014) ‘queer necropolitics’ framework to the everyday, that reworked and metaphorical formulations of necropolitics offer up new insights as a generative theoretical framework when we train its lens not just on the global and supranational structures, but on the figures and death worlds produced and legitimised by everyday discourse. I argue that it is through repeated and normalised everyday discursive constructions of chronic state of allowance and neglect and denial that necropolitical conditions are able to continue existing and creating zones where people are exposed to abandoned life and protracted death.

The first part presents an overview of research positions, theoretical concepts and methodological reflections and considerations. It illustrates the theoretical basis for this project’s theoretical and methodological approaches: a reading of critical psychology against queer and crip theory to create a lens calibrated to analyse race–body–nation entanglements. This study will provide a genealogy of decolonial feminist theory, tracing its emergence, situating it in relation to other decolonial theories, and examining its critiques of racism, colonialism, Eurocentrism and nationalism. Race as social cognition and critical race theory are detailed as examples of alternative ways of reading race. Lastly, Fairclough's (1993) critical discourse analysis is presented and discussed as the choice methodology alongside reflections on researcher positionality. In the second part of the study, I present five analysis chapters: the first on necropolitics and death worlds; the second on necropolitics and the living dead; the third on necropolitics and gender; the fourth on necropolitics and how it intertwines with geopolitics and chronopolitics. I finalise the study through a discussion and concluding remarks that touch on both limitations and contributions of the study.

It is my hope that this study will contribute to new theorisations and necropolitical analyses of necropolitics and racialisation and white supremacy by looking at how racial logics organise media representations in pandemic times. While necropolitics have not provided a strong foundation for intersectional and global solidarity and compassion, it

is my hope that it may, as a critical strategy of analysis, contribute to a more radical vision for future discourse—and by extension, future ways of breaking and intervening against necropower.

My project aims to be documentarian, as well as to go beyond documentary into the realm of generative discomfort. It is my hope that these reflections will encourage readers to bring themselves to uncomfortable and haunting but ultimately liberatory engagements with the disturbing and complex collisions of race, disease, death and nation. I hope to reach and inspire white readers, in particular, to recognise how vast the chasm between our intentions and our impact often is, how little we know, and how urgently we need to cede space and power, both material and intellectual, to scholars and thinkers and artists and activists from historically excluded and marginalised communities. To yield to black scholarship as white people is a simultaneous yielding to being implicated and to being culpable. To immerse ourselves in this, to surrender to it, is to accept that we are not innocent. This means recognising, actively seeking out and looking for ways in which we perpetrate and perpetuate harm and remain complicit in harm, and to look for ways of compensating for that harm. This requires intentional and ongoing epistemic, personal and relational vulnerability.

It is my hope, as well, that there will be terrible surprises and good ones throughout this text that give the reader room to realise that the future can be different from the present; and it is my hope that confrontation can function as a contribution to an undoing of what white people think we know, of how we think we know the world, and of our colonial ways of seeing and knowing and doing. It is my hope we can learn to face, plainly, the realities of the ongoing effects of everyday and state strategies of our white supremacist, epicolonial and terrorist macro- and microstructures, the vestiges of them, the fatalities of them, the clever reconfigurations of them, the brutalisation and abandonment without end, and of lives pushed to the shadows of society by engineered inequity; and I hope that efforts to read and move through these pages across positionalities, and interpreting the different readings of moments in time that they

provide, can be a small step on the road to ceding knowledge and power to black people and a step on the path to another, freer world for everyone.

2. Setting the scene: Race and racism in Denmark and the Nordic region

This chapter provides a brief historically informed account of race and racism in Denmark and the Nordic region, whilst situating Denmark's colonial legacy and complicity. I also touch on the disciplinary Scandinavian context this study emerges from and documents recent efforts and developments by Scandinavian scholars to increasingly take up and interrogate issues around race, racism and colonialism in and by the Nordic region. I finally detail my efforts to and reflections on attempting to locate recent scholarship throughout the past 20 years on race and racism within the discipline of psychology in Denmark across peer-reviewed psychological journals and psychological conferences. I reflect on the particularities of the Nordic region, and the Danish-colonial context in particular, and how this region's contentious struggles against our own whiteness and white supremacy and hegemony drive my choice to research 'against' a Nordic grain by situating my research on a nationally-determined field of research within a theoretical and geographical context and frame—a necropolitical framework and work carried out in South Africa under the supervision of a black, decolonial, feminist African gaze—far away from this region.

Denmark's colonial legacies, past and present

> I, too, live in the time of slavery, by which I mean I am living in the future created by it. It is the ongoing crisis of citizenship.
>
> —Saidiya Hartman (2007, p. 133)

In Denmark, we, too, live like this. I, too, live like this. Except this is not just the future created by it, it is a protracted moment of active, ongoing colonialism. There is nothing

post-colonial about Denmark's colonialism. As of writing, Denmark is still an active colonial power. Greenland, in Greenlandic *Kalaallit Nunaat*, was a Danish colony until 1953, after which it became reclassified as a 'district' of Denmark and is now under the rule of the Kingdom of Denmark. In acknowledgement of this, of Denmark as a currently colonial state, I actively strive to acknowledge and put forward and make visible Denmark's colonial complicities in my work and my theoretical formulations and my strategies of analysis. As Denmark is a contemporary neo-colonial power, Mbembe's (2003) necropolitical framework is a generative fit, as it was originally developed to examine 'politics of death' inside active colonies. I also seek to situate myself and my positionality as someone with a national identity that rests not just on white supremacist logics but actively colonial ones. I seek to acknowledge those connections and these debts and this ongoing violence and make them visible by centering the critical race scholarship that emerges from these contexts and territories when I detail critical race studies in a Danish context. When I speak about race scholarship in Denmark, I seek to pay particular attention to the formulations by researchers and activists from geographies, which are connected with Denmark through late-colonial ties, in particular Greenlandic scholars and activists and thinkers and artists with ties to the Virgin Islands. For context, the Virgin Islands was a Danish colony called Danish West Indies in the Caribbean, consisting of the islands of Saint Thomas, Saint John, and Saint Croix) until 1917. In 1917, the islands were purchased from Denmark by the US for $25 million in 'gold coin' and have since then 'belonged' to the United States (see for example Dookhan, 1975).

To briefly situate Denmark's colonial legacy, and to briefly expand on the history of Denmark's colonial rule over Greenland, Denmark has not represented a 'strong' colonial power in comparison to other European countries. Danish colonisation comprises Greenland, the West Indian Islands, the Gold Coast (West Africa) and parts of Asia. To this day, however, Denmark remains a late-colonial power. Denmark's colonisation of Greenland began all the way back in 1721, and it was only in 1979 that Greenland was granted so-called home rule and, in 2009, so-called self rule, which means Greenlanders have some sovereignty over land and people. It does not mean

Greenland has full independence. It means that Greenland has been ‘granted’, by and large, the right to self-govern with regards to mostly internal affairs, such as family and company law, accounting, aviation, and policing, and that Greenland has two representatives in the Danish Parliaments. It is the Danish government, however, that remains in control of citizenship, foreign affairs and politics, including defense, as well as economic policies. The coloniality of this relationship was recently evidenced by Donald Trump’s August 2019 proposition to *buy* Greenland from Denmark, which resulted in a canceled state visit. The proposition was greeted as ‘absurd’ by Danish actors, including the Danish prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, who made the racist and deeply colonial ‘joke’ that “the time where you buy and sell other countries and populations is over.” (Olsen, 2019, para. 14).

Danish public debate tends to describe Denmark as an old and culturally and ethnically homogeneous nation state, though immigration to Denmark is an old phenomenon. What has happened in recent times, however, is that the demographic composition of immigrants has changed. One hundred and fifty years ago, most migrants came from neighbouring countries. By the early 2000s, migration patterns had shifted to be much more complex. Intra-Nordic migration is still the most prominent type of migration, but migrants now come from more distant and different geographies. According to Jensen, Weibel and Vitus, “a major chain of immigration started at the end of the 1960s, with the appearance of immigrants mainly from ex-Yugoslavia, Turkey and Pakistan, who came to work.” (2017, p. 15) Today, migrants from the Majority World (or what the Immigration Services call ‘non-Western countries’) constitute about 9% of the Danish population (Danmarks Statestik, 2019). The change in migration patterns in Denmark during the last twenty years has been accompanied by an increasingly hostile and racist public discourse on migration and integration, as well as innumerable symbolic policy interventions designed to racialise belonging and citizenship.

Race and racism across the Nordic region

While white Denmark, and the broader hegemony within the Nordic countries, may long

have perceived ourselves as outsiders to the colonial project, and may continue to do so, there have always been other milieus and other voices dissenting and disrupting and complicating that understanding. In recent years in the Nordic region, in particular, critical approaches to racism and colonialism have gained more traction, and Nordic countries have started undergoing the process of critically examining colonial legacies, both past and present, and several English-language Nordic anthologies that engage postcolonial perspectives on the region have been published (see for example Andreassen & Vitus, 2015; Keskinen, Tuori, Irni & Mulinari, 2009; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; see also McEachrane & Gilroy, 2014). By addressing issues of whiteness, national identities, race and affectivity, and migration, these publications have contributed to what Loftsdóttir describes as "[the] critical deconstructions of the idea that the Nordic countries existed 'outside' the European colonial experience." (2015, p. 247) This project forms part of those efforts to critically situate Denmark's participation in colonialism.

In a Nordic context, Swedish Catrin Lundström and Tobias Hübinette are central to scholarship on race, whiteness and postcolonialism. Their highly cited article, *Three phases of hegemonic whiteness: Understanding racial temporalities in Sweden*, (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014) has been influential to contemporary Nordic scholarship on whiteness and racialisation. Swedish anti-racist and feminist scholar Diana Mulinari is another central figure in emergent Nordic scholarship on race and racism. She examines diverse forms of belonging and national and transnational institutions, as well as questions of colonial legacies, Minority and Majority World relations and racialisations, as well as the diversified forms of resistance and organisation to old and new forms of power. In Finland, decolonial feminist scholar, Suvi Keskinen, is important. Her areas of research span broadly from online right-wing radicalism to activism by Scandinavian female activists of color. Stine Helene Bang Svendsen in Norway is another important figure who has worked with race, whiteness and postcolonialism, and is currently working on Sámi relations and decoloniality. Other contemporary Nordic trends within decolonial research focus on race and whiteness in relation to technology, including media technology and reproductive technology, as well as whiteness and

futurity within queer reproduction under neoliberalism, and examinations of how gender and race 'collide' and co-construct each other, with particular reference to Sámi populations.

The majority of research on race and racism and decolonial feminisms in the Nordic region detailed above—and almost all other research carried out in the Nordic region, for that matter—is carried out by white scholars. This may have the unintended effect of further entrenching the coloniality of academic knowledge systems and may account for how race and racism in Nordic research has often been located within particular religious groups, within geographical places and within discrete moments in time, and has had a tendency towards interests in formulations of whiteness and white identities.

There are some powerful and important interruptions to this trend, in which black scholars in the Nordic region are pushing towards situating race and racism as something far more atmospheric and contemporary, as deeply embedded and engrained processes that are produced in contemporary social and political practice and structures—and upheld and strengthened by ordinary people, in everyday settings—and as something that has implications on national and supranational levels. One of these central scholar-activists who are driving the advancement of this scholarship is Jasmine Kelekay, who self-identifies as an Afro-Finland-Swedish researcher and activist. Her work focuses on anti-black racism and black activism in the Nordic region. She was the guest editor for a special issue, *Svart feminism i Norden* (2021) (English: Black feminism in the Nordics), published in the culture-society-feminism magazine, Astra. The special issue highlighted not just some of the ways in which black people in the Nordic region confront, endure and dismantle racialised brutalisations. It also sought to highlight the plurality of ways in which black scholar-activists have long conducted their own analyses, discourses and possibilities for a freer world. In Finland, Monica Gathuo, who is a community organiser and media producer, works as a co-coordinator for the Anti-Racism Media Activist Alliance. Her research and work seeks to research how digital media, race and gender intersect in Finnish contexts, with a specific focus on black women's media patterns and engagements. Another important contributor to black

feminist Nordic research is Judith Kiros, who self-identifies as a Swedish poet, literary scholar, critic, and journalist. Kiros is one of the founders of the anti-racist and feminist platform, *Rummet*, founded in 2013. She has also contributed towards the establishment of a multimedia platform for considerate journalism and critical entertainment, Kontekst Press. Another important researcher-artist is Phyllis Akinyi, who self-identifies as a Danish-Kenyan dancer, choreographer, performance artist, and dance researcher. Akinyi's work is focused on contemporary folklore, what she calls the 'Betwixt and Between' and spiritual rituals in the diaspora (Black feminism in the Nordics, 2021), decolonisation of the Danish art scene, and an expansion of artistic lexicons of knowledge and expression and the inclusion of black and indigenous aesthetics.

As evidence of the regional variations within the Nordic region, in Denmark specifically, scholarship on race and racism has paid less attention to questions around feminism and gender and more on Islamophobia as a mechanism of oppression, and to narratives of "Danish Muslimness" (Kristensen, 2018; see also Nielsen, 2018) and the larger processes of racialisation of Muslims in Denmark. For the past decade, as well, an accumulating body of research has been pointing to the increasing interconnection of national identity politics and immigration policy in public discourse and political practice (see for example Pedersen, 2018; Vieten & Poynting, 2016). Notable exceptions to this trend can be evidenced in the work by Lene Myoung, whose Korean name is Cho Shinhee, a highly interdisciplinary, feminist and decolonial scholar who works on migration, gender and national belonging in a Danish context and whose main area of interest is transnational adoption. She has worked with the (bio)political dimensions of these regulations and applied biopolitics to discourse analysis of media reporting and remains one of the most central voices of critical engagement within race in Scandinavia. There is also a growing focus on Greenlandic identity politics, and on coloniality and race in Greenland. Mathias Danbolt exemplifies this trend and works with Danish postcolonialism through collaborations with artists in Greenland and St. Croix who seek to elucidate contemporary colonial conditions (see for example Danbolt, 2017). In 2019, Peter Hervik's work, *Racialization, Racism, and Anti-Racism in the*

Nordic Countries (Hervik, 2019), was published and has been lauded as ‘one of the first’ books to grapple with the topic of Nordic racialization. It engages mass media and empirical research findings through the framework of critical race theory, an emerging lens in the Scandinavian context, and describes itself as making important contributions to race and ethnic studies, sociology, gender studies, and culture and media studies. Up-and-coming scholar, Bontu Lucie Guschke, who is a PhD fellow with Copenhagen Business School, does important interventions into organizational harassment and discrimination from an intersectional vantage point that considers gender, sexuality and race. Within ‘strictly’ activist and artistic spaces, a division I make uneasily purely for readability as it draws on binary colonial logics of what actions constitute ‘intervention’ and ‘knowledge production’, are Uzma Ahmed and Farhiya Khalid and Joan Rang, who all make bright and exhilarating contributions to the development of decolonial possibilities of existence. Both based in Denmark, Ahmed works as a ‘coexistence consultant’ and speaker, where she works towards the decolonisation of integration and works to highlight and counter modes of racism, discrimination and structural inequality through policy and activist interventions. Khalid is a journalist and historian, who works for the development of ethnic media representation and self-representation in Danish media. Joan Rang is a playwright, who created the first performances in Denmark with only black actors and playwrights.

In all of the above sections, it becomes clear there are notable differences between what disciplines have been quick to engage in decolonisation efforts and which ones have been resistant. Indeed, according to Sámi scholar, Rauna Kuokkanen, white liberal feminists and scholars of gender across the Nordic countries persistently dismiss and perpetuate contemporary Nordic racism. “[Their] dismissiveness takes shape in the form of non-recognition, indifference, or plain ignorance. Nordic feminists don’t openly resist Sámi [and decolonial] perspectives on feminism, but they don’t engage with them either. In fact, I’m not sure if they even know that such things may exist,” she explains (as cited in Knobblock & Kuokkanen, 2015). Echoing Kuokkanen’s claim, scholars of race and racialisation Lene Myong and Rikke Andreassen confirm that there has been a long tradition in Scandinavia of silencing research on racism or theorising it as something

entirely different altogether (Andreassen & Myong, 2017).

Race and racism in Denmark

When I first began the process of developing my initial proposal for this study, and tried to source supervisors and a department that would be a good fit for this particular line of inquiry, I considered Danish institutions. But when I pitched my idea to study how racism operates in Denmark, I was met with incredulity, if not outright disdain, by a number of older, white and mostly male Danish professors and researchers who, unironically and with complete, unflinching confidence in their assessment, told me that racism does not exist in Denmark. If I want to study racism, they would suggest, I need to concern myself with the UK or the US. That's where the real racism is. That's the term they would use. 'The real racism' is over there, not here. Racism exists, but we don't know who or where the perpetrators are. Except definitely not here. That these moments may form part of the very diagnostics of how racism operates in Denmark did not occur to them. But those interactions remain revealing of the logics and strategies that lie at the heart of how white supremacy operates in Denmark. Specifically, these interactions reveal how deeply mediated white Danish people's sense of reality is by what I call 'white epistemic supremacy' or 'epistemic entitlement', a kind of white 'immaculate perception' characterised by a naturalised and embedded sense that we, as white people, know everything there is to know about, well, everything. That we are never wrong and that we are never *in* the wrong. This is a well-worn, well-documented, broadly European, unmistakably white supremacist position to hold. The position that perpetually locates racism elsewhere, away from the subject or nation in question. What we might call a kind of projected racism, or what M'charek, Schramm and Skinner (2014) call an "absent presence" (p. 459). In Europe, they argue, race is an absent presence, where a "widespread reluctance or a refusal to use the word often becomes a mask for contemporary racism; as a result, race is largely seen as a past aberration." (M'charek, Schramm & Skinner, 2014, p. 459) These theorisations beg the question: To whom, exactly, is racism 'absent' and to whom, exactly, is it a 'past aberration'?

White scholars have many terms for our own innocence: We call our racisms unreal (to whom?), or absent (to whom?), or postracial (again, to whom is brutalisation through processes of racialisation 'over'?). We call ourselves colourblind or prejudiced, soft terms that defer accountability. But as black scholars globally point out tirelessly, it is all still racism and it exists right here. Around us and in us. As a stark example of how this unreal racism functions in Denmark, Denmark became the fifth country in Europe to introduce a ban on facial covering in public in 2018. The specific wording of these policies are resultant of a technical need to circumvent a constitution that ostensibly protects freedom of religion. However, these bans have nothing to do with generalised facial covering in public and everything to do with a purported Islamification of Europe, symbolised most poignantly through Muslim women who wear veils, such as the hejāb or niqāb. Two years prior to Denmark's Parliament debating the 'face-covering' bill that became law a few months later, the Danish state launched a pronatalist media campaign targeted at white, middle-class, heterosexual, university-enrolled women, encouraging them to reproduce for the sake of the nation. Its two slogans translate to: 'Do it for Denmark' and 'Have kids whilst you're still a student' (Kivi, 2017). This happened at a time when Muslim and black parents were—and continue to be—ridiculed in public and political discourse for having too many children and portrayed as violent parents through racist narratives of social control and 'honour-related' violence and killings.

Research on racism by the discipline of psychology in Denmark

In order to excavate Danish research on race and racism within the discipline of psychology, I searched through the psychological journals I know of and I have surveyed all current and past research projects I could access online at all departments of psychology in Denmark. In the following section I will briefly detail what I have found. A search through the archives of the *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* and *Psykologisk Set* and *Psyke & Logos*—one of the perhaps most influential journals of psychological research in Denmark, supported by the Department of Communication

and Psychology at Aalborg University, the Department of Education and Pedagogy at Aarhus University, the Department of Psychology at Aarhus University and the Department of Psychology at University of Copenhagen—appears to confirm Kuokkanen's and Andreassen and Myong's criticism: that Danish psychological research does not appear to have concerned itself with or published any overt examinations of racial and colonial violence in recent times, or at the very least psychological research has concerned itself with these issues under and as different terms and theorised this in different ways, as using specific search terms such as 'race', 'racism', and 'colonialism' only yield the following results: Either 'race' is mentioned in passing as another marker of identity or in the following ways that all posit racism as secondary effects, not as a tool and politic of its own. To give a few representative examples, older sources and work that theorise and examine racialisation as 'discrimination' and 'ethnic' differences and identities (Singla, 2001), 'transcultural' diagnoses (Mirdal, 2001), 'Muslimness' and belonging (Khawaja, 2013), and cultural integration of migrants (Singla, Akora, Panesar & Lindström, 2006). To briefly draw on anecdotal evidence to flesh out these searches, I want to mention that Danish professors at different departments of psychology across the country that I conferred with during my study could not point me in other directions either. The closest I kept coming was the repeated reference to research on 'individual prejudice' against migrants. Likewise, to remain anecdotal for another brief moment, during my time as an undergraduate and postgraduate student in psychology in Denmark, I never was instructed on anything that related to psychology and race. When I did my Master's dissertation on racist and necropolitical configurations in mainstream media during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, I struggled to find a supervisor who would supervise my project, as no one at the Department of Psychology at University of Copenhagen had an interest in or expert knowledge on the area. I eventually found an older professor in biological psychology who agreed to supervise me. His main conceptual contribution to my dissertation was to tell me that I should remember to clarify that 'race' is not biological.

I did come across three noteworthy exceptions that all deserve mentioning as examples of overt examinations of racism situated within the field of psychology in Denmark,

although they are not directly relevant to this study or its theoretical positions. Firstly, in 2019 psychologists Naderah Parwani and Iram Khawaja (2023) founded Psykologfagligt Netværk imod Diskrimination (in English: Psychological Network Against Discrimination). Khawaja, whose work was mentioned earlier in this review, is an important scholar of Muslim identities, belonging and Islamophobia in psychological-peadagogical practice in Denmark. It is a network of more than 260 psychologists and students of psychology who work to cultivate knowledge and increase focus on the psychological, health and societal consequences of discrimination and racism (Parwani & Khawaja, 2023). This network reflects an important and black-led intervention into a psychological clinical and practice landscape dominated by whiteness. Notably, Iram Iram Khawaja, who works as an educational psychologist and has a PhD in social psychology, has been instrumental in elucidating processes on becoming and identity as they relate to constructions of Muslimeness and Otherness in Denmark through postcolonial strategies of analysis. Secondly, a book which has been published this year by the Danish psychological publishing house, Dansk Psykologisk Forlag, with the title *Gode intentioner er ikke nok Opgør med fem myter om racisme, diversitet og etniske minoriteter i pædagogisk praksis* (Lagermann & Khawaja, 2022) (in English: Good intentions are not enough—Challenging five myths about racism, diversity and ethnic minorities in pedagogical practice). It is a practical guide to teachers in schools and daycare. It examines questions around diversity and racism in primary educational contexts and seeks to give practical advice on how to approach questions like: “How do you ensure minority ethnic students' opportunities to participate on an equal footing with other children and young people? How do you create educational space with room for diversity?” (Lagermann & Khawaja, 2022, abstract, my translation). Thirdly, Singla and Busch-Jensen have advanced an examination of racism in an article entitled *Racisme - et psykologisk perspektiv* (2007) (in English: Racism - a psychological perspective). They state that racism “implies an idea that humans exist in different racial versions, characterised by different characteristics ranging from skin color and facial shape to abilities, talents, intelligence and morality” (Singla & Busch-Jensen, 2007, abstract, my translation). They go on to suggest that race as a biological ‘phenomenon’ is ‘unscientific’ and suggest, instead, an updated “cultural term

that identifies discrimination against people based on cultural affiliations and preferences." (Singla & Busch-Jensen, 2007, abstract, my translation) This critique of race and racism appears not just rudimentary and uninformed of the vast developments in the global scholarship on processes of racialisation that existed in 2007 already, but advances critiques and argumentations, as well as makes a number of assumptions, that run the risk of reinscribing racism and eugenicist ideas themselves.

What the above illustrates is that even though racialisation functions as an established technology of power and organising tool in Denmark, as pointed out by, for example, Parwani and Khawaja (2019)—and not just under the guise of cultural differences and discrimination or migrant identities, but on social, political, systemic, epistemic and relational levels in which brutalisation through processes of violence that make race real and exclude some, but not others, from life chances and opportunities and the right to legal protection and citizenship and, in the worst instances, expose some to the inevitable conditions of death—scant psychological research and interventions exist on how and to what effect these powerful and fatal regulations are configured. Even though there are some examples of powerful interventions against the traditional, individualising frameworks of traditional psychology in Denmark, psychological inquiries into these regulations and the discursive processes of racialisation on which these regulations rest, and through which these regulations legitimise, maintain and strengthen themselves, remains underresearched. This gap in psychological scholarship in Denmark is illustrative of an urgent need to transform and establish new literature on psychological understandings of racism and how it functions in a Danish context—not just as a discrete and isolated event, but as a multifarious discursive and political phenomenon that intersects with, as this study examines, COVID-19, nation, body and gender and is entrenched across time and space by ordinary journalists in ordinary publications and consumed by an ordinary audience on a day-to-day basis.

In contrast to the research on race and racism detailed above, and in disruption of its silences and complicities, Denmark received its first-ever public monument to a black woman, *I Am Queen Mary* in April 2018—a hybrid portrait by artists Jeannette Ehlers

and La Vaughn Belle intended to address the country's colonial history. Jeanette Ehlers is a Danish-Trinidadian artist and La Vaughn Belle is an artist from the Virgin Islands. The statue was unveiled 101 years after Denmark sold its former Caribbean colonies, St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, to the United States for $25 million.

This statue and the burqa ban and pro-natalist campaign and salient interventions by black feminist decolonial scholars in the Nordics and the recently formed Psykologfagligt Netværk imod Diskrimination all illustrate the contentious space that race and racial violence hold in Denmark and the wider region. On the one hand, scholars, artists and activists, led by black and brown minorities, have offered strong and powerful interventions aimed to challenge racial oppression and colonial logics of knowledge and literary production. On the other hand, intense state terrorism and violence form part of a general modus operandi in Denmark—as elsewhere in Northern Europe (see for example Jensen, Weibel & Vitus, 2017; see also Cretton, 2017; Wekker, 2016; Goldberg, 2006; van Dijk, 1992) alongside denials of and 'non-engagement' with racism and a national sense self premised on notions of exceptionalism and on Denmark as a tolerant and progressive space devoted to social justice and equality. In the broader public, just as within mainstream psychological research, issues concerning racist, colonial and epicolonial discourse and policies are often constructed as isolated incidents relating to individual prejudice.

It is within this historical and contemporary context that my field of research is indebted and located, and it is into this historical and contemporary space that my work emerges. It is the particularities of the Nordic region, and the Danish-colonial context in particular, and our contentious struggles against our own whiteness and white supremacy and hegemony, that drive my choice to research 'against' a Nordic grain. To situate my work on a nationally-determined field of research within a theoretical and geographical context and frame far away from this region. It is in an attempt to work in disobedient (Mignolo, 2009) and refusing (Tuck & Yang, 2014) ways—in the hopes that disobedience and refusal will expose other or additional forms of hidden violences (such as the violence of the established academy in Denmark that did not think I should or

could study racism in Denmark at all)—that I have situated my research within and from a necropolitical framework, and within and from a South African geography, and within and from supervision by seminal black decolonial feminist scholars. By anchoring my study with University of Cape Town's Department of Psychology's Hub for Decolonial Feminist Psychologies in Africa, I have sought to be situated within a platform that—theoretically and epistemically—continues to challenge me and from which I continue to approximate the exposure and resistance of these Danish-colonial and Nordic forms of epistemic violence. It is my hope that, through this multifariously necropolitical affiliation, my study makes a modest contribution against the grain and towards anticolonial research within Danish psychological scholarship. I write more extensively on research on race and racism within the field of psychology in the section, *Theory on racism in mainstream psychology*.

3. Theoretical framework and literature review: Necropolitical theorisations of race and racism

In this chapter, I present the concepts that are relevant to my theory, as well as various theoretical considerations. First, I introduce my theoretical orientation, which is an assemblage of theories that is calibrated towards the attempt at a necropolitical approach within critical psychology. I start off by detailing mainstream psychology's 'racism problem' before describing other available positions on race and racism within psychology, specifically social cognition models, intergroup theories as well as critical psychological research on racism. I then give an overview of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), necropolitics as they have been applied during and on the pandemic, necropolitics and gender and precarious life, COVID-19 and temporality, violence and racialisation, as well as a short review of research on disease, epidemics and coloniality.

Throughout this review of literature, I drew from all kinds of texts, peer-reviewed articles published in journals with and without paywalls, I looked at established classics in the academy and I reviewed what scholars and activists and artists and authors and thinkers have been saying on other, more informal platforms. I surveyed social media for its academic trends and opinions, a much faster-moving and more organic platform than peer-reviewed journals whose processes are rigorous and robust but slow and undynamic. I looked at essays and anthologies, digital and printed. I have spoken to colleagues and mentors and supervisors and I sought out the work they encouraged me to look at. I collected and engaged all these disparate avenues of knowledge concurrently, some less historically valid than others, because I believe that to build alternative archives of knowledge, we need to seek them out first. Particularly in a moment of emergent crisis. Things are not unfolding as they have before; a lot of processes are slower and some are faster. That requires us to be creative in how we source material. We need alternative archives of knowledge, and seeking to build those

alternative archives through my choices of literature are another reflection of the commitment to decolonial epistemics of this study. I take the view that it is Imperative that we re-organize academic and activist practices in a moment of global crisis and profound social and political anguish and uncertainty. The literature presented below is a synthesis of all the above reviews.

By offering a critical intervention into mainstream psychology, as well as applying necropolitics and decolonial, disability and queer theory to methods of critical discourse analysis and situating this analysis in Denmark, this study builds on existing efforts to expand the scope of necropolitics, critical discourse analysis and makes a contribution to the study of geographical variations in everyday discursive productions of race and racism. It is my hope these theorisations will be of interest to scholars in psychology and race, gender and media studies, as well as to journalists at large, activists, artists, policy-makers, community organisers, and anyone working towards making the world a freer place for all.

An assemblage of theories and frameworks: Towards a necropolitical approach within critical psychology

This study places itself within critical psychology, and draws necropolitics and decolonial and queer theory into critical psychology. The theoretical framework integrates multiple critical-psychological perspectives on racialisation to create a necropolitical approach to the study of racism that places itself within critical psychology. It takes central inspiration from contemporary attempts towards a decolonial psychology (see for example Kessi & Kiguwa, 2015; Adams, Dobles, Gómezc, Kurtiş & Molina, 2015; Bulhan, 2015; Fanon, 1952/1967). The necropolitical framework is developed in connection with queerfeminist and crip theories and critiques detailed in the preceding literature review to create a lens calibrated to analyse the production and implication of racialised and racialising discourse during the pandemic. Its field of inquiry is discursive technologies of everyday life and their connections to the systemic. Thus, the study situates itself transdisciplinarily across both the humanities and social sciences. In addition to race

and racism and race–nation entanglements from a necropolitical lens, this is a study that also engages key concepts around gender (Butler, 1993, 2004, 2016, 2020), homonationalism (Puar, 2007), ethical encounters (Ahmed, 2017), crip temporality (Freeman, 2010), racialisation and representational violence, whilst interrogating questions around how we make and deligitimise discursive practices of violence that make race real. By advancing a critical intervention into psychological research on racism, this study is of interest to scholars of psychology and race, necropolitics, gender, the emerging field of critical pandemic studies, as well as activists and community organisers and anyone invested in mapping and sharing new liberatory strategies.

This study rejects the assumption that research, whether qualitative or quantitative, can ever be unbiased and value-free (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007) and epistemologically apolitical. Instead, this study takes inspiration from Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo (2020) reminder that even claims of objectivity themselves form part of colonial knowledge construction, and their call to include the advancement of epistemic decolonising in efforts towards structural decolonising. By epistemic decolonising, they refer to ongoing efforts to redeem “worldviews and theories and ways of knowing that are not rooted in, nor oriented around Euro-American theory” (p. 274) and elaborate that “only knowledges–in their plurality–can be universal, for all attempts at knowing and articulating reality are grounded in a particular social and political context” (p. 274). This study rests on a practical and political and epistemic commitment to interrogating how my access to theory and knowledge is incomplete and staged through my whiteness. It also rests on intentional and continual interrogation of how my positionalities are entrenched in what and how I know and produce knowledge, and on critical engagement with how whiteness becomes entrenched and resisted in academic work, as well as the following interrelated premises grounded in the research, theory, and practice of other decolonial scholars:

1. Academic discourse, particularly academic discourse produced by disciplines like psychology, invisibilise, misrepresent, appropriate and pathologise the

experiences of marginalised groups, particularly people of colour (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Dillard, 2000; Stanfield, 1995).

2. Some researchers have given privileged status to white hegemony over the voices of marginalised peoples, especially people of colour (Tillman, 2002).

3. Researchers' intersecting positionalities and identities play a constitutive part to the process of research on race and racism (Chapman, 2007).

Emerging out of the above context, this study explores how discursive productions of 'Africa' in Danish mainstream media under COVID-19 are configured, with a view towards tackling the necropolitical tensions of these everyday configurations and their wider implications for structural violence. This project represents an attempt to advance a reading of necropolitics against decolonial and queerfeminist theory and disability justice to create a decolonial lens calibrated to analyse pandemic race–body–nation entanglements, and to draw these frameworks into critical psychology. In this chapter, I present the concepts relevant to my theory, including a literature review, as well as various theoretical considerations. The following chapter details the theoretical framework that will steer the analysis, as well as provides an overview of existing literature that aims to utilise this theoretical framework to an enhanced understanding of some of the discursive effects and implications of the pandemic. It starts out with a section on necropolitics as they were originally articulated by Achille Mbembe (2003), and briefly touches on its theoretical inheritances and underpinnings, before detailing a review of the emerging field of scholarship that aims to examine how necropolitical frameworks can be applied to understandings of the outcomes of COVID-19.

Other available positions on racism in psychology

There are many ways to research race and racism and many other available theoretical positions and frameworks available. Far from all consider a necropolitical framework to be a useful lens through which to fracture and understand how racialisation during the

pandemic is produced. As a discipline, psychology has a long and contentious history of researching race and racism in different ways. In the following section I will situate how the extensive scholarship on theorising around race and racism has been approached by mainstream psychology, as well as some of the recent contributions towards racism during COVID-19 by the discipline of psychology. Just as this study emerges from within a historical and contemporary Danish context—identitarian and national both in its data sets and positionialities—so does it emerge from within this historical and contemporary disciplinary context.

As a study situated within the field of psychology, and as a study that understands itself to be fundamentally of psychological inquiry, this is a project whose analytical framework and strategy is unconventional. In the following section, I will detail some of the more conventional approaches to the study of race and racism within the discipline of psychology.

Psychology's racism problem

> Why is Western psychology innocently labeled 'psychology'
> but African psychology geographically located?
> —Suntosh R Pillay (2017, p. 1)

Race, like other socially and politically constructed and imposed norms and identities that inscribe possibilities onto our bodies, plays a central role in determining how we experience the world around us, and in organising our thoughts and behaviours. It would make sense, then, to expect mainstream psychological research to have taken a rich interest in examining race from cognitive, behavioral, developmental, personality or even clinical perspectives. Yet according to a recent study of racial representation in psychological research across the past five decades that still is not the case. In a 2020 study by psychologist Steven Roberts and research team on trends in racial representation in psychological research across five decades, they found that race is almost absent in the prominent psychological publications they reviewed (Roberts,

Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie & Mortenson, 2020). They surveyed more than 26,000 empirical articles published between 1974 and 2018 across major psychological journals in order to examine how often psychological research acknowledges the reality of race, and to examine whether those who edit, write, and carry out the research are systematically connected. Their findings show that race is rarely highlighted as a discrete phenomena, and when race is discussed, it is most often authored and almost entirely edited by white scholars. They note that research on race within developmental and social psychology has increased, but that it has remained virtually nonexistent in cognitive psychology (Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie & Mortenson, 2020). This mirrors the results of my own efforts to excavate and recover psychological research on race and racism in a Danish and Scandinavian context, where I found that psychological research that concerns itself directly with racialisation is almost non-existent, or theorises race as something else, like ‘ethnicity’. As mentioned previously, there is rich engagement with contextual variations of racism such as ‘Islamophobia’ or ‘anti-Greenlandic discrimination’ in Denmark, but these come from other disciplines than psychology, in particular gender and media studies.

These trends point to an alarming and enduring systemic inequality within mainstream psychological research, in which research priorities and frameworks and theories are determined and upheld by white, epicolonial standards that maintain themselves through tightly woven closed systems, in which devaluing and invisibilisation of the reality and impact of racialisation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy—the less we research race and publish scientific work on race in mainstream journals, the more scholarship on racialisation is pushed to the fringes of psychological research, and the more it exists on the fringes, the less we produce and validate race as knowledge that meets colonial-scientific standards of knowing, and the less these standards are met, the less likely mainstream journals are to accept and publish research on it, and on and on it goes. An example of how the discipline structures research access in ways that uphold colonial and white supremacist ideology is through its tendency to produce standardisation samples that are made up of individuals from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic contexts, which biases generalisations psychologists

make about human behavior (Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). Another example is how rare research on black and indigenous groups of people is, and that it often requires a white comparison group to achieve publication (Buchanan, Perez, Prinstein & Thurston, 2021).

In addition to this systemic racism, hegemonic psychological scholarship also displays a reliance on colonial epistemics and a resistance towards epistemic decolonising. Historically, psychology has drawn from and worked to 'scientifically' 'legitimise' white supremacist ideologies. As Oksana Yakushko (2019) reminds us, "Western academic psychology has been influenced by and closely affiliated with eugenics" since its very inception and been defined "by its originators as the 'science of racial betterment.'" (Yakushko, 2019, abstract). The eugenicist role of psychological research has been scantly acknowledged in accounts of Minority World and white psychology, although Yakushko and many others trace its place in the establishment of empirical psychological methods and applied theories. The continual influence of these origins within the discipline, and continues to enjoy prominence under the guise of biologised differences and bioessentialisms, have been widely intervened against by critical psychologists from the Majority World, but remain minimally acknowledged and resisted by the discipline's structurally advantaged geographies and areas of research.

Not only does psychological research have a fraught history with under-researching race and racism. Psychology *as a discipline* has a long-standing and contentious history with *producing* race and racism. As a discipline, globally, psychology has been guilty of extensive epistemic violence in its protection of and contribution to ideologies of white supremacy (Nicholas & Cooper, 1990) and prescriptive normativities—normativities that have served to oppress, marginalise and pathologise 'difference'. As Kessi and Boonzaier write, "types of psychological studies served to legitimise the institutionalisation of racialized, classist, and gendered population control policies, education programmes, and general racializing beliefs about African people in the United States and globally" (2018, p. 2). It bears mentioning that, in addition to the psychology's participation in producing and legitimising racialised and racialising

lexicons of knowledge, the discipline has also perpetuated a complicity with oppressive heteronormative, transphobic, homophobic and ableist cultures and epistemologies in which the naturalised, normalised viewpoint is almost always that of a white, straight, cisgender, male-identified, masculine-presenting, ablebodied, North American, Christian positionality. A stark example of these prescriptive and oppressive tendencies within psychology's construction of gender is the discipline's *continued* pathologisation of queer and trans identities and experiences, most acutely and alarmingly expressed in the cisgenderism that continues to regulate even the recent construction of genderqueer and trans identities as disordered through the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders's latest edition's (DSM-5-TR) criteria for gender dysphoria. For a more in-depth critique of these oppressive and normative registers within psychology as they pertain to the queer body, see for example Pam Alldred and Nick Fox (2015).

As noted by Roberts and his team earlier (Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie & Mortenson, 2020), social psychology is one of the mainstream disciplines that has engaged research on race the most. In the section below, I will therefore detail alternative positions on the psychological study on race and racism within social psychological scholarship. First off, I will look at social cognitive models. Then I will look at intergroup theories and their contribution to the conceptualisation and study of racism. Then I will look at critical psychological approaches, within which I place my own research. As a small caveat, I want to add that the scholarship with social psychology on prejudice and racism is extensive and the following short overview by no means represents an exhaustive review or even a review that does justice to the scope and diversity within the field.

Social cognition models and intergroup theories

Social psychological theory goes back more than 100 years as a formal discipline. Since the mid-1950s, sparked by the wounds of World War II, European social psychologists have sought to explain the origins of racial prejudice and discrimination through intergroup theories. By the 1980s, these efforts had developed into a focus on

the role social identities play in the construction of racially discriminatory views or behaviour. For example, social identity theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 1980s (see for example Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1975; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987), examines patterns of how intergroup prejudice and discrimination become generated in response to different social and political conditions. In particular, it emphasises the processes of making distinctions between groups—the ones we belong to and the ones we don't—and the ways in which we define ourselves positively as members of these groups. When we categorise ourselves as a group member—our ingroup—we start to produce comparisons with other social groups—our outgroups—and these processes work to inform our conceptualisation of our self. In other words, our identity is produced on a concurrently individual and group level or our identity of self is group membership-dependent. Once we perceive ourselves as members of a particular group, social identity theory emphasises that we will be driven towards making evaluations of our own and competing groups, and that we are inherently motivated to construct a positive image of the group we belong to.

More contemporary social psychological efforts to theorise racism have been influenced by the social constructionist turn in social psychology (Gergen, 2001, 2009) and emphasises the reciprocal influence between individual person and society, and works to examine subtler, more covert and everyday behaviours and attitudes through which discrimination is constructed and reproduced. This has led to social psychological scholarship on implicit measures to identify and quantify indirect or subtle racial bias (Greenwald, Nosek & Banaji, 2003). For example, for more than 20 years, the Implicit Association Test (which can be accessed through this link) has measured response latency using subliminal primes to test the strength of association between social categories like 'black' and 'white' and 'positive' and 'negative' trait characteristics. Slow response to 'black' and 'positive' traits and fast response to 'white' and 'positive' traits is interpreted as proof of implicit bias against black people. or prejudice towards coloured people. Yet the individual results that have been published suggest that the test-retest reliability for the Implicit Association Test is too low for it to be safe to use in real-world

settings (Lane, Banaji, Nosek & Greenwald, 2007), and it remains untheorised how implicit bias, as measured by this test, affects real-world racism.

To sum up, social psychological research on unintentional racial biases, group competition, group identity processes, and group dominance all provide a useful lens through which to understand and situate prejudice as processes that develop within a cognitive or group context. Despite their emphasis on social contexts, however, these theoretical frameworks locate racialisation at the level of cogninitioncognition, and individualise the process of racialisation through psychological phenomenon like prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination. Through these social and cognitive theorisations, racism becomes operationalised as something individuals do - in or outside of or in response to groups. By locating the driving force of racism in the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of biased and prejudiced individuals, these theories have the effect of individualising the production of racism, whilst obscuring the structural and systemic ones. Mainstream understandings of racism in psychology also tend to depart from a presumptive standpoint of colourblindness (Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008) and emphasis on how sensitivity to racism is associated with negative outcomes (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). These modes of conceptualising racism locate the 'problem of racism'—perceiving it or enacting it—in the behaviours and attitudes of individuals whose cognition, implicitly or explicitly, is configured as abnormal: either especially biased or especially prejudiced. According to Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan (2010), this personalising and individualist reading prevails in Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic settings, informing both (white) laypersons' and psychological science's conception of racism as an individual-level phenomena (for example Adams, Edkins, Lacka, Pickett & Cheryan, 2008; Sommers & Norton, 2006). This study, on the other hand, takes the critical psychological view that racism is something that is not simply done by, but also assigned to individuals, with a view towards tackling the dialectic relationship between what is produced and maintained on an individual, everyday level and how these productions flow to and from the systemic and institutional. Rather than locating racism in either the systemic *or* the individual, this study takes the integrative approach of

locating racism in the necropolitical and dialectic space between the two: the racialised and racialising exchange between the everyday and structures; between micro and macro; between embodied and systemic violence; between politics of life and death; living and dying; and between protection and abandonment.

Critical psychological research on racism

Critical psychological approaches take the view that racism is an interactive and discursive practice that legitimates power and exploitation in formal and everyday discourse. Critical discursive approaches within critical psychology theorise our discursive practices as products of systemic and political inequalities as opposed to cognitive products. The analytic concern within critical psychological approaches to racism, then, is not the racist individual, but the discursive constructions and configurations we reproduce and maintain, which are regulated by sociopolitical processes. Some of the most illuminating and generative contributions to decolonial and critical psychological research on race and racism, and into and against the general coloniality of knowledge within hegemonic psychology, have come from black scholars who work from and with the margins of psychology and academia (see for example Karenga, 1992; Palmary and Barnes (2015)). There are also emerging and important developments of an African psychology within South Africa (see for example Ratele, 2017), as well as emerging efforts towards Pan-Africanism and Psychology (see for example Kessi, Boonzaier & Gekeler, 2021). A growing body of work in this area also seeks to document the connections between discourse and racism (see for example, Painter, Kiguwa & Bohmke, 2013). Unlike cognitive approaches that tend to employ quantitative methods, critical and decolonial psychological approaches tend towards qualitative data that aim to capture racism in everyday life (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). One available and viable framework within critical psychology that could have been used for the study of race and racism is the cultural-psychological framework. When racism is theorised through this particular framework, according to Salter, Adams and Perez (2018), racism becomes operationalised as both “the budding product of psychological subjectivity and the structural foundation for dynamic reproduction of

racist action." (p. 151) They go on to explain that three key insights on the psychology of racism are derived from utilising this cultural-psychology framework: "(a) dynamic reproduction of racist action can be found embedded in the structure of everyday worlds, (b) people inhabit cultural worlds that afford or promote particular racialized ways of processing and seeing the world, and (c) people shape, produce, and maintain racialized contexts through their selected preferences, practices, and actions." (Salter, Adams & Perez, 2018, p. 151) This framework, which locates racism in everyday worlds, could have been a fit for a study that wants to examine how racism gets expressed through technologies of the everyday. One of the advantages of this framework is its acknowledgment of the extent to which racism is embedded throughout contemporary society in practices, artifacts, discourse, and institutional realities without absolving individual people from the responsibility to resist racism interpersonally. Instead, as a framework it suggests, in alignment with the political commitments of this study, that energies should be directed "toward identifying and dismantling the cultural-psychological structures that are the source of racial injustice in the first place." (Salter, Adams & Perez, 2018, p. 153) However, as this study employs critical discourse analysis as its method, and as I am interested in drawing out some of the connections between everyday discourse and deadlier mechanisms of necropower, I argue that a necropolitical framework is better suited to such an examination. With critical discourse analysis as the method of this study, and with necropolitical theory's debt to Foucault and its Foucaldian underpinnings, there is good reason to pair the two, as necropolitics lends itself well to be examined and interpreted through critical discourse analysis.

Meanwhile, we continue to live In a time of pandemic crisis, and in one of global racial reckoning. Psychology as a discipline has both the opportunity and the ethical responsibility to face this conjecture and reckon with and dismantle our discipline's racist and oppressive legacies by tending to the urgent need for psychological research projects that disrupt and decolonise psychology's understandings of race and racialisation. Whilst the theories detailed above of cognitive, social and individualised explanations for the perpetration of racial violence provide noteworthy explanations around the aetiologies of individualised prejudice—and without meaning to minimise the

harmful role individual cognition and aversive racism do play in the psychology and enactment of racism—there are clear and problematic limitations to the individualist explanatory model for racism as an issue that is located only inside the mind of an individual. The most glaring problem with the individualist approach, whether it be subtle (e.g., microaggressions; Sue, 2010), ambivalent (e.g., aversive racism; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), unconscious (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), this model conceals—or worse, (re-)produces—the systemic, structural, political and socio-cultural practices of violence that perpetuate and maintain race as real. Critical discourse analysis and necropolitics are only emerging as a conjoined method and theory, with the majority of the preliminary research of this kind responding to the haunting inequalities of COVID-19 (Smith, 2022). As Whitney Pirtle and Tashelle Wright (2021) note: “The pandemic reveals. The fact that our unequal society produces unequal health is not a new revelation; rather, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has brought the historically rooted inequities of our society to the forefront, and we have now all been forced to confront the cold, bare, and persistent ugliness of unequal death” (Pirtle & Wright, 2021, para. 1) It is my hope that the theoretical framework as a novel psychological approach to the study of racism, in connection with a critical discourse analytical methodology, will be of use for future research that seeks to shed light on these ongoing deaths and devastations—discursive, pandemic, planetary—and the uncountable human cost of these, as well as the larger implications for our shared survivals and liberation.

Necropolitics

Necropolitics, broadly, refers to the many ways in which state powers, understood largely as governments and politics, regulate and differentiate human life and the values and worth that are assigned to human lives. Originally coined by Achille Mbembe, at first he applied necropolitics to conditions in which life itself is premised on dying, under which life is folded into the powers of death. The cases Mbembe drew on are the postcolony, slavery, apartheid in South Africa, colonies, plantations, war zones and the so-called ‘War on Terror’. In his seminal work, *Necropolitics* (2003; 2019), he wrote that

“the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die […]. To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power.” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 11) For Mbembe, politics is explicitly conceived of as “the work of death” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 16) and sovereignty or power as an expression of “the right to kill” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 16) and assign lives to dying. A key preoccupation for Mbembe in this original formulation of necropolitical thought is “under what practical conditions is the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death exercised?” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 12) In other words, how does the capacity to define who lives and dies, who matters and who doesn’t matter, who is worth saving and who isn’t, arise? Under what conditions are necropolitical power constructed, maintained and strengthened? How does necropower take hold of certain bodies and how does it expose them to conditions that make life highly dangerous and precarious?

Mbembe’s notion of necropolitics is an expansion or extension of Michel Foucault’s notion of biopower and biopolitics (Foucault, 1990, 2007, 2008), which Mbembe argued are “insufficient to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” and necropower. Mbembe’s notion of necropolitics also builds on Georgio Agamben’s (Agamben, 1998, 2005) work on homo sacre and the concept of a state of exception, which is examinations into the state capacity to withdraw protection of certain lives in the face of perceived existential threats. According to Mbembe’s analysis, the right to create conditions for life itself—*make live* (Foucault, 2008)—and the right to leave others to die—*let die* (Mbembe, 2003)—did not capture the formulations of power in colonised contexts, in which authorities of power expressed themselves not simply by ‘letting’ people die, but by exposing people, including a country’s citizens, to conditions so damaging and dangerous to health that people will inevitably and ultimately die (Mbembe, 2003).

One aspect of Mbembe’s exploration that is of particular interest to this study is his descriptions of how necropower is used to produce what he calls death-worlds in which “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to

living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*" (Mbembe, 2019, p. 92; emphasis in the original). By linking racialisation and politics of race to necropolitics, he pushes his argumentation further than Foucault. To Foucault, racism is understood as a direct expression of biopolitics and biopower, in which those who are brutalised by racialisation are brutalised in the name of life, and in the name of maintaining the life of the population. Mbembe, on the other hand, suggests that necropower attaches "a shadow" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 21) to the bodies of those brutalised by racism. Mbembe details this in particular regard to slavery and slaves, but this study uses this concept of bodies imbued with shadow, of shadowed bodies, that linger between death and life, in what Mbembe calls "in a state of injury, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty (...)" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 21) and in "a form of death-in-life" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 21) to elucidate how discourses on African nations and bodies are produced by Danish mainstream media during COVID-19. Indeed, it is my assertion that the pandemic does, in many aspects, resemble a large-scale, protracted Mbembian state of injury and death-in-life, which is why necropolitical framings lend themselves so well to an inquiry into the conditions and effects of this particular conjuncture in time. As Mbembe himself remarked at the beginning of COVID-19, this pandemic has brought the necropolitical to the surface in vivid and graphic detail (Mbembe, 2020).

Mbembe further elaborates on this analysis to include the relationship between race and necropolitics in the context of colonial occupation, in which the colonised bodies are relegated to "a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26), in which these bodies neither possess life or death, but exist in between. It is a relegation that happens across a multitude of areas: Not only are the colonised ontologically pushed into the third zone, but they are also socially relegated, as well as politically, spatially, culturally and economically. This relegation is particularly pertinent to this study, as I argue that this relegation as a necropolitical technique can be transplanted onto and witnessed in the discursive construction of African bodies and nations in Danish mainstream media during COVID-19.

Importantly, necropolitical notions make the assumption that there are a number of so-called technologies that advance these ultimately lethal processes of violence and attach them to certain bodies and nations along certain lines. To Mbembe, and to the interest of this study, these lines are primarily racialisation and racism. Although outside of the scope of this study, Mbembe also concerns himself with lines of capitalist subjugation, which line up with Mbembe's debt to Foucauldian thinking, which demarcates and subordinates existence along borders of the nation and body. This subordination of everything to capitalist necropower is essential for the production and maintenance of a "sacrificial economy" (Smith, 2022, p. 27) that advances illness and death along racial and class lines. This is a position that assumes that the necropolitical world we live in, inspired by Agamben (2005), is one where the political order is reproducing itself as a form of organisation for death almost all across the world, and one in which Thom Davies, Arshad Isakjee and Surindar Dhesi's (2017) hidden violences of the contemporary world order are surfacing. This study departs from this assumption, and takes as its central aim to lay bare some of these hidden violences and to expose some of the discursive constructions that participate in legitimising the relegation of black bodies into ontological, epistemic and material 'death-worlds'.

As Ege Selin Islekel puts it, however, since its original conception, "necropolitics has gained a life of their own: from racialized death to queer death, from states of exception to war zones, to femicide and trans murders, necropolitics as a conceptual tool is used to analyze not only the overwhelming presence of death, but also the multifarious ways in which its organization and regulation constitutes the defining characteristics of the face of the contemporary political sphere." (2022, p. 1). It is within this life-of-their-own, or what Sumba (2021) calls necropolitics *'at large'* and what Islekel (2022) calls 'metaphorical necropolitics', that I place my own advancement of a necropolitical framework. In keeping with emerging research that increasingly works to examine necropolitical theory and discourses unequal distributions of death during the pandemic, I do not utilise Mbembe's necropolitical framework in its original formulation, as I do not concern myself with formulations or sites of literal dying or literal weapons and annihilation. Instead, I draw on some of the reworkings and expansions of the

understandings of necropolitics by mapping and examining the everyday necropolitical discourse on ‘Africa’ in the current COVID-19 pandemic. By drawing on news media representations, this study will provide a conjecture that argues for the importance of everyday discourse in the production, maintenance and strengthening of necropolitical dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is my argument throughout this study, as is being increasingly theorised by applying Judith Butler’s (2004, 2009) ‘precarious life’ and Rob Nixon’s (2011) ‘slow violence’ framework to the everyday (see for example Mayblin, Wake & Kazemi, 2020), that necropolitics offers up new insights as a generative theoretical framework when we train its lens not just on the global and supranational structures, but on the figures and ‘death worlds’ produced and legitimised by everyday discourse. I argue that it is through repeated and normalised everyday discursive constructions of enduring states of acceptance of necropolitical brutality that conditions are allowed to continue existing and thus creating zones wherein people are exposed to conditions not conducive to living but ‘slow death’. I will review necropolitics and ‘precarious life’ in a later section.

Necropolitics and COVID-19

To provide a more detailed review of how necropolitics relate to the specific phenomenon COVID-19 discourse and media representations of ‘Africa’, the following section will explore this recent emergence of scholarship that works to examine and explain pandemic outcomes and consequences through a necropolitical strategy of analysis. As mentioned in the previous section, this study utilises Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics at large (Sumba, 2021). Even though this study employs a metaphorical and expanded reworking of Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics, it is worth noting that scholars of the emerging area of pandemic studies point to COVID-19 itself as a the kind of “practical condition” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 12) globally under which Mbembe’s original preoccupation with “the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 12) has been exercised. Pandemic vaccine gaps, for example, are being examined as evidence of a global necropolitical regulation and differentiation of human life and the values and worth that have been assigned to human lives (Ozgug,

2021; Levine & Manderson, (2021) Necropolitics at large is a more generalised concept of necropolitics that, according to Sumba (2021) himself is concerned with “negligence, acquiescence, and utter disregard for the fatal implications of global inequality.” (p. 48) I would like to add here that in addition to negligence, disregard and acquiescence, I am interested in examining how discourse is applied and developed to actively justify and naturalise these inequalities, to mythologise them as though they are ‘a-priori’—acquired entirely independently of any particular experience—as opposed to politically and socially constructed through our humanly governed and controlled systems. Further, according to Sumba the ‘at large’ suffix denotes “the dispersal of necropolitics in time and space” (p. 48), which this study takes a particular interest in exploring by reading necropolitical dispersal in time and space against disability theoretical concepts of crip time and space. Indeed, Mbembe himself recently tied his theory to the exploration of pandemic inequalities, remarking that COVID-19 gives all of us the power to kill, which lockdowns attempt to regulate (Mbembe, 2020). In other words, COVID-19 has revealed and dispersed necropolitical structures in time and space, from macro- to microstructures, from institutional to everyday settings, resulting in what we might call ‘ordinary’ or ‘everyday’ necropolitics. It is the discursive production of these ordinary, mundane necropolitics I seek to examine in this study.

COVID-19 represents a stark and transformative event in global research history. It is one that researchers and research communities globally have turned their attention to at an unprecedented rate, and it has triggered an unprecedented mobilisation of the research community. Cai, Fry and Wagner (2021) found that a staggering 87,515 publications on COVID-19 were published between January and October 2020. WHO continues to gather the latest international multilingual scientific findings and knowledge on COVID-19, and its relationships to a multiplicity of phenomena and topics, from public health issues to social determinants of survival rates during the pandemic to racism. The global literature referenced or cited in the WHO COVID-19 Research Database is updated everyday from Monday to Friday. The database currently contains more than half a million texts. This doctorate is a study on COVID-19 and how pandemic narratives and discourse configure and produce themselves through and as

necropolitical logics, with a view towards examining how pandemic discourse acts as a constitutive supplement to the production, legitimisation and strengthening of white supremacy in Denmark.

Some of the most widely cited studies that connect necropolitics and COVID-19 have been concerned with the racial/ising and classed dimensions of the pandemic and its unequally distributed fatalities and effects. In *The necropolitics of COVID-19: Race, class and slow death in an ongoing pandemic* (2021), Tony Sandset explores the necropolitical driving forces of how race and class intersect with health disparities during the pandemic, and highlights the pre-existing necropolitical conditions attached and attaching to black, Asian and minority ethnic populations across the UK. In a similar vein, and particularly relevant to this study, Sandset argues that necropolitics should "fix its gaze on the everyday death-worlds" (Sandset, 2021, p. 1413) that "are allowed to continue exciting and thus creating zones wherein people are exposed to conditions not conducive to living but 'slow death'" (Sandset, 2021, p. 1413) through what he calls a 'state of acceptance'. By looking at media representations and health data, he pursues how this 'state of acceptance' allows for pre-existing necropolitical conditions to take on a chronic and inevitable characteristic, which configures the racial disparities in fatalities and negative health outcomes of the pandemic as pre-ordained and acceptable, as a consequence that was anticipated, yet not intervened against. In a widely circulated and influential commentary first published on *Africa Is A Country* in April 2020 ,Christopher Lee makes a similar observation, in which he outlines the emergent necropolitical landscape of the pandemic, in which access to both cross-border mobility and medical care has become even more intensely structured along necropolitical categorisations of citizens and non-citizens. Lee further demonstrates how the concept of necropolitics can be expanded beyond its original formulation—that considered states as the active and intentional producers of 'death worlds', and not in the "de facto way, as seen now during a time of epidemiological crisis" (Lee, 2020, p. 4)—to provide a new strategy for examining the dimensions of this unfolding political moment, in particular the situation of state panic and failure in Denmark and the Minority World at large. The crisis of power that COVID-19 has produced in Denmark underscores the interpretive power that

necropolitics—theory from the Majority World—has for examining and delegitimising the claims and discourses of white supremacist power. In her piece, *Necropoltics versus Biopolitics: Spatialization, White Privilege, and Visibility during a Pandemic* (2021), Carolyn Rouse compellingly reveals a similar necropolitical logic at play by drawing bio- and necropolitics into anthropology to reveal the white supremacy at play during the pandemic, and to theorise the state from the perspective of those who are brutalised by its powers. She asserts that much of the necropolitical violence and brutality that black people have had to endure during the pandemic has come not (just) from the virus itself, but from the public and from a white supremacist state, as well (Rouse, 2021). She leaves us with a haunting image in her juxtaposition of news images from two different protests: one that shows white Americans protesting the lockdown and its ramifications, holding up signs that read: “Don't cancel my golf season” and “We demand haircuts.” (Rouse, 2021, p. 360). She contrasts these photos with signs from another protest around the same time, where black protesters hold up placards that read: “Please don't kill us” and “I can't breathe.” (Rouse, 2021, p. 360) She concludes that the pandemic exposes how people who live in cultural proximity do not inhabit or share the same experiences with state and institutional power.

In another fashion, again particularly salient to this body of work, there is also a recent development of scholarship that seeks to directly connect necropolitical understandings of power during the pandemic with critical discourse analysis. For example, Kandida Purnell elaborates on this, exploring the “raced, classed, and gendered, local-national-global lines along which every body is hierarchically arranged and (in)secured within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.” (Purnell, 2021, p. 6) To this end, she cites Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, which highlights the “reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomenon it regulates and contains” (Butler, 1993, p. 2) to ensure that some will always fare worse than others in the mass death event of a pandemic.

Even though it is tangential to the scope of this study, I would remiss not to mention some of the newly emergent work on necropolitics and COVID-19 in connection to

other, but interrelated areas, that has influenced and expanded my thinking around these connections and how far the necropolitical reach of this moment is. First off, there is the scholarship in relation to economic and market conditions and capitalist logics, exemplified through Mark Howard's mapping of a necropolitical economy (Howard, 2022) that places the market at the very centre of sovereign power during the pandemic, as the logic that organises and regulates who gets to live and die, whilst the state functions as a primary protector of the market—not its people—by administering any violence necessary to keep the market safe—at the literal expense of the safety and security and health of those already most marginalised by social systems by, for instance, easing up on lockdowns prematurely to strengthen the economy. Secondly, there is the work by scholars, such as Lorena Núñez-Parra (2021), who have explored how necropolitical logics drive the disproportionately brutal impact of the pandemic on disabled people, in part due to ableist medical practices and discourses that diminish or deny treatment to those with diverse functionalities and those less able-bodied. It is against the above theorisations that gender's relevance as an interlocking mechanism within and as necropolitics arises and one I will attend to below.

Necropolitics and gender

While Mbembe's necropolitical framework theorises the logic of death as thoroughly racialised, gender and sexuality are not paid much attention as discrete or specific or intersectional mechanisms of power in his original conception. However, as intersectional feminist scholarship informs us, processes of racialisation and mechanism of exclusion rarely, if ever, function free of gender and sexuality as axes around which these mechanisms spin or as assemblages upon which these mechanism are layered. Whilst there are no clear boundaries that establish the genealogy of the political emergence of decolonial and intersectional feminisms across the globe—as Morgan, Busch, Coombes and Rogerson ask in their special issue *Feminist Genealogies: Specific Political Intersections* (2019): "which century? which women? which counter-movements, contests, continents could we count as feminist?" (para. 2)—there are clear inheritances and canonical debts and junctures. One of those clear junctures

is the 1970s in which women of colour and/or queer women in the United States began calling on feminist scholars to recognise our own discriminatory practices and to analyse the intersections of racial, sexual, and gender hierarchies. Later, Audre Lorde's famously published her collection of essays, *Sister Outsider* (1984), in which she challenges racism within women's movements. She writes:

> Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear that it is the task of women of Color to educate white women—in the face of tremendous resistance—as to our existence, our *differences*, our relative roles in our joint survival. (Lorde, 1984, p. 114, italics added)

What Audre Lorde points out here is that the kind of work Mbembe attempts to do through necropolitics, the work to pursue and make visible the ways in which mechanisms of power and death stratify us into protected and advantaged groups and abandoned, neglected and dying groups, also works through and intersects with other additional processes of difference, such as gendered and sexualised differences and forms of domination and control. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term in 1989, defines intersectionality as "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or sexuality dimensions of those experiences separately." (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244) Having since been developed as an influential analytical framework that shifted feminist scholarship, two decades later Crenshaw explains intersectionality as "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects." (Crenshaw, 2017, para. 4). In other words, intersectional thought urges us to consider the powerful ways in which other identities, in this case gendered and sexualised identities, are present and being configured and produced in ways that interlock with and amplify necropolitical mechanisms and regulations of death, and form part of how our value and worth are being produced and attached to us, what our bodies signify in this world, how

or if we are able to access opportunities in life, and to what degree and how we are brutalised violences and relegated to zones of slow or fast death. According to Melissa Wright “the neglect of gender so prevalent in discussions such as Mbembe's limits the political possibilities for subverting the relations of power reproduced through gendered necropolitics” (2011, p. 712). In spite of these undertheorisations, as Islekel (2022) points out, Mbembe’s framework can still be applied as a useful tool in the examination of gendered death and violences. This metaphorical application of necropolitics, much like Zumba’s application of necropolitics *at large*, does present or imply a significant transformation and expansion of Mbembe’s original formulation of his necropolitical framework. But as mentioned previously, this is precisely how necropolitics have been received since their Mbembian birth almost 20 years ago: Through transglobal contestations and expansions and reworkings, the politics of death have gained—quite poetically perhaps—this previously mentioned vibrant and dynamic “life of their own” (Islekel, 2022, p. 1) that situate their potential for examining and subverting powers of death far beyond their original confines.

Two such formulations, that take necropolitics far beyond its first text, and which are of particular interest to this study, is Jasbir Puar’s articulation of queer necropolitics (2007) and C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn trans necropolitics (2022). These articulations allow for necropolitics to be employed through a global queer and transfemininist lens that highlights the role of gendering in conditions of death across the globe, and points to how gender and sexuality formulations and categorisations intersect with and re-vitalises practices and projects of violence on as diverse levels as the everyday and supranational, queering a necropolitical analysis of anything from inner-city gentrification to homonationalist wars on terror.

In her path-breaking work, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), Puar highlights a central tension between biopolitics and necropolitics, stating that “[necropolitics] makes its presence known at the limits and through the excess of the former; the former [biopolitics] masks the multiplicity of its relationship to death and killing in order to enable the proliferation of the latter.” (Puar, 2007, p. 35). In other

words, Puar argues for an interconnection between bio- and necropolitics, as opposed to the delineation often attributed to the two, an enmeshment in which politics of life *and* death unfold together and are dependent on each other. She attends to the ways in which bio-necro registers are inhabited, *at all times*, by power in order to remain ideologically and materially dominant, and takes up queerness as a demonstration of how bio- and necropower interact and collaborate simultaneously. According to Puar, the queer subject is produced, at once, by politics of life and death, by racialising queer subjects and queering racialised subjects. One of her most famous cases is her elucidation of the unsettling connection and linkage between the production of 'Orientalised' terrorist bodies and some queer subjects—the right ones, namely, the ones whose subjectivities intersect with whiteness and liberalism—being allowed and included into the nation state, with proliferation of legal protections and the right to marry and reproduce, whilst other queer subjects. In other words, the inclusion of certain queer subjects links to or depends on or, in its worst reiteration, (re-)vitalises Islamophobic, expantionist right-wing nationalist ideology and the brutalisation of racialised, terrorist bodies. Through her work, Puar demonstrates how necropolitics employs gender and sexuality to enhance its capacity for violence.

Similarly, C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn (2022) *expand and recalibrate* necropolitics by fracturing it through a trans strategy of analysis that brings into view the ways in which everyday death worlds unfolds and intersects with various identities and projects all across the world, on both spectacularised and mundane levels. This study is particularly interested in their development of the connections between mundane and ordinary everyday technologies and death worlds, and how it opens up an avenue for analysing and interrogating how what they call the distinction between valuable and pathological lives that is constructed through the parallel co-constitution of queer subjects who are folded into life, and racialised subjects who are folded into death. (Haritaworn, Kuntsman & Posocco, 2014), as well as C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn's (2013) articulations of a transnational perspective on the systemic violences that lead to conditions of inevitable death for trans people of colour and

provide a framework for examining how trans death works to fracture political and social contexts across time and place.

These formulations are of central value to this study, as they open up necropolitics and create pathways within and away from a necropolitical framework that allow us to think about how, as Islekel puts it, “sovereignty and the state are gendered formations through and through” (Islekel, 2022, p. 6) or that, in other words, necropolitics are gender politics and gender politics are necropolitics. This expansion of the necropolitical framework, to capture formulations of the politics of death as not just inherently racialised and racialising, but also as gendered and gendering, always this study to examine how narratives around the COVID-19 pandemic and ‘Africa’ also deploy gender categories to create a discursive gender-race entanglement that attaches death and dying to simultaneously racialised and gendered bodies. It is against this backdrop that Judith Butler’s theorisations around ungrievable and precarious lives emerge as concepts that are relevant to my study, and which I will detail in the section below.

Necropolitics and precarious life

Across the social sciences, the concept of precarity has been theorised as central to the study of contemporary social challenges. In sociology, ‘the precariat’ describes an emerging category of people (see for example Roy, 2019). In human geography, precarity is theorised as the production of ‘life worlds’ (in tandem with Mbembe’s concept of ‘death worlds’) in which conditions of life are characterised by insecurity and uncertainty (Waite, 2009). Psychological discussions on precarity are strikingly absent, despite Michelle Fine describing precarity as an inherently psychological idea, being “the sense of the predictability of the unpredictable, the experience of contingency and fear, (and how) the deep embodied sense of insecurity is (…) existential and affective, and it’s in all of our lives” (Fine, 2015, keynote address). The scholarship of Judith Butler (e.g. 2004, 2016, 2020) and Butler’s interrogation of these questions provide one of the most central contributions to the interrogation of the advancement of vulnerability, grievability and precarity as political regulations. I highlight Butler’s work on precarity

and vulnerability, as it is of key relevance to this study's interest in advancing an understanding of the discursive distribution of grievability and precariousness during the pandemic.

With this, Butler challenges conventional understandings of vulnerability as something intrinsic to a particular body or population. According to them, rather, the human body is never vulnerable in isolation or by itself, but always vulnerable to extrinsic forces, to structures, situations, people, that may inflict violence or harm upon this body or, conversely, protect it and give it life and nourishment (Butler, 2020). They point out that the degree to which a body or group of bodies are exposed to the risk of either harm or loss of life is not equally distributed. They write that "lives are supported and maintained differently, and there are radically different ways in which human physical vulnerability is distributed across the globe. Certain lives will be highly protected, and the abrogation of their claims to sanctity will be sufficient to mobilize the forces of war. Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as 'grievable'" (Butler, 2004, p. 32). Rather than equal or random distribution, vulnerability and Butler's distinction between whose lives are configured as grievable and whose lives are configured as ungrievable are produced along systemic and structural regulations of power. Racism, capitalism, sexism and ableism produce conditions that place certain bodies in a perpetual state of risk, rendering their lives "precarious" and ungrievable and invulnerable through relentless dehumanising discourse, whilst placing other bodies in a state of relative protection (Butler, 2020). This discursive violence, that produces grievable and ungrievable lives, is a violence that runs across all levels of society. Butler alerts us to the notion that discourse itself "affects violence through omission" (Butler, 2004, p. 35) and to the notion that those who are rendered ungrievable have already suffered what they call the "violence of derealisation" ((Butler, 2004, p. 35) that produced them as sub- or unhuman long before loss of life to racial violence. Indeed, Butler argues that these discursive insensitivities to the suffering of others is one of the central mechanisms through which the violence of dehumanisation can be accomplished. This study draws on these concepts and notions of grievability and precariousness—of discourse as a type of violence through omission—to advance a

necropoltitical discourse analysis of how Danish mainstream media configures 'African' lives, and whether they are rendered as grievable or ungrievable, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to examine the ways in which pandemic discourse naturalises and strengthens insensitivity to human suffering. Hugo Canham (2021) makes an important contribution to the expansion of Butler's concepts around grievability and mourning and black death in his in the context of the pandemic in his 2021 article, *Black Death and Mourning as Pandemic* (2021), where he explores how black life was already cast as contagious long before the pandemic. Casting and producing certain bodies as more precarious leads us to casting and producing certain spaces as more dangerous and assigning geography as a marker of danger, vulnerability, undesirability, and threat to some bodies. Another means through which violent precariousness interlocks with racialisation and is attached to the body is through mechanisms of migration. Below I will detail how necropolitics and migratory mechanisms relate to this study.

Necropolitics and geopolitics

In 2018, Achille Mbembe wrote on the idea of a borderless world. He suggested that "[the] capacity to decide who can move, who can settle, where and under what conditions is increasingly becoming the core of political struggles. (...) As the 21st century unfolds, a global renewed desire from both citizens and their respective states for a tighter control of mobility is evident. Wherever we look, the drive is towards enclosure, or in any case an intensification of the dialects of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, a dialectics of opening and closure" (Mbembe, 2018, para 1). A year and a half later, as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes in his early decolonial reading of the pandemic, the world has responded to a pandemic "through territorial/national solutions with re-bordering being the key methodology" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 374) and by "[closing] borders to a virus that does not respect any border (...)" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 374) Indeed, COVID-19 and the paths it cuts through our world have highlighted and exposed how public health intersects with and becomes regulated through racialised geopolitics.

In his article, De-confining borders: towards a politics of freedom of movement in the time of the pandemic, Charles Heller (2021) explores some of these stark shifts in bordering practices, migration and global mobility that have been brought about by or during the pandemic. He argues that we are witnessing what he calls “an enduring ‘global mobility apartheid’ which uses citizenship and visa restrictions to police the differential access to mobility founded on race and class” (2021, Heller, abstract), and that this ‘mobility apartheid’ has been “supplemented by a fluctuating ‘sanitary apartheid’, seeking to separate populations designated as at risk of COVID-19 infection from those designated as COVID-free.” (2021, Heller, abstract) He goes on to point out how border violence has erupted as an effect of these. This study pursues a much more widely cast conception of pandemic border violence, namely that border violence and discourse during the pandemic is not just at the border, but of border itself; that border(ing) itself functions as a necropolitical force that politically, socially and discursively asserts who can access life-sustaining health care and who must be abandoned in or relegated to zones of despair and death. As Harsha Walia tweeted in 2021: “Crisis is not at the border, but of border itself. Border casts racialized people as perpetual outsiders, erases Indigenous nations, reproduces anti-Black racial order, segments working class, is ideological basis for all deportations, & maintains global apartheid” (Walia, 2021).

Additionally, there is a growing body of work on the experiences of border and migratory politics and issues during the pandemic, with a particular view towards tackling how mechanisms of rebordering have intersected with public health, politics, mobility in ways that have interlocked with pandemic regulations and further exacerbated the precarious and necropolitical dimensions of borders under the pandemic. Luiza Bialasiewicz (2021) describes how the pandemic has ushered in what she calls “a new doctrine of ‘health security’” (Bialasiewicz, 2021, para. 1) in which “global cartographies of danger” produce and strengthen divisions between “healthy and unhealthy, ‘risky’ and ‘less risky’ spaces and peoples” (Bialasiewicz, 2021, para. 1), which are used to bolster and strengthen border regimes and racialise citizenship. These are divisions that mobilise and reinvigorate old and enduring colonial and necropolitical separations between those

who belong to the world of life and protection and health, and those who get pushed to the world of death and abandonment and disease. Further, in their article, Interventions in critical health geopolitics: Borders, rights, and conspiracies in the COVID-19 pandemic, political geographers Sturm, Mercille, Albrecht, Cole, Dodds & Longhurst ask: “Who has the power to decide which restrictive measures should or should not be implemented to achieve public health aims? Who decides on the spatiality and temporality of those measures? Who benefits and who loses from specific mobility controls?” (Sturm, Mercille, Albrecht, Cole, Dodds and Longhurst, 2021, p. 5) These questions lead us back to a bio- and necropolitical sphere, in which politics connect with medicalisation or, more precisely, a space in which the medical is politicised and politics are medicalised. This is something Foucault himself examined in *The Politics of Health* (1980), in which he suggested that the separation of the medical and the political is, in and of itself, a political separation. Departing from this, Sturm, Mercille, Albrecht, Cole, Dodds and Longhurst (2021) explain how “critical health geopolitics examines how geopolitical power—real, imagined and represented—manifests itself in relation to issues of health, disease and healthcare (...) [and] represents a constellation of social, spatial, and discursive practices, operating through medical regimes and health care systems, that border and define places and identities” (Sturm, Mercille, Albrecht, Cole, Dodds & Longhurst, 2021, p. 1). How, in other words, does medical practice and public health fuse with governance and state-making, and how do these practices intersect with processes of racialisation?

It would be impossible to talk about borders and geopolitics during the pandemic without talking about migratory politics, identities and experiences, and how migrants are constructed and portrayed at this conjecture. According to an emerging body of work on migration and race during the pandemic, the age-old racist trope that portrays migrants as ‘threats’, and which has its roots in foundational logics of colonialism and state- and nation-making, has been reinvigorated with alarming intensity since the beginning of COVID-19. In their article, *Migrant Racialization on Twitter during a border and a pandemic crisis*, Maria Avraamidou and Eftychiou (2022) detail how social media discourse during COVID-19 reinforces migrants as racialised others and assigns what

they call “the Eurocentric frame of violent/male/inferior other who could spread a deadly virus” to refugees and migrants (Avraamidou & Eftychiou, 2022, p. 246). Their observations illustrate how the pandemic interlocks with migration in ways that reinscribe what she calls “the racialized, Eurocentric representational field on migrants from the Global South.” (Avraamidou & Eftychiou, 2022, p. 246) These productions align with Kyriakides’ (2017) argument that refugees and migrants in a European context, which is characterised by processes of securitisation, become configured as “victim/pariah, to be ‘saved’ and ‘suspected’’ (Kyriakides, 2017, p. 1).

COVID-19 has proven to be a powerful pandemic that disrupts borders and boundaries and sees a racialisation and radicalisation of migration policies. It is against this geopolitical backdrop, the backdrop of differently situated lives whose worth, mobility and movement unfold differently, and how certain bodies are slowed down or denied access to futurity, that necropolitics and temporalities and the confluence of time and boundaries emerge as dimensions of theory that are relevant to my study. In particular, I look towards these theorisations and examples to interrogate how necropolitical and racialised discourse assign COVID-19 to particular bodies at particular points in time and space and use them to understand attempts to assign the pandemic to ‘Africa’ in Danish mainstream media.

COVID-19 and temporality

COVID-19 has not just restructured our political and social realities, rebordered our nations, and politicised health. It has also changed our temporal landscapes. Normative time, understood as the overarching temporal systems that govern our lives and referred to as ‘chrononormativity’ by Elizabeth Freeman (2010), has been disrupted and reconfigured during the pandemic. Scholars of disability theory and temporality, Ellen Samuels and Elizabeth Freeman, alert us to the reality that COVID-19 has reshaped the temporal landscapes of our world in continually ongoing and unpredictable ways (Samuels & Freeman, 2021) and argue that we now all “live in crip time” (p. 246). Ellen Samuels (2017) explains crip time as a kind of time travel: “Crip time is time travel.

Disability and illness have the power to extract us from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages and cast us into a wormhole of backward and forward acceleration, jerky stops and starts, tedious intervals and abrupt endings. Some of us contend with the impairments of old age while still young; some of us are treated like children no matter how old we get." (Samuels, 2017, p. n). In other words, the pandemic has reorganised temporality for everyone and ushered in a crip temporality that exposes the ableist foundations of the construct of time itself and the regulatory mechanisms that govern time itself. Through lockdowns and institutional and governmental policies that shift how we relate to time and space. For example, Jasbir Puar (2021) has expanded the application of the framework of crip temporality to discuss how the Israeli military has constructed an entire population with mobility impairments, which takes the time of Palestinians as hostage through militarised regulations like roadblocks and checkpoints. Puar concludes that these infrastructural and bureaucratic violences are not just a key aspect of occupation in and of itself, but link to the logics of debilitation and that they ultimately lead to "calibrations of various types of movement render specific stretchings of space and time" (2021, Puar, abstract), what she calls 'slow life', that reinforce the protracted state of terrified waiting for death that the Palestinian population endures. This study looks to Puar's reflections on the construction of 'slow life' during the pandemic as a temporal regulation of violence in order to apply chronopolitics and crip temporality to my examination of necropolitical regulations of pandemic discourse. These reflections lead this review to an overview of the definitions of violence and racialisation that this study utilises.

Violence and racialisation

As this study seeks to elucidate the connections between everyday discourse and mechanisms of necropolitical violence and racialisation, it is important to define what is meant by both violence and race and racialisation in this doctorate. First off, I detail how I instrumentalise the concept of violence in this study after which I will explore how I define race and racialisation.

Violence is a vast, differently defined and widely explored force and phenomenon. The World Health Organisation defines violence as the “intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” (WHO, 2002, p. 4) In their definition, they make a distinction between self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. Likewise, The American Psychological Association defines violence as “the expression of hostility and rage with the intent to injure or damage people or property through physical force”, a form of pathological aggression, or “passion or intensity of emotions or declarations.” (American Psycholological Association, 2023, para. 1). These definitions focus on the harm, on the effects, associated with violence, but they do not address the origins of these harms or the reasons why they are inflicted, and they do not pay attention to victims or perpetrators of violence. In their examinations of violence, feminist scholars have sought to expand on these definitions by distinguishing between and widening types of violence, situating them on interlocking and overlapping continuums, whilst working to elucidate their material and discursive effects, and connecting them to intersectional processes of racialisation, sexualisation and gendering. It is from within these understandings of violence that this study locates itself. In keeping with both necropolitical and feminist traditions, this study relies on a definition of violence as representational and symbolic and as structural. I take a special interest in the connections and linkages between symbolic violence and structural and epistemic violence, as witnessed in the discursive constructions in Danish media during the pandemic that dehumanise bodies and nations associated with ‘Africa’ and blackness, whilst celebrating those associated with Denmark and whiteness. In relation to this, I specifically draw from Sherene Razack’s (2007) argument that we produce and “engage in a peculiar process of consumption” (2007, p. 375) of the representations of violence in order to construct and maintain and strengthen ourselves as either unculpable or valorised in scenarios of violence. She argues that these productions rely on what she calls “stealing the pain of others” (Razack, 2007, p. 375.) through the dehumanisation of victims of violence or suffering through representations of this suffering or violence. She explains how these acts of

producing and consuming representational violence, and thus turning ‘their’ pain into ‘ours’, supplants and exploits their experiences through our participation in a pleasurable process of spectacularisation and objectification of violence and simultaneous construction of superiority. Through this process, she writes, we “[obscure] our own participation in the violence that is done to them” while producing ourselves diametrically as humanitarian (p. 376). While Sherene Razack focuses her argument on representations of the Rwandan genocide, I apply her argument to the necropolitical representation of ‘Africa’ during COVID-19 in Danish media.

I use Zenzele Isoke’s (2015) truncated definition of racialisation, which is a culmination of her own engagement with the term based on a number of other meditations on racialisation. She defines racialisation as “an ongoing process of marking, categorizing, and reproducing human difference through the uneven distribution of life chances within specified geographic time-space continuums.” (Isoke, p. 741) This definition of racialisation is crucial to the advancement of the argument of this study, as Isoke’s definition operationalises race as a fiction that is made real through the application of practices of violence and brutality that regulate and enforce human difference. In line with her and other critical scholarship on race and racialisation, this study positions itself in opposition to the vastly discredited notion of race as a “biological” category, and takes that belief to form part of the very political processes and regulations themselves that mark inequality on the body of some and supremacy on the body of others. In other words, ‘race as biology’ may best be understood as another eugenicist mechanism of processes of racialisation, not its definition. This study traces how discourse contributes to processes of racialisation, which simultaneously create subordinate and superior categorisations and figures whose hierarchy racist ideology works to naturalise. This conceptualisation of race and racialisation as violence is particularly useful in the context of a necropolitical strategy of analysis. In order to deepen the scope of the strategy of analysis, I draw in Judith Butler’s ideas about the performativity of hate speech (1997), applied in this study not to overt acts of hate speech but to mainstream discourse that presumably does not consider itself hateful, in order to examine the performative politics of discourse and how discourse in mainstream media in Denmark

during the pandemic functions not only as discourse *about* violence, but is also itself a discourse *of* violence.

Even though this study examines the subtle techniques of racialisation through representational and discursive violence and necropolitics at large (Sumba, 2021), it is important to mention and highlight that the consequences of race-making are often fatal. The unequally distributed effects of the pandemic across racialised lines, and the widespread brutalisation and loss of life and decreased vitality of people who are most marginalised by social systems and most brutalised by processes of racialisation, whether black, African, brown, Muslim, Sámi, migrant, Greenlandic, indigenous or any of the other guises and terms racial violence works under to cast some as more disposable than others, are more than proof enough of dangerous and deadly powers of racialisation. These deadly powers can be witnessed in anything from the racial disparity in maternal mortality to persistent racial disparities in access to employment. As Hugo Canham notes in relation to the pandemic: “Black bodies have been the site of devastation for centuries. We who inhabit and love these bodies live in a state of perpetual mourning. We mourn the disproportionate dying in our families, communities and the dying in the black diaspora. We are yet to come to terms with the death that accompanied the AIDS pandemic. Tuberculosis breeds in the conditions within which most of us live. We die from hours spent in the belly of the earth where we dig for minerals to feed the unquenchable thirst of capital” (Canham, 2020, p. 1). In Denmark, one of the devastating material manifestations of racialisation and state terror in recent years can be witnessed in the forced evictions of Muslim families with migrant backgrounds in so-called ‘parallel society’ neighbourhoods (The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2022). These are realities that force us to think carefully about how we can acknowledge and disrupt these practices both on an everyday level through new relational solidarities on interpersonal, collective, social and political levels that foster resistance and liberation for all. It is my hope that this study will make a modest contribution towards the delegitimisation and disruption of necropolitical discourse in Denmark.

To conclude this literature review, it would be remiss not to mention works on pandemics and coloniality that precede this particular conjecture and protracted moment of COVID-19. The following section thus takes a brief look at some of the inspirations and intellectual debts to earlier pre-COVID work on the colonial logics and effects of pandemics and the discourses that surround these.

Disease, epidemics and coloniality

In addition to recent and emerging work on COVID-19's specific characteristics, my study also takes inspiration from earlier pre-COVID work on disease, epidemics and coloniality, in general, and more specifically mechanisms that produce and regulate racialisation of disease, as well the narrative constructions of epidemic meanings and their connections to the politics of national identity and national belonging.

White panic over disease as a political and colonial tool isn't new. In the 14th century, Europe systematically perpetrated and murdered Jewish peoples on the perceived grounds that doing so would prevent the spread of the plague. During the witch trials in the Early Modern Period, tens of thousands of women throughout Europe were accused of malevolent sorcery, tried and burnt at the stake as a reaction to crop failure and disease. In the early 20th century, a eugenics movement emerged in Britain and spread throughout Europe, providing the foundations for the racial policy of Nazi Germany. In the early 1980s HIV/AIDS, initially termed GRID (gay-related immune deficiency) by the American general press, was sensationally associated with drug users and, particularly, homosexual men. In 2014, an outbreak of Ebola swept across the West African nations of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and spurred on very pronounced levels of racist panic in comparatively unaffected Western contexts. What ties these events together is not just shared tragedy and staggering death tolls. It is also the social brutalisation, from anti-Semitism to misogyny to homophobia to racism. It's that these are long-standing tropes that configure the queer body as inherently depraved and diseased and the black body as inherently diseased and dirty; that HIV/AIDS has been persistently and enduring configured as 'homosexual' and assigned to queer bodies, whilst Ebola has

been and remains configured as inherently more ‘African’ and in closer literal and figurative proximity to black bodies, even though nothing medically differentiates the vulnerability of any sexual orientation or race to these diseases.

From the earliest conceptions of colonialism, disease has long been weaponised as a colonial tool of marginalisation and brutalisation and it has been intimately woven into the way marginal identities are configured by connecting black bodies to a panic and fear over disease and threats to white health and safety. During colonial rule, one of the mechanisms through which to regulate and dispense control was by assigning disease to the colonialised body and to sexualise and medicalise the black body, what Stoler calls regulations that functioned at “the core of defining colonial privilege and its boundaries” (Stoler, 2002, p. 39). The racist ‘disease threat’ discourse, that continues to portray black bodies as carriers of disease and dirt and contamination, has been a central means to uphold racial hierarchies and carry out colonial politics. At the same time, white bodies have always participated in perfectly juxtaposed racialised norms of ‘innocence’ and ‘purity’. In his 2015 doctoral dissertation, *Sanitizing South Africa: Race, racism and germs in the making of the Apartheid state, 1880-1980,* Zoia explains how the germ theory and sanitisation discourse formed part of legitimising the regulation and control of black bodies by juxtaposing a construction of the black body as inherently diseased with the construction of the white body as inherently pure. Zoia explains that “it would be the black body that was to assume the role of principal germ-carrier for the white colonialists could certainly not blame their (imagined to be) superior selves for epidemic disease. Racism then resulted when a sense of disgust came to characterize white encounters with said black body; a sense of disgust that was given public legitimacy through the science and the social science of the first half of the Twentieth Century that reified racial difference as natural and unchanging” (Zoia, 2015, p. 158). According to Judith Walkowitz (1992), a similar regulation played out when the British Empire implemented its *Contagious Diseases Acts* in 19th Century British Colonies. This act was institutionalised under the guise of wanting to intervene against the spread of venereal disease. The act made it permissible for the British government to arrest anyone who was suspected of being a prostitute and perform unauthorised,

non-consensual medical tests on them. In both Zoia's example from the makings of the Apartheid state, and Judith Walkowitz (1992) example of the British Empire, as Stoler (2002) puts it, "the question of who would be a 'subject' and who a 'citizen' [converges] on the sexual politics of race* (p. 133), as well as colonial regulations of disease and the racialisation of disease that produces some bodies as carriers of disease and others as free of disease as central to the makings and logics of sovereign power, as well as national identity and belonging. This 'threat' discourse has been reinvigorated with alarming intensity during the pandemic. This study looks to these examples to trace the colonial roots of notions about 'disease' and 'contamination' and their connections to productions of body and nation, as they are being reproduced and revitalised in contemporary Danish mainstream media on 'Africa' during the pandemic. I also look to these works in connection with necropolitical theory to tackle how these productions actively work to configure the black body through a colonial logic that not only positions it as closer to disease, but legitimises and naturalises the black body's proximity to death.

Lastly, I have looked towards Simukai Chigudu's (2019) exploration of the politics of cholera, crisis and citizenship in urban Zimbabwe as they relate to the outbreak of 2008/09. Chigudu's work asserts that disease narratives told during and after epidemics "may help people cope with the search for order that takes place when sickness shatters their perspectives on daily life." (2019, p. 32) However, competing narratives characterise the same events in quite different ways, thereby inviting highly contrasting sorts of remedial action. In spite of the competing narratives, his interlocutors tended towards situating the epidemic in terms of its broader political and social contexts, what Chigudu calls its political aetiologies (2019, p. 32). He argues that cholera was experienced by his interlocutors intersecting and overlapping crises at once; both a public and economic and political crisis, as well as crises of identity and history. This multiplicity of crises in the narrative constructions of an epidemic that Chigdu points to demonstrates how pandemics are political and are regulated through pandemic politics. In relation to this study, Chidgu's work supports this study's interest in situating and examining the political dimensions of the pandemic, as COVID-19 represents and

produces a multitude of concurrent crises—epidemeological crisis, a social and political crisis, a crisis of time and, I argue, a crisis of white supremacy and of border itself.

4. Methodology and methodological considerations

In this chapter, I present the concepts that are relevant to my methodology, as well as various methodological considerations. First, I introduce my methodological orientation, then I describe the study context and data collection methods. I then address the process of data analysis, which are grounded in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), and disobedient, crip forms of writing. I address intertextuality and chronopolitics, and reflect on the important praxis of citation. Lastly I address ethical concerns and reflexivity.

Exploring racism

Where do you begin to collect data on racism and white supremacy, and how? Two opportunities immediately present themselves: 1. Collect primary and secondary data on how black people experience the effects of racism and white supremacy through interviews and archival data. 2. Collect primary and secondary data on how white people perpetuate racism and white supremacy through interviews and archival data. As a white scholar, it is important for me to respect the boundaries of individuals and what my positionalities allow and prohibit me from doing. For this reason I have not wanted to interpret and examine racist discourse through the direct words of black people. Instead, I decided to pursue an interpretation of racism through the textual and discursive performances of white people. Due to lockdown restrictions making any primary data collection unfeasible, I ended up collecting secondary data in the form of media texts by white people to analyse the perpetration or disruption of racism in order to contribute to a body of decolonial research on the doing and undoing of white supremacy.

What does decolonial research require of a white scholar? How can I *do* decolonial work, do it not as an adjective but as a verb? What does it ask of me and of all of us?

What does it mean to enact decoloniality, not as a noun but as a verb? Shose Kessi, Zoe Marks and Elelwani Ramugondo (2020) propose that decolonial work entails a political and normative ethic and practice of resistance and intentional undoing as well as action to build alternative ways of knowing that transcend epicolonialism and suggest that there are four interrelated, equally important dimensions of decolonising work: “structural, epistemic, personal, and relational” (Kessi, Marks & Ramugondo, 2020, abstract). This study aligns its understanding of what decolonial work is with Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo’s definition. Throughout this dissertation, decolonising aspirations run as a red thread through its theoretical foundation and strategy of analysis, as well as ts methodological and epistemic orientation, and its political ethic.

Additionally, this study takes Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo’s approach to decolonisation to mean that decolonial work functions “[post-disciplinarily]” (Lykke, 2010, originally in relation to gender research): As on the one hand a demarcated field in and of its own right and on the other hand a multidimensional, interdisciplinary field. This study aims to maintain the tension inherent in positioning decolonial work in that way and hopes to explore what it means to define a field as simultaneously clearly and discretely defined as well as characterised by total openness to dialogue across all disciplinary boundaries. What this means is that I position this study in an at-once demarcated and interdisciplinary field: On the one hand, this study places itself within the field of humanities. The area of research is *texts*, a cultural product. This means the study forms part of a long tradition of humanities research in which critical theory is employed to examine how meaning is established in contemporary contexts through cultural outputs and their connections to ideology, sexuality, class, disability, nationality, gender, and race, etc. Even though the material of this study does not include interviews and observations of ‘lived lives’, I take the critical discourse and queer theoretical position that texts and other cultural products form part of the framework of how these ‘lived lives’ can be made possible and can be understood.

The dissertation's interdisciplinary aspect is reflected in the subject areas that it combines: Critical psychology, necropolitics, feminist, queer and crip theory, as well as

linguistics through discourse theory and media studies through analysis of news articles. These disciplines are not meant to be viewed as separate fields, but as one methodological approach to different dimensions of processes of racialised and racialising discourse and are meant to be viewed as a tool that aids in the capture of how race is produced, maintained, negotiated and contested.

Exploring racism through an archive of media texts

The project has two broad aims and employs a multimodal methodology, consisting of archival research, discourse analysis and a crip (Kafer, 2021) and disobedient (Mignolo, 2009) form of writing. Its aims—to capture the discursive configurations of race and racism in Danish media during COVID and to interrogate its implications for Denmark's nation-building project through crip forms of writing—has been pursued through an assembled archive of relevant mainstream media texts.

I chose to study relevant media texts by Denmark's publishing houses for three important reasons: 1. Because COVID-19, in the early days of its outbreak, presented as a media/ted reality. 2. Big publishing houses and their texts remain agenda-defining across the Danish media landscape. 3. For the pragmatic reason that I had access to these texts digitally during lockdown.

COVID-19 is not just a discrete media/ted event. It is a media/ted reality. Media plays a crucial role in its ability to extend into our lives and shape how we understand the world, and how the world's multifarious realities are prioritised and hierarchicalised. During a pandemic lockdown, our reliance on media to deliver and shape our realities intensified. For those of us with enough structurally embedded advantage that we were neither deemed non-essential workers, nor lost our jobs, but were sent home with pay instead, media were one of the primary sources of experience for a few months. I sat in my mother's flat, after having been locked into Denmark, unable to return to South Africa where I live and work, and for weeks during March, April and May 2020, all we did was consume news articles. All our realities, beyond the confines of a home, were mediated

by media and all those realities were configured through a pandemic lens. As much as the early months of the pandemic were a unique and startling event on geopolitical, cultural, social, psychological and infectious levels across the world, it also represents an unprecedented discursive and journalistic event, calling on an investigation of how mainstream media 'texts' addressed and constructed critical social, political and health issues connected to the outbreak, and what pandemic discourse and figures the media promoted or discouraged. Another simple reason I chose discourse analysis of publicly available mainstream media 'texts' is because mainstream media was all I had reliable, continual access to during the years 2020-2021 of data collection. I therefore consider lockdown and quarantine a kind of impermanent, transient methodology unique to those years and conditions, one that made certain things possible and impossible and required a lot of re-thinking and re-structuring of data collection methods. Making the most of confinement is something intimately familiar to queer and disabled people, and therefore a methodological requirement that allowed me to draw on some of my own identities.

Decolonial scholarship "emphasises the performative side" (Le Grange, 2016, p. 10) of research and knowledge production and entrenches itself within schools of critical and political thought. It is therefore pertinent to the decolonial aspects of this study that the research design and format reflect the study's political and ethical commitments. This is why the study proposes to write the analysis in an alternative form of writing, to make the writing go beyond the confines of academic norms, to go beyond aesthetics and rules and intertextuality, to "*do* something" (Eales, 2016, p. 66). By engaging in an alternative form, through which the first two aims are assembled, analysed and disseminated, crip form also functions as the project's analytical and formal enactment of decoloniality.

This project's overarching method for data analysis is critical discourse analysis developed in connection with decolonial and feminist theories and critiques, with the objective being to create a lens calibrated to analyse the production and hierarchicalisation of racialis*ing* discourse. Methodologically, this project is reflective of

an ongoing push to articulate decolonial feminisms and theories beyond their origins in African feminist anticolonial theory in the 1960s and 1970s (Mendoza, 2015), and to apply them to contemporary psychological research. It is also a challenge to unprobed, unexamined and unacknowledged whiteness privileges.

In the spirit of disruption, the very genesis of decolonial theory, this project engages a range of theoretical paradigms, textual materials and multimodal methodological approaches. Decolonial research inherently challenges traditional modes of academic conduct and dissemination: there is no exact formula yet, there is no a priori way to do decolonial research, except the call to practice epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009). According to Mignolo, “decolonial thinking can be done within existing academic structure, but is not a way of thinking that will have enthusiastic support of the administration” (p. 138, 2013). By definition, he elaborates, decolonial research, if done convincingly, does not support existing academic structures, which are largely premised on colonial ideals of knowledge and history and language, and is thus necessarily an endeavor that is disobedient to its hosting structure, and one that can only exist at the margins of the academic institution. Thus, this project, which seeks to do convincing decolonial research, is a project that seeks to at once establish knowledge and delink from white epistemic superiority. It therefore becomes an act of both knowing and unknowing: at once epistemically vulnerable and disobedient. This draws us to the discussion of the study contexts and data collection methods.

Study (con)texts

This study takes place in the middle of COVID-19 and is therefore informed by the pandemic not just in content, but in form and context. Because the emphasis of this dissertation is on quality rather than quantity, the objective of the study is to become what Padgett (1998) refers to as “saturated” (p. 52) with information within the area of research. But studying a pandemic during a pandemic is a complicated task that threatens to oversaturate and requires constant vigilance around the mutually reinforcing feedback loops of environment and research. Because this is a complex

multi-methods study, the design has been both emergent and explorative, as this design is suitable for illuminating depth and unexplored phenomena (Polit & Beck, 2006).

I have assembled an archive of Danish mainstream media coverage of COVID-19 and ‘Africa’ in 2020 to examine how disaster racism functions. The data collection is not meant to be exhaustive of discourses on racialisation in Denmark. The collection, rather, is an archive that offers up the opportunity for analysis of a limited number of contemporary trends and developments. The choice of Denmark as the context for this piece of scholarship—making it in and of itself a national and identitarian field of research—is primarily rooted in my positionality as a researcher. For a more detailed exploration of this, see section on Reflexivity.

By researching Denmark from within South Africa, as both the geospecific location of my institutional affiliation as well as its theoretical grounding, this project aims to disrupt neocolonial pathways of knowledge production from Minority to Majority World and to interrogate the Minority World's marked and unmarked sites of power from decolonial perspectives. As detailed in the introduction, this study is of marked relevance to formerly colonised countries in the Majority World and any population dehumanised by necropolitics. Danish and European nation-securing projects rely on the production of necropolitical agendas that encourage the protection of certain lives—white and Euro-American—while others—black men, women and children and lives in postcolonial zones of abandoment—are left, in the most literal sense, to die. This is not just about Denmark or Europe and it is most decidedly not just about what white journalists write in newspapers about ‘Africa’. This is about who is worthy of life and whose deaths white supremacy not only encourages but depends on for its own maintenance—in Denmark and beyond. It is my hope and ambition that exposure of some of the more mundane, but nonetheless lethal strategies of white supremacy can contribute to intervention against and ultimately undoing of late-colonial world orders and whiteness.

Strategies of sampling and data collection

I collected and interpreted my data iteratively and according to the principles of critical discourse analysis and determined their themes through thematic coding and analysis, as well as a series of case studies. The archival data of Danish mainstream media's coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak of 2020 and 'Africa' has been thematically, chronologically and purposively sampled. The archive I assembled consists of a nine-month period of in-depth, electronic archival collection of articles published by Denmark's eight biggest newspapers. The analysis focuses on the period from March 2020 to August 2020. It is during this time period that public debate concerning pandemic and 'Africa' peaks. The most alarmist and racist speculation and fantasy pertaining to 'Africa' and COVID-19 also occurred within this period. The chosen publications are the most widely consumed and best-selling national newspapers. They vary in both political and ideological orientation. For more on this, see Details of the corpus of 'text'.

The articles have been selected on the basis of content unequivocally covering both the pandemic and aspects relating to Africanity and 'Africa', both as a geography and an idea. News shorts, defined as articles no more than 250 words, have been excluded. This proposed exclusion criteria is due to the fact that most news shorts in Denmark tend to be informative reprints of international media's news snippets. They will not be relevant to this study and its national-discursive field of interest. A sample size of 9539 articles were selected for coding and in-depth analysis. Importantly, the media items that have been examined are only published articles, not online comments. Special attention has been paid to editorials, as I consider them a salient part of the media agenda-setting, which influences how racial discourse gets disseminated, received and configured in Denmark. Below I go through the finer details of the corpus of data.

All the cluster articles I coded were translated from Danish to English by me. I did not technically carry out back translation, or reverse translation, as I speak both Danish and English fluently. But speaking both languages, and doing all the translation myself, allowed me to carry out discourse analysis of all articles both before, *during* and after

translation. In fact, it was during the process of translation, whilst reflecting on what terminology to use for either this or that term, that important parts of the analysis took place. Carrying out discourse analysis of the texts in both Danish *and* English served as an important kind of triangulation and as a way to increase the credibility of the analysis. Throughout the entire process I would move between the Danish and English version of the same text and double-check if my analytical interpretations remained the same in both languages. I attempted to strike a balance between literal and meaningful translation by both looking at the texts word-by-word, as well as keeping a view towards conveying the overall meaning of the text. There were a few instances where literal and meaningful translation proved complicated, predominantly due to some unique grammatical constellations in Danish whose textual sense is difficult to capture in English. In those instances, I did an approximate translation of the noun or adjective, whilst including the original words in Danish in brackets.

Details of the corpus of text

News coverage of COVID-19 starts small and innocuous. The first articles to enter the Danish broadcasting cycle appear at the beginning of January 2020. They all take the form of news shorts that make references to ‘a mysterious virus’ and ‘common cold-like virus’ in ‘Asia’. By 20 January 2020, all major newspapers have picked up the news and have started dedicating more space to detailing this new virus in their printed editions. Tabloids pick up on it in long form a little over a month later when Ekstra Bladet publishes its first long article on COVID-19 on 26 February 2020. From that moment onwards, we witness a dramatic rise in news coverage, one whose intensity is historically unprecedented and one whose ferocity continues for almost the entirety of 2020.

The sampling of this collection of material was carried out through the website infomedia.dk. It is a research database that collects and stores all national and local printed newspapers. Between 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020, the search term COVID-19 yields 262,588 results across all printed media on infomedia.dk. During the

same period, the term corona yields 511,707 results. As these terms are used interchangeably—though with a marked preference towards corona—there must be some overlap in the 262,588 COVID-19-termed articles and the 511,707 corona-termed ones. Searching for both terms simultaneously yields 56,588 results in that same period. In spite of this overlap and others, this is a uniquely monumental media event in Danish history. Between half a million and 700,000 news articles making reference to the same event is extraordinary. This was a critical media event that had no precedent in Danish or global history. For comparative purposes, the 2014 Ebola pandemic, which is considered another major and critical media event, pales by comparison and yields only 23,776 results between 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014.

For my purposes, I have excluded TV and radio, as well as regional and local newspapers and magazines in my sampling. I made these exclusions because I am interested in the overarching national discourse, the most widely consumed texts, disseminated across the country by leading daily broadcast newspapers by major, trendsetting publishing companies. This brought the number of articles down to 331,295 for corona-related searches and 181,254 for COVID-19-related searches. Once I sourced what Infomedia calls ‘long-form articles’, articles that contain more than 700 words, I was left with a collection of 9539 articles. I sorted all 9539 and was left with one large cluster consisting of 3764 articles pertaining to debates around COVID-19 and ‘Africa’. I read these articles closely and mapped them in different ways before extracting the themes and discourses that form the basis of my analysis.

In alphabetical order, below are the five newspapers I sourced my articles from:

- Berlingske Tidende, a conservative-liberal newspaper and one of Denmark’s three biggest publications
- Information, a left-leaning newspaper
- Jyllands-Posten, a centrist-conservative newspaper and one of Denmark’s three biggest publications
- Kristeligt Dagblad, a Christian newspaper

- Politiken, a liberal newspaper and one of Denmark's three biggest publications

I have assembled these articles with the aim to move discussions from psychology's historical fixation on individual experiences *of* racism toward the discursive and structural perpetration of racism and subsequent broad implications for both exclusionary nation-making projects as well as the possibilities of collective culpability in the struggle for human equity and freedom. By qualitatively considering such a large set of purposively sampled data for my project, and triangulating the different texts against each other and doing a number of comparative analyses, I hope to build and contribute towards an alternative historical archive and documentation of a present conjuncture.

Despite the large scope of articles and the variety of the selected newspapers, the empirical data cannot be considered representative of the Danish media coverage of the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak. As pointed out by Sara Ahmed, a collection of data is a "perilous matter" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 14) and to make the claim that the different texts are connected says something about my interpretation rather than about the texts themselves. The very construction of a collection of materials, to act of selecting and categorising and limiting articles, is already an important part of the analysis itself. Sampling *is* interpretation. Data collection *is* data analysis. Translation *is* analysis. For a bibliographic overview of all the in-text quotes from the data sample, please see Appendix A. This draws us to a description of the data analysis methods.

Critical discourse analysis

This section will cover the process of data analysis, which has been grounded in Norman Fairclough's (1992, 1993, 1995) critical discourse analysis. The analysis of data has been based on an "inductive" (Patton, 1980, p. 306) and emergent approach that is tailored towards the identification of discursive patterns and configurations in the data set.

My corpus-based critical discourse analysis of mainstream media articles is particularly

interested in the exposure and unearthing of some of the hidden traces of the tacit, covert, implied and otherwise subtle ideologies and assumptions of the text creators that underpin central constructions within the articles, as well as the creators' representational strategies. In other words, how can race and racism be performed in a text? To reiterate the study's research questions: How do discourses of the African body and nation produced by Danish media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 act as a constitutive supplement to the production of race?

I choose to make use of discourse analysis because I believe that words and discourse matter. They matter in how we construct our worlds and identities and in our attempts to build finely-tuned understandings of how mechanisms of advantage, oppression, exclusion and marginalisation work. Discourse analysis—as an academic movement—rests on a set of long-standing, complex and interlocking political and social genealogies, but is often traced back to an origin within the field of literary studies. Since its conception(s), it has spread across numerous disciplines, much like necropolitical analysis, and is now used *at large*. Indeed, it is this doctorate's assertion that discourse—which is so much more than the sum of its dictionary definitions—and how we use discourse, and how it functions in texts to create and oppress identities, is crucial to the discipline of psychology. The complex interplay between meaning and intention and effect of words, either spoken or written, is an issue that deserves full attention from a psychological, everyday and relational perspective. As Elizabeth Nichols reminds us, "language is code" (2014, para. 2), code in the algorithmic sense, and urges us to evaluate language not on intent, but by results. It is therefore essential, she says, "for us, as citizens of the world, to be aware not only of what we mean, but what others understand." (Nichols, para 17).

There are two major theoretical approaches in the school of discourse analysis. One is the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and the other is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (1992, 1993, 1995). Within their discourse theory framework of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), there is no material and objective reality that sorts groups and people into different classes. Instead, they contend that all observable groups in

society and all identities are the result of processes of a discursive-political nature. It is my opinion that this view amounts to an anti-materialist collapsing of structures, which creates the illusion that all people and all groups and constructs and categories are somehow equal before discourse, that discourse is an ultimate equaliser—something that starts to relativise reality and moves close to a social constructionist view of the world—in which discourse precedes material reality and has the power to undo or create all of it. A more in-depth discussion surrounding constructivist and constructionist debates of ontology other than asserting this—that discourse is powerful and important, but not powerful enough that it is the constituency of our embodied lives—are a little outside the scope of this study. On a more pragmatic level, their position also does not explain what social forces have a greater capacity to impact discursive changes and how and why (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), whilst "[overestimating] the ability of social groups to bring about change through the rearticulation of elements into new social orders" (Rear & Jones, 2013, p. 378). I therefore consider Laclau and Mouffe's stance to be an unhelpful and privileged epistemic position to take that will not assist me in capturing the very structural, very systemic, very material and very hierchicalised and unequal dynamics at play with regards to race and racism.

Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, on the other hand, takes as a foundational axiom that not all groups can or do have equal and equitable access to the kind of discourse that impact hegemonic change and transformation. Broadly speaking, Fairclough's version takes a more politicised and interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis and considers language to be a kind of sociopolitical practice and aims to critically examine ideologies and power relations involved in this socio-political practice. Its main concern lies in producing insights into the way discourse (re)produces power and the way discourse configures, sometimes creating and sometimes resisting, socio-political inequality. In other words, Flairclough's approach does not limit its analysis to specific structures of text or speech, but is characterised by its efforts to systematically and carefully relate discursive elements to structures of the sociopolitical context. By considering signs, language, texts, and verbal communication within their social context, Faircloughian analysis recognises that discourse does not neutrally

report on the world, but reconstructs it. There are constructionist edges to this position, too—indeed, Fairclough calls on us to consider discourse as broadly operationalised as an “active relation to reality” (Fairclough, 1992, 41)—but these constructionist edges are tempered through the insistence on always relating discourse back to a political, material and ideological landscape.

Fairclough provides a systematic framework for the work of connecting these literary micro-level analyses of texts with the sociopolitical macro-level structures through three specific characteristics of discourse: genres, which are ways of acting; discourses, which are ways of representing; and styles, which are ways of being. Through this framework, Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis represents a kind of acting, doing and being in the world. According to Flairclough, the relationship and structure of these three elements, considered in their cultural, social and political contexts, are responsible for the social effects of discourse (Fairclough, 2003). This social effect, however, relies on an audience that either reproduces or resists these particular discourses, making our agency and choice in discursive reproduction a crucial element. Discourse, in other words, is constructed as relationally and foundationally contingent and any study and examination of how discourses function, then, requires a focus on not just the production of discourse, but on its dissemination. A stand-alone piece of discourse cannot be captured and analysed in isolation. Discourse only comes to live, and gains its traction and power, when it acts upon and influences *another* piece of discourse in the act of what he refers to as intertextuality. This study is particularly interested in intertextuality and has paid special attention to the relationships between different discourses, both intratextually and intertextually, both within and across texts, and how they enact and reconstitute each other in a dialectical flow.

In line with Baker, Gabrielatos, Khosravinik, Krzyżanowski, McEnery and Wodak’s (2008) further developments of Fairclough’s work, I relate to “critical discourse analysis [as] an academic movement, a way of *doing* discourse analysis from a critical perspective” (p. 273; emphasis added) rather than a specific methodology. In line with their perspectives, I also do not view critical discourse analysis as *a* method or a single

approach that certain and set methodologies are associated with. Rather, I am inspired by Baker et al.'s suggestions to view critical discourse analysis in terms of its aims, as an emergent approach that can incorporate any method that is adequate to realise the aims of the specific critical discourse-inspired research. This emphasis on the *doing* of discourse analysis—echoed in Fairclough's own acting, doing and being in the world—and its emergent qualities makes it particularly pertinent to this study as it aligns well with the emergence, performance and activism of decolonial work, as well as the social and political and epistemic (re-)doings of a decolonial strategy of analysis.

In summary, as a methodology, critical discourse analysis' ability allows for in-depth examination of discursive form, structure and content—from the very grammar that is being used all the way to social interpretations by broader audiences and intertextual replications—that goes far beyond language. It also facilitates an assessment of how discourse functions and how it acts and, perhaps most important, assessment of what the text is *being asked to do*, explicitly and implicitly, politically and socially. This full-bodied assessment, with its dual focus on form and content and on the co-constituting nature of discursive and political realities, is what makes it such a salient tool in the analysis pertaining to this study.

Performative writing in crip form

> There are many truths.
>
> —Christel Stormhøj (2006, p. 66)

This project rejects 'truth' as something that exists 'in the world', ontologically and epistemically, that scientists can reach and represent. Instead, this study operationalises truth as a shifting and multifarious phenomenon, something that we construct, over and over, socially, relationally, politically, culturally, discursively. Research, from this vantage point, is not a description of the world as it exists, but a

production of worlds and worldviews as the researchers interpret them. Believing that researchers can write from a universal standpoint has been instrumental in promoting the zero-point epistemologies that prevail through Minority World-colonial knowledge production. Reflective of a desire to reject and intervene against these colonial paradigms of knowledge production and dissemination, this study aligns itself with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's (Castro, 2016, in Skafish, 2015) call for an anthropology, and more broadly social sciences, that seeks to move towards multinatalism—beyond the study of different so-called 'world-views', which presumes a single world exists and is accessible to all of us, and on to the study of different worlds altogether as the permanent decolonisation of thought.

Theorising from a decolonial position consists of not merely using but also *doing* concepts around (de)coloniality. One way of putting decoloniality into practice is by enacting epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) in designing and doing new kinds of emancipatory and insurgent research that not only captures but transforms our lived realities. This project also aligns with what Elizabeth Freeman calls a deviant chronopolitics (2005) as well as Manuel DeLanda's non-metric temporality (1991). A deviant chronopolitics envisions relations across time, and between times, whilst nonmetric temporality challenges the assumption that the repetition of units is necessarily composed of identical instants, meaning—as Jasbir Puar (2007) puts it—that "one second is not the same as another second" (p. 22). Taken together, their chronopolitics make time nonlinear and idiosyncratic. What this means for this dissertation is this: That at any given time this text, or any other text, is embedded with multitudes of time. Put simply, this dissertation conjures time itself as nonlinear. As Puar (2007) writes: "Each work has its own time, and times within itself: the time of its writing, the time of its release (…), and the time of the text, of the words themselves, of times and temporalities that intersect with its audience's times (…) that is, temporalities of production and absorption." (Puar, 2007, p. 22)

How to write on racism

For these reasons, to capture the plurality of time and texts and the writing and reading of texts, I have chosen to write and present my analysis in what queer and crip scholar Alison Kafer calls “crip form” (Kafer, 2021, p. 425). Crip form is the insistence on the political dimensions and possibilities of writing and the need to diversify the forms of writing that academic norms consider ‘critical’. It is a call to write against and beyond normative and colonial scholastic representation and make the writing itself performative, the writing itself analytical. According to Pollock (1988) performative writing “collapses distinctions by which creative and critical writing are typically isolated” (p. 80) and troubles traditional texts by inserting creativity and unfamiliarity into the writing and produces new registers of knowledge and ways of knowing. She notes that “performative writing evokes worlds that are otherwise intangible, unlocatable: worlds of memory, pleasure, sensation, imagination, affect and in-sight.” Performative writing, thus, becomes an indispensable decolonial methodology, a way to write about that which is incomprehensible, that which is as-of-yet unknown, and it allows for a space to approach the indefensible and unspeakable aspects of racism. It also radically shifts the idea of legitimated knowledge by challenging white and colonial norms of writing and the borders between ‘rationality’ and ‘emotion’, between ‘knowledge’ and ‘affect’.

Importantly, I have also chosen to write like this because I would not know how else to write about racism and violence. There is so much inevitable reproduction of the very same violences I aim to contest involved in documenting and delegitimising them that I am unable to write about these injuries in any other way. Rather than evolving incrementally and developing my analysis in a linear way, one where the argument slowly advances and more and more important points are made, my analysis chapters resist progressive argumentation and seek to operate more like overlapping conceptual circles, rejecting chronology. Practically and stylistically speaking, I have attempted to achieve crip form in six different ways:

1. By letting the text flow across a numbered sequence with a gap between each number, a style of writing inspired by Alison Kafer’s *After Crip, Crip Afters* (2021).

The text proceeds across numbers and gaps to disrupt the linearity of a monograph and instead create islands of argument that both interlock and delink from the rest of the text, like building blocks or assemblages that can be put together and taken apart.

2. By including a subset of textual quotes from the sample data uninterpreted, and un-embedded in-text, in order for them to function as evidence only and be interpreted as the reader sees fit.

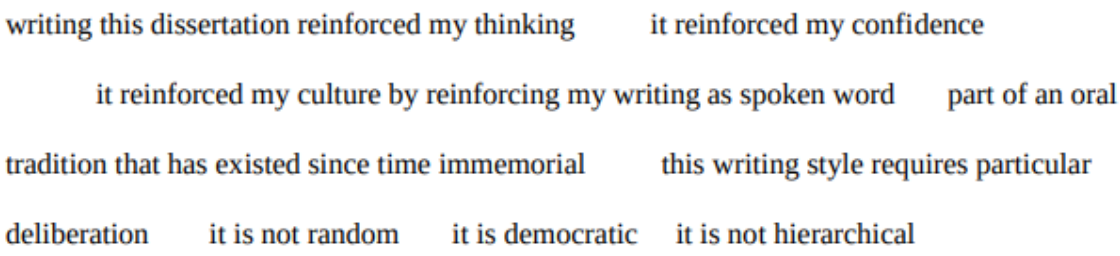
3. By writing in ways that are emotive and intertextual, linking the data and theory to autobiographical memories and associations.

I have done that to echo this project's commitment to Snyman's (2015) epistemic vulnerability in favour of situating myself as "masterly, correcting, or prescriptive" (Puar, 2007, p. 28). It is a further attempt to insist on the unruly aspects of a decolonial methodology that cultivates and puts forward tensions, dilemmas, uncertainties, ambiguities, non-closure, non-clarity and discomfort—what Spivak calls uncoercive rearrangements (2004) and Tuck and Yang's (2014) decolonial refusals—as legitimate outcomes of research and not 'academic failures' to overcome. For the sake of readability, I also introduce each chapter with a note to the reader, in which I restate these stylistic and epistemic commitments.

Though unusual, writing in radically different forms is not without precedent. Lindsay Eales (2016) explores performative and creative styles of writing to capture what she calls "the unspeakable aspects of madness." (Eales, 2016, p. 66) Anne Harris (2010) presented seven video films as part of her dissertation on the educational experiences of Sudanese refugee women in Australia, in which each film accompanies and complements one chapter of the written thesis; Nick Sousanis (2015), who studied the importance of visual thinking in teaching and learning at Columbia University, formatted his doctoral dissertation as a 132-page graphic novel, *Unflattening*, which was published by Harvard University Press; Benjamin Dix (2016), a visual ethnographer,

presented his dissertation on complex human rights testimonies as a graphic novel.

In addition to Alison Kafer (2021), who routinely challenges academic form in her writing and publications, this project also takes inspiration to make the choice to write in crip form and decolonise and liberate formal boundaries from 1) black, queer-feminist mathematician Piper Harron, whose dissertation—*The equidistribution of lattice shapes of rings of integers of cubic, quartic, and quintic number fields: an artist's rendering* (2016) from Princeton University—includes in each chapter a section for 'the layperson', one for 'the initiated', and a third for 'the mathematician'; and 2) First Nation architect and scholar Patrick Stewart's doctoral dissertation, *Indigenous architecture through indigenous knowledge* (2015) from The University of British Columbia, formatted as a poetic narrative with almost no capital letters or punctuation and a consistent privileging of the Indigenous language Nisga'a as a form of resistance to the unthinking acceptance of English language conventions and to "purposely [provide] an oral / aural / visually designed context and thereby [underline] an indigenist research approach … and privilege indigenous knowledges." (Stewart, 2015, p. x)


writing this dissertation reinforced my thinking it reinforced my confidence

it reinforced my culture by reinforcing my writing as spoken word part of an oral

tradition that has existed since time immemorial this writing style requires particular

deliberation it is not random it is democratic it is not hierarchical

Example of Patrick Stewart's (2015, p. xii) doctoral formatting.

Attempting to *do* decolonial research in this way takes us back to Mignolo's (2009) disobedient epistemics where we—as researchers and participants, writers and readers—are in a constant state of transition and interaction. It allows the project to be(come) intentionally anti-linear and creative and emotional and present writing in a way that de-links from and disrupts the epistemic assumption of a neutral and detached observational location from which the world is interpreted—in positions, equally, as

writer and as audience—and instead create a reading experience that is inherently dynamic and interrupts the linearity of a monograph. Working *against* academic norms—of research and writing styles—is one of the ways it becomes possible for an institution of knowledge production whose very genesis and logic is white, Minority World and late-colonial, and which continues to be governed by necropolitical structures, to function as an agent of decolonisation and transformation.

But it is a confronting choice to write like this. There is not much precedent in psychological research and it presents a number of challenges. Its nonlinearity requires careful planning so as not to produce an unmanageable proliferation of branching outcomes. The form is also demanding of the reader, especially in a colonially-mired tradition such as academia. The choice to avoid offering up concrete answers following a progressive argument, infusing the writing with so many unanswered questions and intertextual links, may also be challenging to engage with and considered evasive. That is part of the point. I want to provide a reading experience that is challenging and uncomfortable to a white audience—feeling challenged and uncomfortable whilst confronting racism is the least of its secondary impacts, something we should be absolutely willing to tolerate—and I want to remain evasive and avoidant of the types of prescriptive answers and objective truths colonial psychology is so guilty of historically advancing. How could I want to seek a finality in any of my work? Everything I say is a suggestion and an undoing, an enactment of vulnerability and inadequacy in an attempt to push against and fracture white supremacy. My reflections are an invitation to look differently; it is an attempt to work very hard to see norms that are, by design, created to function as invisible to me and all other white people. But they are just invitations; I do not have a final answer. This is the opposite of that, not a closing of an argument, but an opening up and a ceding of supremacy and knowledge and space and the right answer, not a doing, but an undoing.

I am not sure what it means to be uncertain and offer up unsure answers in an academic tradition that prides itself on seeking the truth. This tension constitutes one of the main ways in which my writing choices disrupt the stylistic and content coloniality of

the monograph. The monograph places an expectation of linear and chronological engagement on the reader, one in which the reader must follow the predetermined organisation of the writer. Indeed, it can be seen to occupy an exclusionary niche amid a thicket of overlapping borders at varying levels of abstraction and distance, from geopolitical and economic to neurological and interpersonal; it is an intensely privileged artefact whose form and dissemination enforce a sharp cut between writer and audience. Crip form, on the other hand, lends a decolonial, pluralistic, nonmetric, nonlinear and accessible form to the dissertation. The format is intrinsically anti-capitalist, working to dismantle the borders between writer and audience, between who is reading and what is being read. As such, crip form works as both a practice of protest and solidarity that honours Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang's (2014) decolonial refusal through unbecoming claims., Before each analysis chapter, I have included a note to reader to prepare for

Finally, and perhaps most saliently, crip form queers the three-body boundaries between the researcher, the research, and the audience by enfolding the reader into the work via new mechanisms. By cripping the reader's engagement with the dissertation, and presenting a non-linear argument across sets of numbers premised on unbecoming claims and questions, this form *disempowers me,* the 'researcher' and 'author', and renders my 'gaze' less powerful. This function echoes the very heart of this project's political beliefs:

1. That white researchers *must* accept and engage epistemic vulnerability and disempowerment and irrelevance as a process of decolonisation and deconstruction of white supremacy; and

2. That research must always, in the end, function in service of emergent, collaborative and *collective* world-building and liberation.

Reflexivity, power and ethical considerations

I have chosen to discuss ethical considerations, reflexivity and power together in one section, as I consider reflections on reflexivity and power to be, in and of themselves, central aspects of the ethical considerations that shape this study, whilst I also consider ethics to form part of my considerations around reflexivity and power. In other words, ethical considerations are (also) considerations of power. I have not been able to separate and theorise distinctly how I perform research on race and racism *as* a white scholar and how I perform research on race and racism ethically.

As discussed in the earlier section, Epistemic framework, this study rejects the assumption that research, whether qualitative or quantitative, can ever be unbiased and value-free (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007) and epistemologically apolitical. Instead, this project rests on a practical and political commitment to interrogating how whiteness may be entrenched and resisted in academic work, as well as several interrelated premises grounded in the research, theory, and practice of other scholars:

1. Academic discourse, particularly academic discourse produced by disciplines like psychology, invisibilises, misrepresents, appropriates and pathologises the experiences of marginalised groups, particularly people of colour (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Dillard, 2000; Stanfield, 1995).

2. Some researchers have given privileged status to white hegemony over the voices of marginalised peoples, especially people of colour (Gordon, 1990; Tillman, 2002).

3. Researchers' intersecting positionalities and identities play a constitutive part to the process of research on race and racism (Chapman, 2007).

Thus, this study departs from the immutable axiom that my structurally embedded advantages and disadvantages inform not only how I identify and move through the world, but shapes the work that I do and the work I *can* do. My privileges and structural

advantages are threaded through how I am able to show up in the world. My writing and my research dialectically depart from the subjectivities I occupy. Epistemically, I believe we can only represent what we can see and that what we see and what we are ontologically capable of seeing are dependent on our positions relative to that which we think we are seeing. In other words, seeing and describing are a question of power and situatedness. To be quiet about the realities of this situatedness, of my positionalities, my subjectivities, my powers and my vulnerabilities in the world, and the way they produce how I am able to perceive the world, would render my contributions towards decolonial knowledge, at best, meaningless and, at worst, dangerous and harmful. Reflective of the commitment to making the sociopolitical dimensions of this scholarship explicit, it is important for me to state the following:

I do this work as a white woman from Denmark who is living in South Africa, and who is both queer and disabled. I grew up and remain middle-class. I have Danish citizenship. I speak and write only in English and Danish. As someone from Denmark, an actively colonial state power, I seek to situate myself as someone with a national identity that rests not just on white supremacist logics but on actively and ongoingly colonial ones. I seek to acknowledge these connections and these debts and this ongoing violence and make them visible in all my work. My whiteness—upon presentation—almost always eclipses my disability and my queerness. I do the work I do in service of community and liberation. For me, these markers of identity are not just descriptive terms; they are political identities, based on my own and other people's lived experiences, and I understand them to be powerful ways of moving through and interpreting the world. I believe white people have an urgent role to play in dismantling white supremacy and ending racism from within our communities. That is the first and last political commitment of this liberatory and reparative project: To contribute to racial equity and reparation by addressing and transforming racism within my own community and background. In my research, I strive to be conscious of the dangers of reinscribing racism as a consequence of studying it; I strive to be conscious of the dangers of reflexivity becoming an exercise in white narcissism; I actively situate and understand my whiteness as an epistemological disadvantage, particularly in work on race and

racism; and I foreground the act of listening to, taking responsibility for and trying to transform my complicity in racism and its effects “with its lengthy duration” (Ahmed, 2004, para. 57). I do not situate my examination of the problem of race and racism as external to me, and I am not external to my examination of this problem. I consider myself part of the problem, and I consider my examination part of both reinscribing and working against the problem. Everything I trust about what I know about race I have learnt from black scholars and thinkers and artists and activists and supervisors and teachers. I am hugely indebted to black intellectual production in my own scholarship and this is my way of trying to settle some of that debt. I have spent more than a decade listening and reading. This is the first published product of mine on race and racism.

What I connect to more than my Danish citizenship is my white, queer and disabled placelessness. I am deeply connected to these supranational, amorphous identities, which are not beholden to specific geographies, but which allow me to form solidarities across normative borders. It is through my disability and my queerness I know what embodied violence feels like. It is through my queerness that I have learnt how life persists and holds meaning and joy even when—especially when—it looks radically different to anything society deems valuable or good; that what we have been taught—that it is good, it is better, to be white, better to be straight, better to be healthy—isn’t true. But it is also through these marginalised identities that I am reminded of the moral debt I carry with me as a white person; it is through my disability and queerness that I am able to sense the contours of how nothing severs our ties to this world and the people around us as much as too much structurally embedded advantage; and it is through those marginal experiences that I know that it is not my oppression I must be ashamed of, it is not my oppression I must wrestle—rather, my oppression is like a door to a room that reveals how I am an oppressor, too. This is the unlikely link between my oppressions and my powers: That being queer and disabled helps me confront my white violence. This study is *not* a performance of allyship. Rather, this is an attempt to implicate myself by confronting and weaponising my whiteness to directly expose and critique colonial ideas and their concurrent institutions, infrastructures and powers. To get to or at anti-colonial knowledge, to practice anti- and

decoloniality, there is a lot of passing through and filtering through and undoing of colonial knowledge, what Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang call ‘unbecoming claims’ (2014). In their widely cited and influential article, *Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research* (2014)*,* Tuck and Yang discuss the role of refusal in the analysis and communication of qualitative data, and what role refusal can play in the work of making claims. They explain how refusals are necessary to work against the narratives and representations in social science literature that, like my recirculation of racist discourse, run the risk of diminishing and rewounding through repetition and circulation. Their writing opens up space for confronting and disrupting how academic research itself and the academy itself are forms of ongoing colonisation that must be disrupted through refusal, As a white scholar, implicating myself, I wrestle with the eerie and uncomfortable sensation that I never quite know when I have arrived at, or if I can even contribute to, knowledge that decolonises. I have not written any of this with confidence. This study is also an exercise in vulnerability, uncertainty and unbecoming. This project aims to unlearn and notice things. This is not a prescriptive project; it does not hold answers. This is not a time for white people to formulate answers, but to cede power. To cede epistemic and ontological power. I am aware of the inherent tension in a statement like that, the epistemic contradiction. A call to be less prescriptive is, in and of itself, a prescription. But this is what this moment tasks us with. Striving for what is not yet possible, for as-of-yet impossible futures. This is an attempt to notice what I was raised to never see and to assist in invisibilising. Because my race perception is always informed and impaired by my whiteness, and because my understandings are approximations at best, the concept of postcolonialism offers up an intuitive or unconscious kind of relief: I don’t need to look so hard, colonialism is over. It is right there in the name: We are past it. It is in the past. Or, certainly, if we are not past it *yet*, we can at least see an approaching line in the sand, a border, an end point, like a finish line of a race. The faster we run towards it, the quicker it will all be over. According to Sara Ahmed (2004), this white desire to be over racism, to be done with it, to be through with colonialism, to fix it, is counterproductive to the entire project of racial liberation. Instead, she encourages white scholars and people to confront and be with the long duration of racism. (Ahmed, 2004) To not run with or from it, but to linger with it, to stay

in it. Ahmed's reflections are one of the reasons I strive to further and utilise anti- and decolonial work. The prefixes 'anti' and 'de' connote emergent, fluid processes and function as verbs, as doings and undoings, as opposed to the implications of the already-finalised historicity of *post*colonialism. One of the ways I have reworked critical discourse analysis as a method through this methodology of refusal is by keeping my positionalities transparent throughout the analysis by bringing my own complications into and histories with the data to the forefront. By making autobiographical memories and associations and connotations with and of the data transparent, I have been seeking to refuse the masking and invisibilisation of how our own subjectivities impact our interpretations. I have also attempted to refuse and resist the making of claims through disturbing the flow of my argument in my analysis by writing in crip form and letting my points be disrupted by spaces between the sets of numbers that the analysis proceeds across. I have also prioritised asking questions instead of providing discrete answers in an act of further unbecoming.

In my reflections on how to research race and racism ethically, I have also drawn from Sara Ahmed's (2000) idea around how textual encounters are able to reproduce violence by totalising its textual recognition of the subject. The encounters I describe carry historicities and unequal power relations that I not only recognise but totalise by retelling and recirculating them. According to Ahmed, the stories I re-tell, in this case the discourses I reproduce, become another layer of representational violence that relies on logics of intelligiblity and on the quality of already always being recognisable and readable, thereby reproducing its subjects or figures in their reductive totality (Ahmed, 2000). To further elucidate these dynamics, Ahmed introduced the concept of "commodity fetishism" to theorise how the 'other' is separated from their contextual being so that the self is able to advance their story over the other and inscribe itself as the active being who positions the other as inherently passive. This retelling takes place in this study and forms part of its most troubling aspect ethically and forms part of the most central limitation of this study. I have carried out the whole project with an awareness of this tension and a commitment to not just reinscribe and repeat these violences, but to haunt and delegitimise them by interrogating how they are produced so

we may ultimately find out where they break. By applying critical methodologies and theories to these confrontations, I have aimed for reproduction to function as delegitimisation and an undoing of what white people think we know, of how we think we know the world, and of our colonial ways of seeing and knowing and doing and, as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes, that the "(...) naming of the crisis [gives hope] about a post-capitalist, post-colonial, and post-patriarchal world" (2020, p. 378) that allows us to realise that the future can be different from the present.

I have written this project during COVID-19 and have spent a considerable amount of time working on this study in contexts of lockdown and quarantine. I therefore consider lockdown and quarantine a kind of impermanent, transient methodology unique to those years and conditions, one that made certain things possible and impossible and required a lot of re-thinking and re-structuring of data collection methods. Making the most of confinement is something intimately familiar to queer and disabled people, and therefore a methodological requirement that allowed me to draw on some of my own identities. During this project, I have needed to continually re-assess what methodologies are available to me under quarantine and how I may be able to enact and perform methodologies that are caring and nurturing in a time of sickness and disaster.

Throughout this project, I have also continually needed to return to the following questions—alone, in supervision and with colleagues—as a method of 'triangulation' and a way of safeguarding the project from becoming a reproduction of whiteness:

1. How do my identities, particularly my whiteness, play a part in my methodological and theoretical frameworks, as well as in my analyses and criticisms of the sample data?

2. How is it possible to open up for new questions—to "ask the other question" (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1989)—and thus explore my blind spots in order to be as reflexive around the power structures that permeate all human interaction and all

scientific methodologies (Lykke, 2010, p.82)? What am I not seeing? How am I reinscribing racism? How can I consciously and carefully work against finding only what I am seeking?

3. How is it possible for white researchers to produce a position of humility and generative shame, whilst remaining rigorous as a credible replacement for white (supremacist) epistemologies, to be intentionally fallible and vulnerable in our 'knowing' and develop a praxis of what Snyman (2015) calls epistemic vulnerability? How do we insist on cultivating and putting forward dynamic tensions, dilemmas, uncertainty, ambiguity, non-closure, non-clarity and discomfort—what Spivak calls uncoercive rearrangements (2004)—*as legitimate outcomes of our research* and not 'academic failures' to overcome in favour of situating ourselves as "masterly, correcting, or prescriptive"? (Puar, 2007, p. 28).

Overview of key thematic findings

Given the crip style of writing, and for a better sense of the text that is about to follow, in preparation below is a brief and broad overview of the key thematic findings from the succeeding analysis chapters in one place.

The key thematic findings of this doctorate is that media discourse—in this case of the African body and nation produced by Danish media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020—act as a constitutive supplement to the production and maintenance of race through a (re)organisation and strengthening of necropolitical logics during a time of disaster. The key findings of this doctorate point to these media representations achieving this reorganisation and strengthening through the following discursive techniques:

1. By producing necropolitical configurations of 'Africa' as a 'death world' through discourse that constructs 'Africa' as 1) overcrowded and overpopulated; 2) as in perpetual crisis—past, present and future; 3) as unable to provide health and

safety to its people; and 4) as a space not just of pandemic crisis, but pandemic catastrophe.

2. By producing necropolitical configurations of Africans as 'the living dead' through discourse that constructs African lives as 1) contingent on white supremacy and saviourism; 2) as relegated to a third zone of the living dead; and 3) instrumentalises African opinions and expertise to support necropolitical logics.

3. By mobilising gender within necropolitical configurations of 'Africa' through discourses that 1) gender suffering and death in 'Africa'; and 2) produce African lives as ungrievable.

4. By mobilising geopolitics and chronopolitics within necropolitical configurations of 'Africa' through discourses that 1) intertwine migratory discourse with necropolitics to construct and dehumanise Africans as threats to the nation state; and 2) intertwine temporality and necropolitics to construct a concept of necrotime, in which 'Africa' is constructed as a place where time always moves towards death by advancing multiple chronopolitical hypotheses on and around how and why the pandemic is not *yet* as bad in 'Africa'.

5. Analysis chapter 1: Necropolitical configurations of ‘Africa’ as a ‘death world’

Note to readers: In an attempt to mark crip and decolonial time through form—and to write in a disconcerting style as both a practice of protest and solidarity that honours Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang’s (2014) decolonial refusal through unbecoming claims—the five analysis chapters proceed across sets of numbers. This writing style is inspired by Alison Kafer’s After Crip, Crip Afters (2021). The thematic discourses are highlighted in bold. I have chosen to include numerous article quotes to give the reader a better sense, on the page, of the sheer volume and repetition of the discourse in question. I have integrated and embedded and analysed the majority of the quotes in-text, but some remain un-embedded and function as evidence only and may be interpreted as the reader sees fit. Leaving a subset of quotes uninterpreted echoes this project’s commitment to Snyman’s (2015) epistemic vulnerability in favour of situating myself as “masterly, correcting, or prescriptive” (Puar, 2007, p. 28). It is a further attempt to insist on the unruly aspects of a decolonial methodology that cultivates and puts forward tensions, dilemmas, uncertainties, ambiguities, non-closure, non-clarity and discomfort—what Spivak calls uncoercive rearrangements (2004) and Tuck and Yang’s (2014) decolonial refusals—as legitimate outcomes of research and not ‘academic failures’ to overcome.

1. In this analysis chapter, I examine some of the most frequently appearing necropolitical configurations of ‘Africa’ that occur in my sample data of Danish media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Applying Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics in a reworked and expanded form, I will examine how ‘Africa’ is discursively produced and regulated in Danish mainstream media as a world of dying and death to trace how ‘Africa’ is discursively assigned to and constructed as what Mbembe’s calls a ‘death world’. Mbembe’s concept of death

worlds refers to “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 92; emphasis in the original). Applying the term in its expanded version, I will demonstrate how these conditions of death emerge as a form of necropower within and as discursive configurations of ‘Africa’ in Danish mainstream media during the pandemic.

2. The following quotes are a representative synthesis of my textual data that I offer up as evidence of this necropolitical determination of ‘Africa’ as a world of death. I will perform an examination of the overarching and intertextual necropolitical themes that these quotes contain, as well as a close critical discourse analysis of select, discrete sentences.

3. The following necropolitical configurations combine to produce ‘Africa’ as a death world through an advancement and assignment of discursive constructions of the following four discourses: 1) ‘Africa’ is overcrowded and overpopulated; 2) ‘Africa’ is in perpetual crisis—past, present and future; 3) ‘Africa’ can’t provide health and safety to its people; and 4) COVID-19 is, itself, a death world in ‘Africa’.

4. **Discourse: ‘Africa’ is overcrowded and overpopulated.** There is a long history of population panic and its use in racist ideology and the sample data relies on and strengthens this white supremacist trope, as evidenced in the quotes below:

Embedded in-text
Headline: “Africa fears virus: »The systems are not made for it at all.«” —Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)

“For weeks the World Health Organisation has been busy preparing Africa for the coronavirus.”
—Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)

“Kibera is probably the largest, but to say the least not the only large slum settlement in Africa. (...) In addition, there are refugee camps such as Kenya's overpopulated Dadaab and Kakuma camps with about 400,000 refugees, as well as camps with tens of thousands of people crammed into South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Congo and Somalia.”
—Information (14 March, 2020)

“[In Kibera in Nairobi], many hundreds of thousands of poor people live densely crammed into an area with lots of disease, lack of clean water and in turn open sewers and sewage streams contaminated with human feces. Releasing a super-infectious virus here is similar to the recipe for an uncontrollable epidemic.”
—Information (14 March, 2020)

“Floods in eastern Africa force people together in corona nests.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (20 May, 2020)

“Hundreds of thousands of people in East Africa are flocking together to flee floods, making it difficult to keep their distance. Aid organisations now fear violent corona waves among East Africans. A saying goes that one accident rarely comes alone. This is currently a tragic reality in a number of countries in East Africa, which are not only experiencing an increase in the number of people infected with corona, but where 1.3 million people are now also affected by historically heavy rainfalls.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (20 May, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

“But experts predict that it will be difficult—if not impossible—to stop the virus from spreading in Africa."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (20 March, 2020)

“Corona is getting a hold on Africa. Jyllands-Posten reports from South Africa, where danger lurks, in particular, in South Africa's overcrowded slums. »Never in the history of our democracy has our country faced such a serious situation,« Ramaphosa warned.”
—Jyllands-Posten (20 March, 2020)

5. On 20 May 2020, Kristeligt Dagblad writes: “Floods in eastern Africa force people together in corona nests” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 20 May, 2020). They go on to add: “Hundreds of thousands of people in East Africa are flocking together to flee floods, making it difficult to keep their distance. Aid organisations now fear violent corona waves among East Africans. A saying goes that one accident rarely comes alone. This is currently a tragic reality in a number of countries in East Africa, which are not only experiencing an increase in the number of people infected with corona, but where 1.3 million people are now also affected by historically heavy rainfalls.” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 20 May, 2020) *Forcing* people together. In *corona nests*. People *flocking* together. Flocking together is used to describe the gathering together in great numbers, typically said of birds or sheep. Birds, too, make nests. These are verbs and nouns specific to animals, drawing on the pernicious history of tying behaviours, cultures and customs of African people with unhuman and antihuman behaviour. Notably, it is aid organisations, not East Africans themselves, who fear violence. Flocked together in corona nests, East Africans are dehumanised by implying that they behave like animals and that there are altogether too many of them. This construction reveals that white supremacy situates and produces ‘Africa’ through a eugenicist framework.

There are too many people in ‘Africa’. ‘Africa’s problem—a vast continent's complexity reducible to a problem—is demographics, it is its people. That there are too many of them and that the ones that are there do not behave like they should.

6. On 14 March 2020, Information writes the following: “[In Kibera in Nairobi], many hundreds of thousands of poor people live densely crammed into an area with lots of disease, lack of clean water and in turn open sewers and sewage streams contaminated with human feces. Releasing a super-infectious virus here is similar to the recipe for an uncontrollable epidemic.” (Information, 14 March, 2020) ‘Africa’ as overpopulated. Already full of disease, way prior to COVID-19. Open sewers. Not just contaminated water, but water specifically contaminated with human waste. Describing Kibera like this produces ‘Africa’ as a place inherently out of control, diseased, and deadly, full of too many people who are passively crammed together.

7. Producing those most brutalised by social systems in ways that make them responsible for their own brutalisation is a particularly harsh kind of violence that obstructs efforts at social change and transformation on a systemic level—after all, if people are to blame for their own victimisation and marginalisation, system change would be not just unnecessary but perhaps even misguided. This is one of the discursive strategies by which late colonialism upholds itself. By contributing to tight, circular loops of logic that go like this: Overpopulation—not the role of colonial powers, past and present—creates poverty and Africans themselves create overpopulation. So really, Africans create their own poverty through bad individual and group choices and behaviours. In ‘Africa’, the logic of white Danish media implies, it is a far more crucial and relevant and far worse choice with greater systemic implications to choose to have a child and start a family than the choice to continue and maintain late colonial trade relations between European and African nations. It is striking how blatant the necropolitical foundation of these stories is. Life—past, present and future—is afforded only

some of us. Protection of life—the one you have whilst you are indeed alive and the potential of life that could come into existence in the future. In ‘Africa’, not only are current lives that are being lived and unfold everyday not valued, but future lives, life that could be in the form of children, are not just indirectly discouraged but configured as a direct cause of suffering. In ‘Africa’, you are poor and you suffer because there are too many of you, needing to flock together in nests. In ‘Africa’, if there is life, it is life itself that is to blame for suffering.

8. How do we manage to configure and imagine life in ‘Africa’ as not just undesirable, but *unviable*? How do we produce narratives of life not as living and livelihood and vibrancy, but as a path towards more suffering, fewer resources, bigger crowds? How are we able to configure life, for some, as slow and fast dying? How are we able to hold the idea of life as death in our minds, collapsing biopolitics and necropolitics into one and creating worlds where we imagine birth as overpopulation as poverty as dying? How much dehumanisation does that require?

9. These configurations remind me of the racist mythology of ‘Africa’ that I grew up with: A continent devoid of people. In every story, in every cartoon, in every exhibition on ‘Africa’, in every documentary, we were confronted by a continent that had no people, no cities, societies, no cultures, no man-made anything, no roads, no lampposts, definitely no children. Just animals and natural landscapes. Pristine, open savannahs, deserts, vast oceans, deep jungles—of course jungles—and mountain ranges. Lions, cheetahs, elephants, rhinos, wildebeests, ostriches, great white sharks. Tiny animals, too. Insects, frogs, all kinds of birds. Endless documentaries about dung beetles. I don’t remember when I realised that ‘Africa’ is full of cities, too, but it was years and years apart from learning about the animals. Those I knew about from as early as I can recall. It can’t have been a single moment, either, considering the amount of unlearning and relearning you need to engage in as a white European who grew up in the 90s to begin to understand that you have been wrong about everything you were taught

and thought you knew about the ‘African’ continent. When I first decided I wanted to go on an exchange to the University of Cape Town, way back during my undergraduate degree at Aarhus University, the first thing the international exchange counselor asked me, with a surprised look on her face, was: “Africa? You want to go on an exchange in Africa? Do they have universities there?”

10. ‘Africa’, a continent romanticised for its nature and demonised for its people. It begs the chilling question: Do necropower and white supremacy imagine ‘Africa’ would be better—and better off—if it was devoid of black people? How do we manage to hold in our minds the contradictory ideas, sometimes appearing only sentences apart in an article, that ‘Africa’ is simultaneously overcrowded and densely impenetrable, as well as vast and empty and unreachable? How much cognitive dissonance does that require?

11. On 17 February 2020, Jyllands-Posten features an article with the following headline*:* “Africa fears virus: »The systems are not made for it at all.«” (Jyllands-Posten, 17 February, 2020) In the same article, they go on to write the following: “For weeks the World Health Organisation has been busy preparing Africa for the coronavirus.” (Jyllands-Posten, 17 February, 2020) Referring only to ‘Africa’, rather than specific nations, ignores huge differences across the world’s second largest continent. ‘Africa’ is not a country. You cannot, as an ordinary person who writes for a Danish newspaper or an ordinary person who reads a Danish newspaper and thinks nothing of this or takes it to heart, make the conflation of African countries with ‘Africa’ without strengthening a political non-distinction that is made purposefully to strengthen white supremacy by minimising African complexity.

12. Internally, this discourse contradicts itself, too, as it is possible to trace in it a simultaneous vastness *and* minimisation. This tendency to make references to the entirety of the continent of ‘Africa’ as a single country and thereby minimise the diversity and heterogeneity of ‘Africa’ by producing it as a singular,

homogenised unit is one of the most frequently occurring discursive strategies in the data.

13. There are traces of this discursive strategy in nearly every sample article, in which ‘Africa’ is discursively positioned as a country or as a collection of countries. Often local or regional areas are conflated with countries or with the entire continent. On 14 March 2020, for example, Information notes that “Kibera is probably the largest, but, to say the least, not the only large slum settlement in Africa. (...) In addition, there are refugee camps, such as Kenya's overpopulated Dadaab and Kakuma camps with about 400,000 refugees, as well as camps with tens of thousands of people crammed into South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Congo and Somalia.” (Information, 14 March, 2020) African nations can easily be name-dropped on a list, conflated with their refugee camps, never configured as distinct or complex as European or other nations are. African nations do not exist as very discreet places in Danish mainstream media. ‘Africa’ is a Danish imaginary. ‘Africa’ as imagined by Denmark. It is a non-specific place, not an exact location or geography, but a type of vastness, in which articles draw on colloquialisms used most often when referring to far more localised sites—writing, for instance, ‘in the poor Kenya’ when ‘in the’ is usually used to express locations such as ‘in the left-hand corner’ or ‘in the morning’ or, indeed, ‘in the small town’—and thereby conflating semi-contained, concise fractions of spaces with an entire region or continent.

14. **Discourse: ‘Africa’ is in perpetual crisis—past, present and future.** A significant number of the articles in the sample data rely on a collective, intertextual understanding of a continent already associated with and defined by struggle, suffering and the continuous act of dying—both past, present and future. In chronological order below are examples of articles seamlessly tying COVID-19 to Ebola, war, violence against women and famine:

Embedded in-text

“And on a continent that, for example, south of the Sahara, has 25 million HIV-infected people with a vulnerable immune system, corona infection must be significantly deadlier than in countries like Denmark.”
—Information (14 March, 2020)

“In Africa, the health crisis overlaps with a food crisis caused by climate crisis.”
—Information (3 April, 2020)

“Whilst many African countries are doing what they can to limit corona infection so that the pandemic does not catch on, locust swarms continue to attack crops in east africa. A biblical comparison is almost inevitable: the plagues that are currently affecting the African continent coincide in a way that brings to mind Egypt's ten plagues in the Old Testament.”
—Information (3 April, 2020)

“What happens when a country in the midst of civil war gets struck by corona? Libya is about to find out, and the answer could be catastrophic.”
—Jyllands-Posten (16 April, 2020)

“Corona in Libya: What death is worse? To contract corona or get hit by a bomb?”
—Jyllands-Posten (16 April, 2020)

“Africa is hit by a biblical plague. We must help. While Asia, Europe and the United States are paralyzed by corona infection, large parts of Africa are plagued by an even greater, almost biblical plague. Or rather a quadruple

plague: climate change, grasshoppers, corona and war. The plagues come more or less in the order mentioned, but also intertwine."
—Politiken (20 April, 2020)

Headline: "Iron-hard African shutdowns lead to hunger and social unrest."
—Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)

"Which is worse: to risk dying of COVID-19 or dying of starvation? It sounds like a choice between the plague or cholera. Nevertheless, it is a question that the world's poorest people in Africa are beginning to ask themselves after living for weeks with curfews, closed communities and a stagnant economy."
—Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

"The irony is that even if corona bypasses Africa, the vulnerable continent is already a certain loser. The attention of the global media is focused on what has happened in China and what is happening now in Europe and the United States. Few note that the most vulnerable continent risks becoming the big loser, whether the infection spreads or not."
—Information (14 March, 2020)

"In South Africa, among other places, the first signs of social unrest have begun to appear. An expert calls it a »ticking bomb«.
—Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)

"For several months, people have been complaining that they do not have money for food, but they obviously have money to buy alcohol."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (4 June, 2020)

15. On 3 April 2020, Information notes that “[in] Africa, the health crisis overlaps with a food crisis caused by climate crisis.” (Information, 3 April, 2020) Later that same month, Jyllands-Posten asks: “What happens when a country in the midst of civil war gets struck by corona? Libya is about to find out, and the answer could be catastrophic.” (Jyllands-Posten, 16 April, 2020) They go on to wonder about the following: “Corona in Libya: What death is worse? To contract corona or get hit by a bomb?” (Jyllands-Posten, 16 April, 2020) A week later, Jyllands-Posten again ask themselves this: “Which is worse: to risk dying of COVID-19 or dying of starvation? It sounds like a choice between the plague or cholera. Nevertheless, it is a question that the world's poorest people in Africa are beginning to ask themselves after living for weeks with curfews, closed communities and a stagnant economy." (Jyllands-Posten, 23 April, 2020) These statements and these questions, almost rhetorical in structure, reveal a production of a continent that is marked by crises. By food crisis and climate and health crisis. A continent torn apart by war and defined only in terms of horrifically brutal binaries: War or disease? Dying of COVID-19 or starving to death? Contracting COVID or getting hit by a bomb? There is never an option to survive. In ‘Africa’, you either die or you die. The only question we are interested in is how and, perhaps, when. Will it be in this way or in that way and will it be before us? There is no possibility that you may not get hit by a bomb or contract COVID-19 altogether. There is no possibility of containing the pandemic, and if there was, it wouldn’t matter, because parallel to COVID-19 is another, and then yet another, crisis lurking and looming, sure to devastate. Indeed, in these texts lies the necropolitical assumption and production that there is never life in ‘Africa’. There is only death and the spectacle of dying.

16. In fact, sometimes the interdependent production of ‘Africa’ as a site of death and Denmark as a site of life becomes very obvious, as in the following quote in Information on 14 March 2020: “And on a continent that, for example, south of the Sahara, has 25 million HIV-infected people with a vulnerable immune system,

corona infection must be significantly deadlier than in countries like Denmark." (Information, 14 March, 2020)

17. COVID-19 *must be* significantly deadlier in 'Africa' than in countries like Denmark. A respiratory illness must be deadlier in 'Africa' where conditions of disease and death are always already present.

18. On 3 April 2020, Information states the following: "Whilst many African countries are doing what they can to limit corona infection so that the pandemic does not catch on, locust swarms continue to attack crops in east africa. A biblical comparison is almost inevitable: the plagues that are currently affecting the African continent coincide in a way that brings to mind Egypt's ten plagues in the Old Testament." (Information, 3 April, 2020) Later that same month, on 20 April 2020, Politiken makes a similar religious reference and writes: "Africa is hit by a biblical plague. We must help. While Asia, Europe and the United States are paralyzed by corona infection, large parts of 'Africa' are plagued by an even greater, almost biblical plague. Or rather a quadruple plague: climate change, grasshoppers, corona and war. The plagues come more or less in the order mentioned, but also intertwine." (Politiken, 20 April, 2020) This is how far white liberal Danish performative allyship is willing to go: 'We' must help. How, exactly? By implying that grasshoppers and biblical plagues—not global racial inequity and late-colonial devastation at the hands of systemic white supremacy and its structures which we participate in upholding every day—are responsible for the making of suffering and famine and refugees? How many ways can white people frame ourselves as innocent whilst pretending to be critical? For how long will we blame grasshoppers before taking any accountability of intertwined not just crises but histories?

19. Here is another question: If COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated inequality and insecurity across food systems on the African continent, where might those inequalities and insecurities come from? If COVID-19 rubs salt in old wounds,

who inflicted those old wounds in the first place?

20. How far down do the roots of the pandemic crisis go?

21. Here is a guess: All the way down to the legacy of colonialism.

22. This is conversant with what Boluwatife Akinro and Joshua Segun-Lean (2019) talk about when they tell us that blackness achieves cultural and political relevance only when it detaches from Africa. They saliently point out that "it would seem that none of the Africas the rest of the world imagines are any of the ones Africans live and think and work and love and die in." (Akinro & Segun-Lean, 2019, para. 10) This is an example of the ontological turn in anthropology that posits a theorisation of not just many worldviews, but many simultaneous worlds existing in parallel.

23. Even when the measures taken by African governments are identical to the ones taken by European governments—in this case, lockdowns—the outcomes and effects in ‘Africa’ are always worse. On 23 April 2020, Jyllands-Posten headlines with the following statement: “Iron-hard African shutdowns lead to hunger and social unrest.” (Jyllands-Posten, 23 April, 2020) Just as COVID-19 becomes deadlier in ‘Africa’, lockdowns in ‘Africa’ don’t help contain and manage a pandemic like those very same lockdowns do in Europe, but instead result in deadlier and more dangerous conditions.

24. **Discourse: ‘Africa’ can’t provide health and safety to its people.** Across my sample data, journalists keep producing and perpetuating a necropolitical discourse that assigns no institutional and infrastructural value and worth to ‘Africa’, as evidenced in the chronologically presented textual quotes below:

Embedded in-text

"»The health systems of many African countries are not made, at all, to handle epidemics like the new coronavirus,« says Christian Wejse. (...) It is already difficult to get rid of other infectious diseases on the African continent: Health systems are already struggling with malaria, Ebola, measles, polio."
—Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)

"Today, more than 1.2 billion people live in Africa, and it is estimated that approximately 4 out of 10 Africans in sub-Saharan Africa live in poverty. The majority of them live in rural areas and small villages where basic health care and treatment are not available. It is a real horror scenario if the infection reaches this far."
—Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)

Headline: "Denmark's first corona-patient: It is pretty unreal"
—Politiken (4 March, 2020)

"Jakob Tage Ramlyng wrote Danish history as the first citizen with the disease COVID-19 from the new coronavirus. He will never forget his last week."
—Politiken (4 March, 2020)

"2 March, 2020: At 02.15 the doctor calls and says: »Your wife and son's tests came out negative, but you won't believe it, because Jacob, your test is positive, you are Denmark's first corona-infected [person]."
—Politiken, 4 March, 2020)

“Africa's healthcare is underfunded and lacks both trained staff and, for example, laboratory capacity.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)

“On paper, most African countries have contingency plans for flu epidemics in place, but in reality most are outdated or the resources are too few to implement them.”
—Information (14 March, 2020)

“Facts: NO ACCESS TO WASHING BASINS. An important safeguard against corona is to wash your hands thoroughly and often. However, this is impossible for millions of people in Africa to comply with. In sub-Saharan Africa, 63% of the inhabitants of urban areas—258 million—have no access to sinks. Under 5 pct. of the population of Liberia, Lesotho, DR Congo and Rwanda have access to washing basins with soap. In South Africa, approx. half of the urban population—18 million—do not have basic hand washing facilities in their own home. Source: Unicef.”
—Jyllands-Posten (20 March, 2020)

“Facts: CORONA IN AFRICA. The number of infected people in Africa is surrounded by relatively high uncertainty in light of the lack of tests and poorly functioning health systems in many countries.”
—Jyllands-Posten (28 March, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

Headline: “Slum areas and weak health systems make corona difficult to control in Africa.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (20 March, 2020)

25. Overall, the above quotes centers on wondering and speculating as to *how* ‘Africa’ is avoiding huge COVID-19 numbers. This speculation does not just contribute to the strictly chronopolitical element of narrative necropolitics under COVID-19, which is discussed in the final analysis chapter. Importantly, it is also a construction that marks—in both direct and indirect, overt and covert ways—an entire continent by chaos, disease and governmental incompetence.

26. On 17 February 2020, Jyllands-Posten writes: “»The health systems of many African countries are not made, at all, to handle epidemics like the new coronavirus,« says Christian Wejse. (...) It is already difficult to get rid of other infectious diseases on the African continent: Health systems are already struggling with malaria, Ebola, measles, polio.” (Jyllands-Posten, 17 February, 2020) They go on to remark that “[today], more than 1.2 billion people live in Africa, and it is estimated that approximately 4 out of 10 Africans in sub-Saharan ‘Africa’ live in poverty. The majority of them live in rural areas and small villages where basic health care and treatment are not available. It is a real horror scenario if the infection reaches this far.” (Jyllands-Posten, 17 February, 2020) On 6 March 2020, Kristeligt Dagblad remarks that “Africa's healthcare is underfunded and lacks both trained staff and, for example, laboratory capacity.” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 6 March, 2020) On 14 March 2020, Information writes the following: “On paper, most African countries have contingency plans for flu epidemics in place, but in reality most are outdated or the resources are too few to implement them.” (Information, 14 March, 2020) These four quotes seamlessly construct ‘Africa’ as a world marked by governmental incapacity and chaos, a space without functional systems of governance and expertise, where both education and funds are absent.

27. Meanwhile, Denmark, on the other hand, is produced as doing so well we even have the capacity to *export* infrastructure to Africa. We have always had, it seems, the capacity to export, which makes it easier to understand when you realise that ‘export’ tends to be code for ‘extract’. Related news stories indicate

that ‘non-western immigrants’ are at greater risk of contracting the virus, and that COVID-19 is uncontained in refugee camps. Danish newspapers even take time to report on how ‘African-Americans’ are dying of the virus at greater rates than white Americans—who are, of course, simply referred to as ‘Americans’ in the articles, no pre-fix or adjective needed. Similar emergent trends are observed in American and British media, as discussed by Sandsted (2021).

28. On 20 March 2020, Jyllands-Posten includes the following information and categorises it as fact: “Facts: NO ACCESS TO WASHING BASINS. An important safeguard against corona is to wash your hands thoroughly and often. However, this is impossible for millions of people in Africa to comply with. In sub-Saharan Africa, 63% of the inhabitants of urban areas—258 million—have no access to sinks. Under 5 pct. of the population of Liberia, Lesotho, DR Congo and Rwanda have access to washing basins with soap. In South Africa, approx. half of the urban population—18 million—do not have basic hand washing facilities in their own home. Source: Unicef.” (Jyllands-Posten, 20 March, 2020) On 28 March 2020, the same newspaper brings forward another ‘fact’ about COVID-19 in ‘Africa’: “Facts: CORONA IN AFRICA. The number of infected people in Africa is surrounded by relatively high uncertainty in light of the lack of tests and poorly functioning health systems in many countries.” (Jyllands-Posten, 28 March, 2020)

29. These broadly generalised statistical information of the impact of the virus on marginalised communities is juxtaposed against the humanised and human-interest focused cases of white Danes. ‘White privilege’ emerges as the right to be described in nuanced and sympathetic and individualising ways by journalists and politicians in mainstream media. Meanwhile, racial minorities have suspicion thrown on them, and are configured as one single and determining mass, not individual persons. A salient example is an in-depth profile on the man, Jakob Tage Ramlyng, who was assumed to be Denmark’s first known COVID-19 patient. On 4 March 2020, Politiken published a first-person portrait in a

diary-style format. It starts out like this: Headline: “Denmark’s first corona-patient: It is pretty unreal.” (Politiken, 4 March, 2020) And goes on like this: “Jakob Tage Ramlyng wrote Danish history as the first citizen with the disease COVID-19 from the new coronavirus. He will never forget his last week.” (Politiken, 4 March, 2020)

30. The piece goes on to detail his and his family’s experiences and thoughts, from his perspective, over the course of a week from Tuesday 25 February to Monday 2 March 2020. It is a lengthy article that takes up 1697 words. It ends with the following sentence: “2 March, 2020: At 02.15 the doctor calls and says: »Your wife and son’s tests came out negative, but you won’t believe it, because Jacob, your test is positive, you are Denmark’s first corona-infected [person].” (Politiken, 4 March, 2020)

31. The choice to give the journalist the space to tell his own story is humanising and sympathetic and protective. It is devoid of blame and anger. He gets to be cast and cast himself as a hero, someone who makes history, not just someone who is innocent, let alone guilty, but someone we want to hear about and from, someone whose fate is important. There is no victim-blaming, and no scapegoating, even as it is firmly established that he is the one who brought the virus to the country. But that is not the focus of the piece, not in a negative sense. He is praised for his family’s calm and resilience.

32. **Discourse: In ‘Africa’, COVID-19 is constructed not just as crisis, but as catastrophe.** In ‘Africa’, COVID-19 is discursively assigned the properties of ‘catastrophe’. In Denmark, the pandemic is framed as a crisis. The word that is used is the same as the one that suffixed to climate and finance when Danes speak about climate change and devastation and the 2007/8 financial crisis: coronakrisen, klimakrisen, finanskrisen. It is not a corona-emergency, it is not a corona-disaster and it is not a corona-catastrophe. Not in Denmark. Here, it is a crisis. The crisis narrative is one of the most dominant narratives in the beginning

stages of coverage of the pandemic. Early on, the pandemic is disregarded, downplayed and othered. Journalists and ‘experts’ are certain the pandemic won’t reach Danish borders. Once it does, and once the magnitude and gravity of the situation becomes clear, a new narrative is immediately mobilised: The crisis story. In fact, the crisis narrative is one that has dominated the news coverage in much of Europe, including the UK, and the US. As Sandset argues (2021), a crisis narrative reveals not just an epidemiological crisis, but a crisis of sovereignty. Berlant additionally reminds us, deployment of a crisis narrative is “a distorting or misdirecting gesture that aspires to make an environmental phenomenon appear suddenly as an event because as a structural or predictable condition it has not engendered the kinds of historic action we associate with the heroic agency a crisis seems to already to have called for.” (Berlant, 2007, p. 760)

33. But what is a mere crisis in Denmark and Europe—one no one can possibly be held accountable for, more like a natural disaster than a structural event—transmutes into an outright catastrophe of death in Africa, which its bad governments and bad people are, if not fully at least partially, to blame for. Here we witness the discursive construction of the shadow Mbembe (2003) suggests that necropower attaches to the bodies of those brutalised by racism. Whilst Mbembe theorised this shadow in relation to slavery and slaves, we now see it unfold across and onto entire discursively created worlds, in which ‘Africa’ is configured as a world in shadow, one that lingers between death and life. With the arrival of the pandemic as it is discursively performed in Danish media, we witness worlds that are imagined to linger in what Mbembe calls “a state of injury, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty (...)” and in “a form of death-in-life” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 21). Indeed, the way the pandemic is discursively narrated in ‘Africa’ in Danish mainstream media makes the pandemic event itself function like a large-scale, protracted Mbembian state of injury and death-in-life, in which necropolitical fantasies are exposed and produced in vivid detail.

34. This notion, that the pandemic itself functions discursively as a death world, is echoed by scholars of the emerging area of pandemic studies, in which COVID-19, itself, as a kind of “practical condition” (Mbembe, 2003., p. 12) globally under which Mbembe’s original preoccupation with “the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 12.) has been exercised. These regulations can be witnessed in Adam Smith’s (2022) exploration of how discourse on pandemic vaccine gaps provide evidence of a global necropolitical regulation and differentiation of human life and the values and worth that have been assigned to human lives.

35. Work by Hajer AL-Dahash, Menaha Thayaparan and Udayangani Kulatunga (2016) reveals that even though there is significant overlap in the meanings attached to these terms, and even though they are interconnected, there are important differences between how these terms are defined and used and what they signify. Further, according to Enrico Quarantelli (2005), in a catastrophe compared to a disaster or crisis, most or all of the community built structure is heavily impacted, help from nearby communities cannot be provided, and most of the everyday community functions are sharply interrupted. Quarantelli (2005) further points out that, in recent times, mass media systems socially construct catastrophes in ways that dramatise a catastrophe more than a disaster. In print media, there is a tendency towards a focus on looting and squalor and other dramatic visuals, whilst electronic media exhibits less of its ordinary filtering and screening of stories. An important implication of these kinds of media activity is “far more diffusion of rumors [during catastrophe coverage] than occurs in disasters.” (2006, para. 21) A crisis is a threatening event that may be intervened against and managed. A catastrophe is a crisis with tragic consequences, a threat that falls outside the coping ability of the community or society in which it takes place.

Embedded in-text

“The African countries are cracking down on the coronavirus in recognition that they have to deal with this themselves. But without a miracle or an anti-pandemic marshall plan launched by the richer countries, an explosion of COVID-19 in the poor countries will trigger a catastrophe that can engulf everyone.”
—Information (27 March, 2020)

“The West looks with deep concern at the coming weeks and months, but in developing countries the prospects are even more dire. With limited treatment options and several adjacent risk factors, including malnutrition, high population density, multigenerational homes (Danish: storfamilieboformer), poor sanitation and poor access to clean water, mortality rates can be many times higher than in the West. Also economically, a new ice age can take place: African countries typically have nothing to fall back on (Danish: ingen polstring), no emergency funds, no stimulus packages, no insurance premiums.”
—Information (27 March, 2020)

“A much worse catastrophe awaits.”
—Information (27 March, 2020)

“Africa is facing a potential corona-catastrophe.”
—Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

“The terror of the fact that the West has failed to contain the coronavirus will pale in comparison to the consequences it would have if the pandemic seriously affected developing countries in Africa.”

—Information (27 March, 2020)

“The poor, the uninsured, the possessive, the underinformed and the least mobile are defenseless victims.”
—Information (27 March, 2020)

36. On 27 March 2020, Information writes: “A much worse catastrophe awaits.” (Information, 27 March, 2020) They go on to say that “[the] African countries are cracking down on the coronavirus in recognition that they have to deal with this themselves. But without a miracle or an anti-pandemic marshall plan launched by the richer countries, an explosion of COVID-19 in the poor countries will trigger a catastrophe that can engulf everyone.” (Information, 27 March, 2020) The article further offers up the following construction of ‘Africa’ under the guise of white, late colonial, both patronising and passive concern: “The West looks with deep concern at the coming weeks and months, but in developing countries the prospects are even more dire. With limited treatment options and several adjacent risk factors, including malnutrition, high population density, multigenerational homes (Danish: storfamilieboformer), poor sanitation and poor access to clean water, mortality rates can be many times higher than in the West. Also economically, a new ice age can take place: African countries typically have nothing to fall back on (Danish: ingen polstring), no emergency funds, no stimulus packages, no insurance premiums.” (Information, 27 March, 2020) On 23 April 2020, Jyllands-Posten simply remarks the following: “Africa is facing a potential corona-catastrophe.” (Jyllands-Posten, 23 April, 2020) According to these quotes, the pandemic is configured as an impending catastrophe and, as these articles keep reminding us, as something that is only a matter of *time*. A catastrophe-potential. It is only a matter of time before it gets worse across ‘Africa’ than what we have witnessed in Europe.

37. These speculations, which at times appear to border a kind of wishful thinking, represent another crucial necropolitical function. That we need it to happen that

way. Value and control and protection is assigned to the way the virus unfolds and is folded into life in Danish society. It is through these mechanisms we see the co-constituting relationship that Puar (2007) speaks about when she talks about necro-bio-power and their interlocking, interdependent symbioses. A Danish crisis *has* to be trumped by an African tragedy or catastrophe. That is one of the necropolitical, discursively regulated functions of 'Africa' in Danish media: As a placeholder for our anxieties and fears, 'Africa' is a place of death where everything is worse than it is here. Things might be bad in Denmark, but they are worse in 'Africa'. Even as the catastrophe has not yet happened on actual African soil, news articles *speculate* it into existence. This further points to how the 'Africa' that gets produced in Danish media is a necropolitical configuration and imaginary, and not a 'real' place that exists 'out there' in the material world. And even that, more time, won't help 'Africa'. Africans are powerless against time and do not know how to make use of it. Danes, on the other hand, successfully buy and wield extra time to get our health care sector *ready* for the virus. Again, necropolitical underpinnings assign worthlessness to the actions taken by African actors and worthiness to the actions taken by Danish actors.

38. These tactics are tangentially conversant with Henri Tajfel and John Turner's social identity theory—and their argument that an important part of an individual's sense of self is rooted in the individual's perceived group membership, and that we gravitate towards maintaining positive self-identity, and will engage in direct competition with groups who threaten our positive self-identity. What does it mean if we think of configuring 'Africa' as speculatively worse off than ourselves—if not right now, then at least, *hopefully*, later—as an example of intergroup competition transplanted onto national identity discourse?

39. These discourses relate to and expand on the well-established and interdisciplinary area of scholarship on colonial representations of 'Africa' in Minority World media and beyond, in which discursive constructions of 'Africa'

that are embedded in or rely on colonial logics have been examined by critical scholars of discourse, media and journalism for decades.

40. In 1972, Walter Rodney published his seminal work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), that shaped the study of 'Africa' across many disciplines, in which he described how 'Africa' was intentionally underdeveloped by European colonial powers, whilst 'Africa' developed Europe at the same rate that Europe underdeveloped 'Africa'.

41. In 1992, in her widely cited and influential paper, *Constructing the Dark Continent: Metaphor as Geographic Representation of Africa*, Lucy Jarosz explained how the dominant representation of 'Africa' in Minority World media tends to ignore the specificities of socio-economic processes occurring across the continent (Jarosz, 1992).

42. In 2005, Binyavanga Wainaina wrote the important satirical piece, How To Write About Africa, where he illuminatingly writes: "Broad brushstrokes throughout are good. Avoid having the African characters laugh, or struggle to educate their kids, or just make do in mundane circumstances. Have them illuminate something about Europe or America in Africa." (para. 10)

43. In 2009, John Kiarie Wa'Njogu discussed the neglect and negative portrayal of Africa by Minority World media, and argued for ways to correct the persistent relegation of an entire continent to "the backwater of the news, brought to light only during clashes, coups and natural catastrophes such as floods and drought" (Wa'Njogu, 2009, n. p).

44. In 2011, Olatunji Ogunyemi argued that Minority World media invents and constructs ideological articulations of 'Africa' that revolve around poverty, conflict, disease, instability, and illiteracy, which contribute to widespread public perceptions of African people as victimised, inferior and subhuman (Ogunyemi, 2011).

45. In 2013, Molefi Kete Asante examined how the inferiorisation of ‘Africa’ is a part of the philosophical and cultural fabric of Europeanisation and expressed and strengthened through Western media’s falsification of ‘Africa’ (Asante, 2013).

46. There are a few dissenting scholars who represent the view that ‘Africa’ has not been exclusively produced through colonial logics in Minority World media, like Toussaint Nothias (2018), whose article, *How Western Journalists Actually Write About Africa*, argues that representation of ‘Africa’ in a globalised age is tending more and more towards a ‘hopeful Africa’ image—a discourse Nothias curiously does not consider part of the same epicolonial strategy that did away with overtly racialised speech by folding it into indirect and anti-racist rhetoric.

47. In 2015, Chukwubuike Henry Oguh argued that the “‘hopeless’ representation of Africa in [most Western media outlets] has persisted since the late nineteenth century during the era of slavery and colonialism” and produced Africa as the “‘dark continent’ characterized by primeval irrationality, tribal anarchy, civil war, political instability, flagrant corruption, incompetent leadership and managerial ineptitude, hunger, famine and starvation as well as rampant diseases” (2015, p. 3).

48. These are old problems that black scholars and writers and artists have been interrogating and resisting for decades, yet they persist as vividly and gratuitously as ever.

49. Most recently, discourse studies of racism in media have branched out to examine not just the structures of racist media discourse, but their communicative context as well, like production, media access, policies, knowledge production and dissemination. This study and this analysis emerge from all these efforts and aims to contribute to and expand on this area of research by advancing a Denmark-situated analysis of racist, necropolitical

discourse in media during the particular conjecture of the COVID-19 pandemic, combining established efforts to examine racist media and representations of 'Africa' with emerging efforts to trace the necropolitical underpinnings of the pandemic.

50. In order to better understand how the necropolitical underpinnings of the preceding discourses—1) 'Africa' is overcrowded and overpopulated; 2) 'Africa' is in perpetual crisis—past, present and future; 3) 'Africa' can't provide health and safety to its people; and 4) COVID-19 is, itself, a death world in 'Africa'—function, it is instructive to take note of *where and when* the pandemic is assigned its deadliest value. Throughout the data, discourse on the pandemic in and related to 'Africa' inscribes necropower by configuring the virus in/and 'Africa' as death worlds deadlier. Meanwhile, the epidemiologically and medically identical virus can be identified as less deadly, more controlled, less dangerous when it is observed in or in relation to Denmark.

51. Across all the aforementioned discursive strategies, Danish mainstream media produces and imagines 'Africa' as a world that is governed by conditions of death, necropolitical conditions in which life itself is premised on dying, a vast and overpopulated and overcrowded world where life exists as folded into the powers of death. It is through these discursive constructions of 'Africa' as a world where living and being is already folded into death that we see traces of Mbembe's critique of Foucault's notion of biopower and biopolitics (Foucault, 1976/1994; 2007; 2008) as insufficient in capturing contemporary mechanisms of discursive power that regulate racialised lives by assigning them to the already-dead, the always-dying.

52. We also see in these discourses Mbembe's critique of Agamben's (Agamben, 1998; 2005) work on homo sacer and the concept of a state of exception. The preceding discourses do not just withdraw protection from certain lives in the face of perceived existential threats. As Mbembe highlighted in his analysis, the right

to create conditions for life itself—to make live (Foucalt, 2008)—and the right to leave others to die—to let die (Mbembem, 2003)—these discourses go beyond the capture of formulations of power that express themselves through simply 'letting' people die.. Instead, these discursive constructions produce configurations of 'Africa' that imply conditions of life that will expose all that live there to conditions so damaging and dangerous to health that people will inevitably and ultimately die (Mbembe, 2003).

53. In keeping with necropolitical analyses of ill health, when read all together, these discourses devalue and diminish the role and authority of any African state or system of governance. We see their necropolitical elements when we consider how they simultaneously seek to infuse Danish governance with value, whilst minimising or obscuring or denying the contributions any African governmental state actor does—let alone can—make to preserve life or protect health. In this way, these discourses position 'Africa' as a world of death and dying, which aligns with Nixon's conception of 'slow violence' (2011) and the efforts of this study to expose symbolic and hidden violences. These alignments are produced through configurations of the pandemic in 'Africa' that actively undermine and obfuscate any notions that there could be any efforts towards preventing the pandemic from unfolding across 'Africa'. Instead, these discursive constructions actively *await* the pandemic in 'Africa' and bolster hypotheses of how and when it will unfold. At the same time, these discourses work to draw focus towards or imply a generalised Danish supremacy with regards to differentiated approaches to the pandemic.

54. Additionally, these discourses do the work of necropolitics and what Mbembe calls "the work of death" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 11) by assigning and eagerly awaiting African lives to dying and configuring 'Africa' as a death world where pandemics discursively transmute from crises into deadly catastrophes. By applying a necropolitical framework to these configurations, necropolitics offers up new, generative insights into the figures and 'death worlds' that are produced

and legitimised by everyday discourse in Danish mainstream media. By repeating and normalising everyday discursive constructions of ‘Africa’ as a death world, we contribute to the normalisation and acceptance of necropolitical conditions that assign some worlds to catastrophe and death and others to crisis and life, thus perpetuating unequal zones in which some lives are exposed to conditions that produce slow and fast deaths, whilst other lives enjoy nourishing conditions of life-making and life-protection.

55. These discourses link to Sumba’s (2021) concerns with “negligence, acquiescence, and utter disregard for the fatal implications of global inequality” (p. 48) through the discursive application and development of strategies and techniques that actively justify and naturalise global inequalities, and seek to mythologise them as ‘a-priori’ facts-of-life that are entirely independent of any political or social determination through mechanisms and registers of precise and intentional systems of control and governance. These discursive efforts link to Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2016) work, *Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality*, in which he argues that effects of coloniality include ”the naturalization of extermination, expropriation, domination, exploitation, early death, and conditions that are worse than death (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 16). Fracturing them through a necropolitical lens, we see that these discourses are actively applied and developed to justify and naturalise slow and fast and early and excessive death, to justify and naturalise inequalities and mythologise them not just as ontologically ‘real’ and not just acquired entirely independently of any particular experience—as opposed to politically and socially constructed—but to describe and situate them as an integral part of the superior protection and regulation of life in Denmark. It is through a necropolitical reading that these elements are revealed: That the discursive production of ‘Africa’ as a death world functions not just an incidental acceptance of inevitable death, but as the intentional construction of the right to kill (Mbembe, 2003) and as the intentional maintenance of deadly conditions, so that necropower can facilitate and secure more even more biopower in its wake.

56. Ultimately, necropolitical notions make the assumption that there are a number of so-called technologies that advance these ultimately lethal processes of violence and attach them to certain bodies and nations along certain lines. To Mbembe, and to the interest of this study, these lines are drawn through processes of producing and assigning race. By creating discursive subordination of everything in ‘Africa’ to necropower, these discourses participate in producing and strengthening the assignment of illness and death—and therefore simultaneously health and life—along racial lines. As ordinary and mundane as it is to describe and produce ‘Africa’ as a place of death, this discursive configuration participates in legitimising the assignment of ‘Africa’ into an ontological, epistemic and material death world.

57. These reflections wrap up the first analysis chapter and lead us to further engagement with discursive configurations of death that are produced in ways that assign these configurations to particular bodies and relegate these bodies to zones of living and conditions of life that cannot sustain life but advance slow and fast death, and to a critical examination of the necropolitical configuration of Africans as the living dead in Danish mainstream media during COVID-19.

6. Analysis chapter 2: The necropolitical configuration of Africans as 'the living dead'

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1. In this chapter, I examine the relationship between race and necropolitics in the context of my data to show how African bodies, as well as bodies raced as black and those assigned to or associated with blackness, are discursively relegated to what Mbembe calls "a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26), in which colonised and racialised bodies neither possess life or death, but exist in a liminal space between the two. Mbembe has traced this relegation across a multitude of areas and shown how colonised bodies are ontologically, socially, politically, spatially, culturally and economically pushed into this third zone.

2. The quotes that follow in the box below are a representative synthesis of my textual data that I offer up as evidence of this necropolitical relegation of bodies. I will perform an examination of the overarching and intertextual necropolitical themes that these quotes contain, as well as a close critical discourse analysis of select, discrete sentences.

Embedded in-text

Headline: "Debate: Anthropologists after trip to Burkina Faso: Coronavirus is an almost impossible task for weak health systems in Africa."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (28 February, 2020)

““As we saw during the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, rumors and mistrust of national and international organisations' efforts to combat epidemics spread rapidly among the local population. (...) Strengthening the basic health system and greater resilience in the national surveillance system of potential epidemics will be absolutely essential if coronavirus—or other potential epidemics—are to be detected and contained in time. However, this in itself will not be enough. Learned from the experience of Ebola epidemics, it is crucial that there is a special focus on strengthening the confidence of local people and health workers in national and international organizations in order to ensure effective action against future epidemics.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (28 February, 2020)

Headline: “Danish help for Africa is running a race against time”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (3 April, 2020)

“The biggest challenge [in Africa] now is to get rid of the fear and the many myths that thrive in the wake of corona. Hans Storgaard points out that many Ethiopians believe that viruses can get stuck in the air following the presence of an infected person, so you become infected if you walk down the same street as them. Others have faith that the disease lets itself be cured with holy water, garlic or special teas. The Red Cross is trying to dispel myths and rumors through local volunteers who—after the travel ban—are the only ones who can make it into the villages. They drive around in cars and inform villagers through loudspeakers, but they also meet directly with the population—at a safe distance of two meters.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (3 April, 2020)

Headline: *“Debate: COVID-19 can open possibilities for Africa.”*
—Politiken (April 27, 2020)

Headline: “Africa’s corona anguish: no schools, no food”
—Jyllands-Posten (30 April, 2020)

“Facts: DANES AT THE FRONT LINES. The corona crisis has hit the whole world. Jyllands-Posten interviews a number of Danes who are at the front lines around the globe. From aid workers in refugee camps and poor countries to Danes responsible for global corona efforts. They all talk about their work and reflect on the crisis. (...) ERIKA JØRGENSEN. 62 years. Has worked for the United Nations World Food Program for 20 years and has previously lived in Bangkok, Rome and New York. Today she lives in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, where she is WFP's regional director in East Africa. Here she has the overall responsibility for coordinating food aid to nine African countries and has a staff of over 100 employees under her. The UN Food Program is described as the world's largest humanitarian organization fighting global hunger.”
—Jyllands-Posten (30 April, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

Headline: “While Africa awaits the corona storm: the whites will exterminate us”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (27 April, 2020)

3. **Discourse: African lives are contingent on white supremacy and saviourism.** Configurations of black and African people in Danish mainstream media during COVID-19 are characterised by patterns that attach ‘bad cultural practices’ and ‘bad personal choices’ to black bodies, whilst attaching proficiency, skill and knowledge to the white bodies. Whenever there is an interaction between black and white bodies in the sample articles, that dynamic is expressed through the racist filter of the what Teju Cole (2012) calls the white savior industrial complex—the idea that white people are acting from conscious or

unconscious positions of supremacy when they attempt to help or rescue black people or communities, positions that have a marginalising and oppressive effect on the communities they purport to help.

4. On 3 April 2020, Kristeligt Dagblad writes the following: “The biggest challenge [in Africa] now is to get rid of the fear and the many myths that thrive in the wake of corona. Hans Storgaard points out that many Ethiopians believe that viruses can get stuck in the air following the presence of an infected person, so you become infected if you walk down the same street as them. Others have faith that the disease lets itself be cured with holy water, garlic or special teas. The Red Cross is trying to dispel myths and rumors through local volunteers who—after the travel ban—are the only ones who can make it into the villages. They drive around in cars and inform villagers through loudspeakers, but they also meet directly with the population—at a safe distance of two meters.” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 3 April, 2020) These discursive productions contribute to older, colonial bodies of knowledge, what Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo (2020) call “the vast body of knowledge that posits black people as ‘problem people’ trapped by their cultures and morally dubious aspirations.” (p. 278). Much like the productions in the preceding chapter on the necropolitical constructions of ‘Africa’ as a death world and its attachment to large, old lexicons of colonial knowledge that posit ‘Africa’ as a place of darkness and disease, so are Africans themselves, African life itself, assigned to sickness and inferiority in need of white ‘help’. Africans make bad personal choices, whilst foreign aid organisations—always a stand-in for whiteness in general—make commendable ones. They may instrumentalise local volunteers—curiously, not *paid* local *partners*—but it is the Red Cross trying to dispel myths and rumours. It is the Red Cross that is the knowledgeable and rational and powerful actor, the body that dispenses knowledge through and into volunteering and superstitious African ‘villagers’ who, without the Red Cross to correct and save them, would continue to be superstitious and myth-bound. In Denmark, on the other hand, personal choices made by the general white population are complex and nuanced and

contradictory impulses and desires and values exist. In ‘Africa’, choices—like the bad choice to have too many children—are bad. African beliefs and choices and values are infantalised and reduced to myth and superstition.

5. End of February, Kristeligt Dagblad publishes a piece by two white female anthropologists, a PhD student and an associate professor at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen. The headline reads: “Debate: Anthropologists after trip to Burkina Faso: Coronavirus is an almost impossible task for weak health systems in Africa.” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 28 February, 2020) The anthropologists go to observe the following: “As we saw during the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, rumors and mistrust of national and international organisations' efforts to combat epidemics spread rapidly among the local population. (...) Strengthening the basic health system and greater resilience in the national surveillance system of potential epidemics will be absolutely essential if coronavirus—or other potential epidemics—are to be detected and contained in time. However, this in itself will not be enough. Learned from the experience of Ebola epidemics, it is crucial that there is a special focus on strengthening the confidence of local people and health workers in national and international organizations in order to ensure effective action against future epidemics.” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 28 February, 2020) These quotes provide examples of the discursive construction of Africans as passive beneficiaries of white philanthropy and assistance—stand-ins for white supremacy—in which worth and value and knowledge are assigned to the white body and foreigner, whilst incompetence and passivity are attached to African bodies.

6. On 30 April, Jyllands-Posten publishes an article with the following headline*:* “Africa’s corona anguish: no schools, no food.” (Jyllands-Posten, 30 April, 2020) No schools, no food. We are back to the discursive production of an empty ‘Africa’, a vast landmass devoid of anything other than beautiful nature and self-inflicted human suffering. No schools. Again and again we come back to the

reliance on white saviourism to configure ‘Africa’ for us. Earlier in the month, the same newspaper ran a headline that exposes this belief even more overtly: “Danish help for Africa is running a race against time” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 3 April, 2020) No schools, no foods, just Danish help racing against time. ‘Africa’ is not about ‘Africa’, but about white supremacy and white capabilities and white strength and valor. The majority of the articles in the sample data casually, either in covert or overt ways, produces necropower by perpetuating a pattern of white saviorism by conceptualising Africans as uneducated and uncoercive, prone to superstition and conspiracy theories, intentionally working either with or against white aid efforts and as people without agency who exist predominantly as passive recipients of white benevolence.

7. This pattern of superstitious, uncoercive, uneducated Africans quietly intimates the haunting sense that it is its people, not historical legacies, structures and systems, that represent the greatest challenge to the African continent and to the containment and treatment of COVID-19. Not even COVID-19 itself. In a dual movement, these characterisations manage to necropolitically assign death to the dying and blame to victims for their suffering by positioning their behaviours as morally questionable and as the very cause of the problems the behaviours are trying to alleviate, whilst also strengthening the necropolitical technique that configures whiteness as a source of life, of proficiency, of skill and of control.

8. These discursive techniques link to Sara Ahmed’s (see for example 2004; 2017) extensive work with theorising the affective dimensions of racialisation and the cultural politics of affect, and how we can learn about the dimensions of power by examining who complains and have the right to complain about abuses of power.

9. The sample data does not contain detailed descriptions of the work and labour that African researchers, health workers, policy-makers and activists are putting up in the fight to contain the pandemic. But there is plenty of mention of the heroic efforts of Danes, fighting in the front lines against COVID-19, or helping

local actors realise their own potential. On 30 April, for example, Jyllands-Posten writes this: “Facts: DANES AT THE FRONT LINES. The corona crisis has hit the whole world. Jyllands-Posten interviews a number of Danes who are at the front lines around the globe. From aid workers in refugee camps and poor countries to Danes responsible for global corona efforts. They all talk about their work and reflect on the crisis. (...) ERIKA JØRGENSEN. 62 years. Has worked for the United Nations World Food Program for 20 years and has previously lived in Bangkok, Rome and New York. Today she lives in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, where she is WFP's regional director in East Africa. Here she has the overall responsibility for coordinating food aid to nine African countries and has a staff of over 100 employees under her. The UN Food Program is described as the world's largest humanitarian organization fighting global hunger.”
(Jyllands-Posten, 30 April, 2020)

10. Another striking absence in the sample articles is the decidedly unheroic relationship between the white world to countries of Africa.

11. There is some acknowledgement of the existence of mistrust from Africans towards Europeans, but it used to dehumanise Africans and diminish their capacities and agency instead of being treated in its historical context. African mistrust towards white and European actors is *more than warranted* when we account for the long and brutal history, both past and present, of colonial and epicolonial medical experimentation in ‘Africa’. As Patrick Malloy (2014) notes in his paper, *Research Material and Necromancy: Imagining the Political-Economy of Biomedicine in Colonial Tanganyika*, European colonial and biomedical regimes not only co-constructed, but expanded and strengthened each other for centuries—and abhorrently continue to do so through contemporary medical trials that use ‘Africa’ and African people as a testing ground for medical experiments. For more on medical apartheid, see Harriet A. Washington’s seminal work, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (2007).

12. This general failure to properly account for and contextualise Europe's colonial past, and our necropolitical and late-colonial present and border regimes and resource extraction, as well as the continuous white interference, contributes to the configuration of the necropolitical obfuscation of the interlocking and co-constituting histories between white Europeans and black Africans, see for example Walter Rodney's seminal work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972).

13. The few times I came across the explicit mentioning of the politically intertwined relationships between 'Africa' and Europe, the articles express this relationship through self-protective anxieties. An editorial in Information, for instance, stated that Africa's problems becoming 'our' problems is a political dilemma that all Western countries face (Information, 24 April, 2020). The article contains the sentence: "The developing countries' (Danish: u-landenes) problems of today will be our problems of tomorrow." (Information, 24 April, 2020) I recall that term from my childhood. U-lande. Developing countries. D-countries, would be an accurate translation. The most well-intentioned articles, the ones that speak of stretching ourselves to provide transnational solidarity, do so with a justification that is firmly rooted in self-protection and self-gain: We must help 'Africa' because it will benefit us in the long run.

14. How many ways of employing necropolitical discursive strategies to justify 'necropolitical resource extraction' can we think of? How many ways can we mobilise 'Africa' for our own redemption?

15. These discursive infantalisations of Africans also speak to the idea of the 'passive' African and 'active' European, which a huge body of scholarship that has identified and examined these representations and their implications. For example, Nandita Dogra (2013) refers to this in her work on representations in international development. These active versus passive constructions keep

coming up throughout the sample data. Their constructions look like white bodies with names and stories, whilst black bodies are produced as anonymous and represented as poor, female or child, as inactive and in need of guidance. In her work, Nanjala Nyabola (2018) writes about the construction of a ‘passive’ ‘Africa’ that is produced as an object for consumption, populated with passive women and children through what she calls “the language of colonisation” (Nyabola, 2018, para. 8). She remarks on how ‘Africa’ is described “in relation to its position in Western and now Eastern commodity chains”, which reinforces ‘Africa’ as a “‘a new economic frontier’ and not (...) a home.” (Nyabola, 2018, para. 8)

16. **Discourse: European experts relegate African experts to a third zone of the living dead.** Another striking tendency in my sample data is the recurring way in which Danish journalists seek expert input on ‘Africa’ from everywhere other than ‘Africa’ itself, both as geographical and epistemic locations, and from everyone else other than black Africans. It is so closely related to white saviourism, yet subtly different. It is the argument of this study that the recurring relegation of African experts on issues in and of ‘Africa’ constitutes a necropolitical technique, in which Africans and their knowledge production and epistemics are subordinated into what Mbembe calls “a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood” (2003, p. 26). In this case, bodies marked as black and African can not produce or possess knowledge, but are suspended in a space between ontology and epistemics. Within this space of epistemic tension and unbecoming, Africans can’t produce knowledge or conditions that sustain knowledge themselves, but must depend on deferred knowledge.

17. In the following paragraph, I will do a close discourse analysis of one of the quotes that encapsulates this tendency well in order to do a close examination of the necropolitical underpinnings of this particular kind of discourse. According to an article published by Politiken in March 2020, John Campbell is an American ‘Africa-expert’ from the American and US-based think tank Council on Foreign Relations. This small example warrants detailed attention, as John Campbell’s

inclusion in the article, as well as his statements, hint at larger systems of necropolitical knowledge production and circulation, and at who is permitted and encouraged to create and speak and who will be believed within these larger systems of knowledge. This links to the previously discussed emerging research within critical discourse studies on racism that seeks to elucidate and lay bare racism not just within the discourse itself, but in how access to discourse creation is produced in the first place (see for example Carroll, 2017). "»In my opinion, we basically do not know how the virus came to Africa. Where does the media get it from? In most cases from the local health authorities«, says John Campbell. (...) »The only thing we can say with certainty is that Africa will not have the capacity to deal with it«, says John Campbell on the phone from his home office in Washington." (Politiken, 19 March, 2020) Sourcing an 'Africa-expert'—in and of itself a highly dubious term, as it seems doubtful it is possible to be an expert on as complex a system as the world's second-largest and second-most populous continent of 54 sovereign states—in the US reveals the intentional and effortful act of reaching out to a *foreign* expert, one who is thousands of kilometers away, speaks another language and most likely resides in a different time zone to Denmark. If those are the lengths you will go to in order to speak to an expert over the phone for your piece on 'Africa', there is nothing prohibiting you from reaching out to an 'Africa-expert' in *Africa*, which is not only geographically closer and time zone-correspondent, but presumably epistemically much more relevant to your piece on, yes, Africa. Unless, of course, you are committed to constructing your ideas of 'Africa' without the participation of Africans. It is striking that a Danish journalist reveals that it is through the viewpoints of American foreign relations that Danish media will access the most relevant and useful analysis of 'Africa'.

18. These techniques allow us to trace, plainly, the role that geopolitics play in the way smaller, everyday, 'innocuous' media discourse is constructed. We are not interested in what 'Africa' is to Africans. We are interested in and privilege how 'Africa' appears to Americans, our cultural and political friends and allies. In fact,

as John Campbell makes sure to stress, we do not trust the 'local', which is to say African, health authorities. In John's opinion, which we *can* trust, *we* do not know how the virus came to 'Africa' because all we have to go by is what *local* authorities tell us. Local African, that is, not local American. The US never really gets configured as local, and if it is, we don't mean local in *that way*. The US is a society and (part of) the world and globally relevant and relatable. Local African authorities connote something far away from both the truth and John Campbell's office. When he refers to a *we* that speaks with certainty—"»The only thing we can say with certainty is that Africa will not have the capacity to deal with it«" (Politiken, 19 March, 2020)—it is a we that functions not just to the exclusion of, but in overt defiance of the aforementioned local authorities. Local media, via local health authorities, claim one thing about how the virus came to 'Africa', but the American we, it is implied, knows better and knows that we, both Americans and Danes, should be suspicious of what those local health authorities are claiming, especially when it contradicts our pre-empted narrative of unrelenting and ever-impending African tragedy and death. Crucially, the American expert gets named by first and last name, as well as his professional title and place of affiliation. In sharp contrast to this, the local health authorities are a large, unnamed, untraceable, interchangeable mass, anonymous, faceless, displaced and unreliable. There is no specific geography attached to these local authorities, aside from the dizzyingly unspecific and vast 'Africa', and no specific profession either, aside from another vast and imprecise reference to the health sector. This all serves to situate Africans, when they are implied in the text, as generalised and nonspecific, whilst white experts get constructed as precise, specific, knowable and knowledgeable.

19. If we take all these intertextual references and hold them together as one, Politiken manages to create, in collaboration with 'Africa'-expert John Campbell, a privileging of the white knowledge on 'Africa' as something that represents an inherently truthful construction of 'Africa', whilst discrediting and casting doubt on the validity of African knowledges on 'Africa'. This is a contemporary expression

of a technique as old as white supremacy itself, one that can be traced all the way back to Europe's first colonial encounters with the African continent and all the way back to John Maudeville's fourteenth century book, *Mandeville's Travels, of pilgrimage, travellers' tales, and fantasy*, one of the earliest known and preserved literary depictions of medieval European race-making that, according to Heather Blatt (2020), has been influential in planting some of the first seeds for colourblind racism. By constructing Africans as a generalised mass and American experts as a person we can call and speak to on the phone, these discourses contribute to the configuration of white lives and people as more real than the amorphous and unknowable group of black lives.

20. Similarly, Information writes that "[f]ew professionals believe that Africa can avoid the epidemic, and when it hits it could have far more serious consequences than in Europe. But a miracle can not be completely ruled out." (Information, 14 March, 2020). These two sentences crystallise multiple tendencies in the data. First of all, they elevate racist anxieties about an anticipatory African either tragedy or miracle to so-called professional judgment. Framing racist discourse as not just expert opinion but majority expert opinion, by minoritising the 'professionals' who believe 'Africa' can avoid an epidemic impact less severe than *in Europe*, forms part of white supremacist efforts to elevate the discursive value of a statement like this from prejudice to fact. By calling on *professionals* to express beliefs about the future state of an entire continent, it sounds less like a belief and more like substantiated knowledge.

21. This reveals an important discursive choice that runs through the data: 'Africa' is never permitted to 'speak'. 'Africa' is spoken *about*. It is worried about and speculated about and feared for and reported *on*, but it does not set its own terms of engagement. It does not even co-create a discourse. Black African experts are not consulted. 'Africa' is determined in the Danish imaginary. 'Africa', in these media reports, exists entirely free of any actual African input. 'Africa', as it exists under COVID-19 in Danish mainstream media, is produced without the

participation of any Africans. It exists free of itself, as a deferred entity, and is therefore a puzzling epistemic product, never ontological, who cannot see or know itself.

22. Danish mainstream media routinely publishes translated British and American journalism, written and produced in the UK and US, by and for British and American audiences. I only came across one article written in the African continent, by an African journalist, on issues pertaining to the African continent—or anything else for that matter. ‘Africa’ almost never speaks and cannot generate reliable knowledge on itself. White journalists in Denmark speak on and about the continent. If they do seek commentary, it is from white Danish experts on Africa, or it is from other white European experts, or white European agencies and institutes. They do not seek information or commentary from black and African experts or journalists or politicians. At most, they do reports on—not *with*—‘poor, black Africans’, in which a white journalist sets the tone and asks the questions. Information about ‘Africa’ comes from Danish mainstream media *itself*. It does not exist *out there* as recognisable to the hundreds of millions of Africans who live on the continent. It is an ontology of its own. The ‘Africa’ that Danish media reports on is into a place of the white Danish imaginary, an ontological production that only exists, in its particularities, in Danish discourse. It begs the curious question if Africans even recognise the ‘Africa’ that gets produced in by the Minority World and Western-based mainstream media.

23. These configurations are collectively produced and sustained. They are not individual prejudice—what mainstream psychology often theorises racism as and limits it to, as discussed in the Chapter on Theoretical Considerations—but constitute a common backdrop, what phenomenologists call ‘the habitual background’. Habitual backgrounds are not individually owned, but they are enacted and reproduced and sustained and strengthened and undermined and delegitimised by people. As Kessi, Marks and Ragumondo remark: “[S]tructures, epistemologies and actions alike are dependent on human relations; we sustain

and replicate systems of power and exclusion." (Kessi, Marks & Ramugondo, 2020, p. 275). Such cannot be individually owned but is always already in the common world.

24. A pertinent question to ask then is: who is accountable for Denmark's mainstream media? Who has access to it and who is allowed a right to participate in the determination of what and who black people are? Who is included and excluded from these productions? Who is pushed to the zone of the living dead, a suspended existence between production and consumption?

25. **Discourse: African agency and opinions are instrumentalised to support necropolitical logics.** A related technique that upholds the relegation of African knowledge to a third zone of the living dead is the weaponisation and instrumentalisation of black opinions to confirm colonial and necropolitical logics and world orders. The only time African agency occurs within the sample data is when it is assigned to pre-existing necropolitical hierarchies and structures.

Embedded in-text

"»In my opinion, we basically do not know how the virus came to Africa. Where does the media get it from? In most cases from the local health authorities«, says John Campbell. (...) »The only thing we can say with certainty is that Africa will not have the capacity to deal with it«, says John Campbell on the phone from his home office in Washington."
—Politiken (19 March, 2020)

"Denmark has, for decades, fought to stabilise the continent and worked to create a future for the African population."
—Jyllands-Posten, 24 March, 2020)

“Africa must recognize its problems and take part in solving them. COVID-19 has changed Africa's development potential. Significant setbacks in the fight against poverty are now threatening on the horizon, as the countries of the developed part of the world turn their eyes inwards and away from Africa and focus on correcting their own economies. However, it is not necessarily negative as long as Africa recognizes its problems and becomes part of the solution itself. (...) [COVID-19] has been involved in exposing African governments and their international sponsors. (...) In virtually all African countries, there is a shortage of hospitals, healthcare professionals and medicines. (...) As a direct consequence of poor management and poor spending habits, we are left to the charity of others to obtain the right amount of test kits and preventive treatment equipment.”
—Politiken (April 27, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

“When the Dane occasionally looks up from the mountains of concrete, practical tasks that need to be addressed these days, she makes no secret of the fact that she is worried about the bruises that the corona crisis will inflict on African society in the long run.”
—Jyllands-Posten (9 April, 2020)

26. In the cluster of 3764 articles on ‘Africa’ and COVID-19 I sampled, I came across a single example in which a black African person is allowed to participate in the determination and production of who and what ‘Africa’ is. This particular example warrants closer examination as, at first glance, such a striking anomaly. The article in question is a translated opinion piece by Bobi Wine, a black Ugandan member of parliament, and Greg Mills, a white South African CEO. A translation was published in Politiken on 27 April with the title: “Debate: COVID-19 can open possibilities for Africa.” (Politiken, April 27, 2020) In the piece, Bobi Wine and

Greg Mills write the following: “Africa must recognize its problems and take part in solving them. COVID-19 has changed Africa's development potential. Significant setbacks in the fight against poverty are now threatening on the horizon, as the countries of the developed part of the world turn their eyes inwards and away from Africa and focus on correcting their own economies. However, it is not necessarily negative as long as Africa recognizes its problems and becomes part of the solution itself. (...) [COVID-19] has been involved in exposing African governments and their international sponsors. (...) In virtually all African countries, there is a shortage of hospitals, healthcare professionals and medicines. (...) As a direct consequence of poor management and poor spending habits, we are left to the charity of others to obtain the right amount of test kits and preventive treatment equipment.” (Politiken, April 27, 2020)

27. In these quotes, all from the same article, the discursive construction of ‘Africa’ draws on a wide range of pre-established, intertextual understandings of ‘Africa’: They immediately reduce the entire continent to a single, homogenous unit, something it is possible to speak of in grossly simplified terms. There is one ‘Africa’, and it functions as a singular space, a single entity, one country, a unit with a distinct task, in this case to recognise its problems and become accountable for those problems, something—it is implied—that ‘Africa’ has not yet done or is reluctant to do. They also make references to ‘Africa’s’ potential, a more recent necropolitical discourse that situates ‘Africa’ as a space of sudden growth and value, erasing the reality that value has been extracted from ‘Africa’ since the beginning of colonial activity, whilst also obscuring the complexities of African histories. They further imply that ‘Africa’s’ poverty will increase as a function of ‘the developed part of the world’ retracting their help and support, as though the economic states of African countries are the result of their own mismanagement and bad governance—what they call poor management and poor spending habits—and not the engineered outcome of centuries of resource theft and exploitation by those same ‘developed’ countries. They go on to obscure, if not flat-out deny, the interconnection of global economies by urging

‘Africa’ to focus on their ‘own’ economies, as though they can be conceived of in insular, clearly defined terms, a closed system that can be managed from within. Lastly, they frame necropolitical and extractive relationships between African and European governments as ‘sponsorship’ and ‘charity’.

28. What is interesting about this article is *not* the implications of a black Ugandan man, in collaboration with a white South African man, choosing to critique ‘Africa’. That is not what this doctorate is concerned with. It is not my place or my right to analyse or comment on that and I do not have the ability to. What is interesting about this opinion piece, to the particular pursuit of this scholarship, however, is how it is precisely *these* sentiments, in this setup, that gain access to a Danish newspaper.

29. It is interesting and revealing that the *one time* a black man’s voice and opinions on ‘Africa’ and COVID-19 are represented in Danish mainstream media in the sizable set of sample data of this doctorate, it is a representation in which the black voice speaks alongside a white voice, and it is an example of commentary that draws on a wide array of racist tropes about the African continent, tropes widely recognisable and consumable to a Danish readership. The fact that this is the stand-alone example of the partial amplification of a black man’s voice, to the exclusion of the amplification of interviews with or opinion pieces by other black people or black scholars and experts who would represent a different ‘Africa’, reveals that media institutions are not trying to participate in inclusive representation and dialogue. Rather, it tells us that they are, as they do, weaponising black voices to confirm pre-existing racist bias. This is an important discursive strategy to be cognisant of, one that reveals that media representation of marginalised groups and voices can be used to both strengthen and weaken oppressive ideology.

30. The discourses examined throughout this chapter—1) Discourse: African lives are contingent on white supremacy and saviourism; 2) European experts

relegate African experts to a third zone of the living dead; and 3) African opinions are instrumentalised to support necropolitical logics—further illuminate additional ways in which necropolitical logics and power are produced and maintained and strengthened in Danish mainstream media during COVID-19 in 2020.

31. Across these discourses, necropolitics at large again provide us with multiple avenues to fracture and deepen our understanding of how these discourses work to assign death to some and the right to kill to others. As was asked in the beginning of the chapter, what place is given to the 'African' body under the pandemic in Danish discourse? How are conditions of death and disease discursively produced in such a way that particular groups, in this case African groups, are relegated, epistemically and discursively, to zones of living that do not sustain life but to conditions that advance slow and fast death? How do logics of death advance racialisation as a central technique?

32. Much like in the previous chapter, across the evidence put forth in this analysis chapter, we see the racialising logic and technique of necropolitics put forth by Mbembe in his original formulation of the concept. In the preceding evidence, Danish media explicitly racialise African people and 'Africa' and imbue these racialisations of life-as-death with brutality by assigning Mbembe's concept of 'sub-humanity' (Mbembe, 2017) to these racialisations. 'Sub-humanity' describes, as Mbembe observes in *A Critique of Black Reason* (2017), how 'benevolent' colonial powers construct sub-human and childlike 'Nègres', who require both intervention and guidance to survive. *Négre*, according to the translator, Laurent Dubois, of *A Critique of Black Reason*, "is a particularly capacious and shifting term in French, layered with uses and counteruses, shot through in a sense with centuries of struggle over its very meaning" (p. xiv, 2017) but ultimately means 'black' or 'blackness' in ways that can be both neutral and political. This notion of sub-humanity works to advance a humanity that is premised on white colonial paradigms, in which humanness is ascribed to colonisers, whilst those colonised and brutalised through racialisation are placed at a border where, as Sabeen

Chaudhry puts it, they are “straddling a line they did not draw, with one foot within the territory of humanity and the other outside.” (Chaudhry, n. d., para. 17) Chaudhry goes on to explain that, “[t]his paradigm is also one that assigns and rates humanity along a linear scale with non-human at one end and human at the other, where people are placed in ascending order according to increasing levels of supposed characteristics of humanity.” (Chaudhry, n. d., para. 17) Throughout this chapter, we see how necropolitical discourse assigns Africans to a sub-humanity by producing discourses that situate African lives as helpless and African knowledge as impossible.

33. These haunting techniques of necropower and the racialised configurations of black death and white supremacy wrap up the second analysis chapter and lead us to an examination of gender and gendering’s relevance to necropolitics and how gender interlocks with and co-constitutes necropolitics, which I will attend to in the next chapter: Gender and necropolitics.

7. Analysis chapter 3: Gender within necropolitical configurations of 'Africa'

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1. Whilst Mbembe's notion of necropolitics theorises the logic of death as inherently racialised and racialising, as examined in the preceding two chapters that looked at the production of 'Africa' and African lives and how these productions are assign to death worlds and the living dead, gender and sexuality have not been taken up by Mbembe (2003) in his original conception. The following chapter will incorporate decolonial, intersectional and queerfeminist critiques of necropolitics to advance an interrogation of how necropolitical processes of racialisation function through additional mechanisms of gender and sexuality.

2. In this analysis chapter, I examine the necropolitical mobilisation of gendered and sexualised discourse during the coverage of COVID-19 and 'Africa' in my sample data of Danish media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. By applying a queerfeminist reworking of Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, I will examine how gender *in* necropolitics and gendered and sexualised death are discursively produced and regulated in Danish mainstream media in and of 'Africa', in order to point towards and interrogate mundane everyday pandemic discourse in its necropolitical and intersectional complexity and damage.

3. The following quotes are a representative synthesis of my textual data that I offer up as evidence of the discursive constructions of gendered death in Danish media's production of 'Africa'. I will perform an examination of the overarching and intertextual necropolitical themes that these quotes contain, as well as a close critical discourse analysis of select, discrete sentences.

4. **Discourse: Suffering and death are gendered in 'Africa'.** The following quotes are representative examples of how gendered and sexualised dimensions of

necropolitical discourse function in the mainstream media coverage of the pandemic and ‘Africa’ in my sample data. It is a discourse that represents both a departure from and reliance on what has been identified and examined in the discourses in the first and second analysis chapter, in which every effort is made to diminish and homogenise ‘Africa’ and Africans into a single entity and mass. This discourse works in tandem with the previously identified discursive techniques by continuing to rely on massifying and overgeneralising African populations and demographic groups, but it works in tension with this strategy by diversifying and stratifying the necropolitical production of African lives along two additional lines: gender, sexuality and childhood. These additional stratifications, in turn, continue to homogenise within the additional borders they draw, ignoring and denying possibilities of difference *within* groups demarcated by gender, sexuality and childhood. It is important to note that these stratifications do not occur frequently throughout the data, but represent a new scope in the dimensions of how to investigate and examine the ways in which discursive logics of death organise and regulate themselves. The following analysis will critically examine how necropolitics create splits and tensions in its creation of discursive everyday death worlds of racialisation, in which ‘African’ women, queers and children are marked through logics of intelligibility in their suffering and death, whilst black men’s death remains silenced and intelligible.

Embedded in-text

"It is understandable that African governments are shutting down to avoid infection. But an African woman who cannot go to the market and sell her tomatoes is without any income.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (28 March 2020)

“*Facts: CORONA IN AFRICA. The number of infected people in Africa is surrounded by relatively high uncertainty in light of the lack of tests and poorly functioning health systems in many countries. (...)*

Most infected are registered in:
South Africa: 927
Egypt: 495
Algeria: 302
Morocco: 275
Tunisia: 173."
—Jyllands-Posten (28 March, 2020)

"In the long run, corona can present challenges that we would not see in strong Western democracies. (...) There are also examples of authorities using the situation to target minorities. In Uganda, where homosexuality can lead to life imprisonment, 20 people from the LGBT community were recently charged with violating assembly restrictions."
—Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)

"The unrest is also simmering in the large East African country of Kenya. The French newspaper Le Monde describes, among other things, scenes from the capital Nairobi's large slum Kibera, where exhausted women and children collapse in the queue for food and water, where the police, repeatedly, have had to resort to the use of batons and tear gas to ensure peace and order."
—Jyllands-Posten (23 April 2020)

"Millions of girls and women will, against their will, have become pregnant, divorced or circumcised in the turbulent wake of the pandemic. We are all involved in deciding how hard the corona crisis will hit the world's poorest, says former Dutch Minister for Development Aid Lilianne Ploumen. In the villages of Somalia, there is one profession that has flourished during the corona crisis: female genital mutilation. According to the children's organisation Plan International, 'the circumcisers' have been especially diligent in their knocking

on doors to bring home money during lockdown—and the families have welcomed their services."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (8 June, 2020)

Headline: "Africa's girls are paying the price for COVID-19."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (20 August, 2020)

"More than 120 million girls have been sent home from school as part of the African countries' efforts against COVID-19. For many of them, 'home' means more violence and more sexual assaults. In other areas, too, the massive shutdown of African societies takes a toll on the girls."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (20 August, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

"Both in Ethiopia and in the rest of Africa, the number of child marriages has increased since the outbreak of COVID-19, because to some poor families, marrying off a daughter and having one less mouth to feed seems to be the only solution to their financial problems. And that is just one of the problems that have arisen for Africa's girl children in the wake of the corona crisis."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (20 August, 2020)

5. On 28 March 2020, Kristeligt Dagblad writes: "It is understandable that African governments are shutting down to avoid infection. But an African woman who cannot go to the market and sell her tomatoes is without any income."(Kristeligt Dagblad, 28 March 2020). On 23 April 2020, Jyllands-Posten publishes the following commentary: "In the long run, corona can present challenges that we would not see in strong Western democracies. (...) There are also examples of authorities using the situation to target minorities. In Uganda, where homosexuality can lead to life imprisonment, 20 people from the LGBT

community were recently charged with violating assembly restrictions." (Jyllands-Posten, 23 April, 2020) Later in the year, on 20 August 2020, Kristeligt Dagblad headlines an article as such: "Africa's girls are paying the price for COVID-19." (Kristeligt Dagblad, 20 August, 2020). The piece goes on to state the following: "More than 120 million girls have been sent home from school as part of the African countries' efforts against COVID-19. For many of them, 'home' means more violence and more sexual assaults. In other areas, too, the massive shutdown of African societies takes a toll on the girls." (Kristeligt Dagblad, 20 August, 2020)

6. These discourses play on the affective registers of Danish liberalism through a pandering to feminist and LGBT rights, as well as to conservative notions of the vulnerable child and woman in distress. This pandering allows racism to be manifested as a public and international good—after all, it is 'we' that must be part of 'deciding' if we want to defend the helpless and collapsing 'women and children' from the ravages of—it is implied—black men and black male authorities.

7. Laleh Khalili (2011) calls this the weaponisation of gendered 'telling' to distinguish between those who are (supposed) to be protected from those who are (supposed) to be feared and annihilated. These discursive strategies are so powerful that they do not need to rely on facts—rather, they override facts and pre-determine them, a reversal of the usual direction fact-production takes and making them into narrative and emotional products., which relates back to the discursive weaponisation of 'facts' on and about 'Africa', in which factually incorrect statements are articulated and produced as 'fact'.

8. It is only within the structures of a white supremacist and racist logic that criticism of how inequitably COVID-19 distributes globally and racially can be responded to with discursive productions on the futures of children, women and LGBT persons 'under' black governments.

9. One of the salient differences between the discursive construction of black women and children, on the one hand, and black men, on the other, is not in the literal exposure to dangerous and harmful and fatal circumstances—it is instructive to remember that black men are also victims of racialised brutality and violence—but rather in the circulation of that harm and those dangers and that death within dominant and mainstream discursive frameworks that determine who can be publicly mourned as 'victims' of COVID-19's devastating direct and indirect effects.

10. There is one particular aspect that recurrently marks the discursive construction of dying Africans that remains repeated in the Danish mainstream media articles of my sample data. Namely, that the vast majority of suffering and dying African bodies under COVID-19 are black and they are poor and they are women and children.

11. On 8 June 2020, Kristeligt Dagblad writes as follows: "Millions of girls and women will, against their will, have become pregnant, divorced or circumcised in the turbulent wake of the pandemic. We are all involved in deciding how hard the corona crisis will hit the world's poorest, says former Dutch Minister for Development Aid Lilianne Ploumen. In the villages of Somalia, there is one profession that has flourished during the corona crisis: female genital mutilation. According to the children's organisation Plan International, 'the circumcisers' have been especially diligent in their knocking on doors to bring home money during lockdown - and the families have welcomed their services." (Kristeligt Dagblad, 8 June, 2020) The sheer number of women and children who are suffering and dying is enough to mobilise a former Dutch minister to make statements that sympathise with the fates of the world's poorest and condemn the violent conditions under which they necessarily live.

12. In the repetition of the so-called ‘facts’ surrounding the dying and suffering of women and children, there is a noticeable absence: Acknowledgement of the lives and deaths, the living and dying, of black men.

13. These techniques of gendered necropolitics relate to and are conversant with the extensive scholarship on gendered discourse and war. In 1990, Cynthia Enloe (1990) coined the term ‘womenandchildren’ in order to think about the operationalisation of gendered discourses to justify the first Gulf War. By utilising Enloe’s concept of ‘womenandchildren’, as well as Maya Mikdashi’s (2021) reworkings of it, we are able to interrogate and think through how death, and *whose* deaths, circulate in Danish mainstream media in relation to ‘Africa’ and COVID-19. Maya Mikdashi (2021) argues that “in this framework, the death of women and girls and pre-teen and underage boys is to be marked, but boys and men are presumed guilty of what they might do if allowed to live their lives. (...) The young boys, after all, may grow up to be violent extremists. Thus, kill the flesh—extinguish the potential.” (Mikdashi, 2021, para. 3) According to Mikdashi, this produces a configuration that accomplishes two important discursive functions: “The massifying of women and children into an undistinguishable group brought together by the ‘sameness’ of gender and sex, and the reproduction of the male black body as always already dangerous.” (Mikdashi, 2021, para. 3)

14. The killing, imprisonment, and maiming of black men and boys in times of a pandemic goes uncited, untold, unremarked on. White Danish men, on the other hand, are framed and readable as victims of COVID-19. From the very beginning of the coverage. They are publicly mourned and celebrated through, for example, humanising diary-style articles of the first official COVID-19 patient detailed in the previous analysis chapter.

15. In an almost direct reversal of these productions, black migrants and African men are constructed as one of the primary threats against European borders and

women, which allows for the concurrent construction of them as a primary and justified target of European state violence. Yet they are not produced by Danish media as subjects or figures who are victimised by state violence despite being the primary target of border controls. Black men are put in the impossible and contradictory position of having to fight to be recognised as human, to be acknowledged in life and death as victims of necropolitical injury. The identifiers 'African' and 'black' produce them as threats and as targets, while the gendering preclude them from being understood and circulated as mournable victims in the media.

16. The emphasis on the suffering of women and children, to the exclusion of black men and boys and black migrants, further normalises white supremacist violence. We mourn those who are defenseless and innocent and who can serve as narratives to prop up white democracy by marking the sites of their deaths as inherently 'undemocratic' and 'anti-Western'. Men get excluded from this unless they are queer men, in which case they are emasculated through processes of homophobia and thus not considered a threat. Ablebodied, heterosexual and cisgender black men are always already suspicious and dangerous, a living and breathing embodiment of the possibility, if not inevitability, of violence. The individual and personal violence towards women and children and queers is massified and generalised in statistics.

17. To Danish media, 'Africans' function as a reminder that there is another *other*: An announcement, a hypervisible disturbance, that keeps pointing to and strengthening the conscious or subconscious white reality that our ability to be *Danish*, to be a white nation state, to be a white democracy, our ability to be on the inside of those productions, to be fully alive, is intimately entwined with the simultaneous presence and erasure of outsiders and the deaths of others.

18. To perpetuate this social and political order, mundane everyday discourse in Danish media pushes every African woman, every African child, all African

queers, as well as the muted, silenced, invisiblised African men who only appear as perpetrators of violence—never as its victims—into zones of gendered and sexualised death. Consider these two quotes that reveal so much about our constructions of African women and children: On 21 April 2020, Information writes this: “On a gravel road in the township Khayelitsha in Cape Town, planks of wood, mattresses and clothes are strewn across the dirty ground. Two women embrace each other on a plastic chair in front of a shed, while the sound of gunshots resounds in the background.” (Information, 21 April, 2020) On 23 April 2020, Jyllands-Posten publishes the following: “The unrest is also simmering in the large East African country of Kenya. The French newspaper Le Monde describes, among other things, scenes from the capital Nairobi's large slum Kibera, where exhausted women and children collapse in the queue for food and water, where the police, repeatedly, have had to resort to the use of batons and tear gas to ensure peace and order.” (Jyllands-Posten, 23 April 2020)

19. As Maya Mikdashi puts it when she details the similar gendering of Israel’s war on Gaza, this discursive framework of death “identifies and enumerates them, sequesters and quarantines them, occupies and divides them, disenfranchises and under-develops them, places them under siege and wages war on them with impunity.” (Mikdashi, 2021, para. 9)

20. What this means is that gender and sexuality function as a mechanisms of legibility and intelligiblity that marks and splits off some deaths—queer, female, child—as readable to us only in death, whilst others—male—remain unintelligible to us as even as death. Black men don’t even get to be recognisable as dead or dying in Danish media.

21. According to Midashi (2021), the practices of these everyday technologies and strategies have ceased to shock us. This is due to the erasure and normalcy of the slow death, genocide, structural violence and dependency lived daily by indigenous communities across the world, including the lives lived by indigenous

Inuit communities in Greenland under contemporary Danish colonial rule. In fact, it is, in part, the normalisation of contemporary white Danish colonialism in Greenland that produces today's refugees in Kibera or assaulted women in South Africa or migrant refugees by the Greek border as readable to Danish readers as discrete and 'reprehensible' events. It is the success of white supremacist necropolitics that a Somali woman and her child—who were barred from the child's creche in Denmark during the pandemic for no other reason than being black and blackness signaling pandemic infection—are produced as somehow apart from and different to the women and children suffering in 'Africa'. It is the success of necropolitical structures that these are made literate to us as two distinct and separable events, rather than different aspects of the same mechanism.

22. These lives should not be separated in death by Danish mainstream media according to our gendering of them. This separation reproduces and strengthens a gendered, sexualised and racialised hierarchy of victims and mournable lives and deaths. It is a hierarchy that allows black women and queers to emerge and be publicly and internationally mourned *only* in spectacles of violence-and-disease, violence-*in*-disease, but never in the slow and silenced deaths under ordinary necropolitical conditions of excessive death.

23. These themes relate to the recent development of pandemic scholarship that seeks to directly connect necropolitical understandings of power during the pandemic to performativity. For example, For example, Kandida Purnell elaborates on this, exploring the "raced, classed, and gendered, local-national-global lines along which every body is hierarchically arranged and (in)secured within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic." (Purnell, 2021, p. 6) To this end, she cites Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which highlights the "reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomenon it regulates and contains" (Butler, 1993, p. 2) to ensure that some will always fare worse than others in the mass death event of a pandemic.

24. **Discourse: African lives are ungrievable.** Not only are lives split along gendered and sexualised lines in death. They are also split along these lines in grief and in mourning. If unviable, as established earlier, then of course also the discourse of ungrievable. There is a negative space in all the articles in the sample data that I want to touch on. Because when there is a presence, there is an absence. Throughout my engagement with all these articles, I keep coming back to that, to the question of presence versus absence. I keep coming back to the idea that when there is a choice to include a certain narrative, there is a concurrent choice to exclude another. That empty space, the deliberate exclusions, the silent implications, tell us as much as the active inclusions. What is left out is as important to address as what is left *in*. I want to address the glaring thing no article really talks about: The tragedy of the thousands of African lives lost to the pandemic. I have gone through more than ten thousand articles. Nowhere did I come across grief. Not once did I see mourning. Not once did I see condolences or respect for lives lost. I saw concern for and pain and fear in relation to the handful of Europeans who have contracted the virus. I saw an in-depth interest in their lives as people. I saw portraits of the contractees. Following are the quotes that touch on the grief and pain and sadness attached to the loss of African life:

25. I did not identify a single one across the sample data's cluster of 3764 on COVID-19 and 'Africa'. This untelling, unciting, unremarking is striking. There is no point in mourning an African death in Danish mainstream media. We already consider that body inherently closer to and thus more deserving of dying. In these constructions, abhorrently, it is not surprising, or even tragic, that black people die, and their deaths don't count as a loss, not really, because they were never fully alive and always already configured as expendable.

26. These observations are conversant with Hugo Canham's theorisation on hierarchies of death and mourning in his seminal piece, *Black Death and Mourning as Pandemic* (2021). Hugo Canham (2021) expands on Butler's concepts around grievability and vulnerability in the context of the pandemic. Through his work, Canham insists on and draws attention to the importance of publicly mourning all black deaths—men and women and children and queer people alike—at moments of pandemic crisis and during the everyday siege of violent necropolitics, and thereby insisting on their right to have been alive in the first place.

27. Instead of mourning or grieving any lives lost to the pandemic across 'Africa', the texts in my sample data reduce them to statistics in their reporting on deaths in 'Africa'. When the suffering and the dying and the death world conditions are stratified, it is along gendered lines. When the deaths are re-homogenised, those stratifications disappear and every African death becomes a numerical figure. Producing African deaths as so ungrievable that we portray them as statistics is starkly contrasted with the mournful, life-giving, value-attributing description and privatisation of Danish deaths, who are either intimately and respectfully detailed in a nuanced way or—importantly—avoided altogether. Illustratively, here is an end-of-article fact summary on 28 March 2020 by Jyllands-Posten:

> "*Facts: CORONA IN AFRICA. The number of infected people in Africa is surrounded by relatively high uncertainty in light of the lack of tests and poorly functioning health systems in many countries. (...)*
> *Most infected are registered in:*
> *South Africa: 927*
> *Egypt: 495*
> *Algeria: 302*
> *Morocco: 275*
> *Tunisia: 173." (Jyllands-Posten, 28 March, 2020)*

28. Fact boxes of dying Africans. Producing African deaths as a number. Another mundane practice of dehumanisation. Your death is not a tragedy, it is a data point. That full stop after the last bullet point in the above quote, right after the 173, is not an error or stylistic choice on my side, but a direct import from the article itself. That is how factual these facts are: They deserve a full stop. The end. Of this fact and that life.

29. Since Roland Barthes' (1982) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, these differentiations in describing and showing death have been extensively theorised in critical media studies. For example, through David Campbell's (2004) theorisation on images of death and how they are distributed across contemporary media. Similarly, Carol Winkler, Kareem El Damanhoury, Aaron Dicker and Anthony Lemieux (2019) argue that images of death and dying in global media have a "symbiotic relationship with nation states as they can bolster state control by defining who has the right to take lives in the interests of the community, by identifying enemies of the state, by demonstrating dominance over enemies, and by lending a moral posture to the state's war efforts" (p. 248). In 2018, Sarah Sentilles further elaborated on these ideas to describe the "practice of keeping some bodies protected from view while other bodies—be

they victims of bombings or natural disasters or police violence—are visible everywhere" (Sentilles, 2018, para. 15) work to reinforce racist and nationalist ideas that some deaths are more valuable and significant than others and get positioned through mechanism of exclusion or inclusion. She sums it up strikingly by writing that "[the] visible dead do not belong to us" (Sentilles, 2018, para. 15). The connections between representation of deaths and how this representation occurs and assignment of value or insignificance, protection or carelessness, nuance or gratuity, are elements we can trace in the discursive productions of this analysis.

30. To sum up the necropolitical dimensions the preceding discourses—1) Discourse: Suffering and death are gendered in 'Africa'; and 2) Discourse: African lives are ungrievable—function, it is instructive to take note of *where and when* the pandemic is assigned its deadliest value. Throughout the data, discourse on the pandemic in and related to 'Africa' inscribes necropower by configuring the virus in/and 'Africa' as death worlds deadlier. Meanwhile, the epidemiologically and medically identical virus can be identified as less deadly, more controlled, less dangerous when it is observed in or in relation to Denmark.

31. The preceding analysis that traces how gender categories and productions intersect with necropolitics to strengthen practices and projects of racial violence on mundane everyday discourse levels connects with the work of Jasbir Puar (2007) and C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn (2013) and their respective theorisations on queer and trans necropolitics. The gendering of necropolitical discourse by producing stratifications that mark 'African women' and 'Africa's girls' as discrete categories, we see how there are internal splits to necropower that fractures off some categories—Enloe's 'womenandchildren' (1990)—and infuses them with more life inside an inevitable world of death. We also see how the excessive, statistical dying of Africans is contrasted with the nuanced, in-depth and mourned passing of individual Danes, which connects to Jasbir Puar's argument about the interconnection between bio- and necropolitics, in

which life *and* death unfold together and remain co-constructed and interdependent at all times.

32. By examining these formulations, it is possible to observe and identify how there are pathways within and away from a necropolitical framework that reveal how necropolitics are a simultaneous form of gender politics, whilst gender politics contain within them their own necropolitics. By tracing these gender and child stratifications, we see how necropolitical productions of the COVID-19 pandemic and 'Africa' in Danish media also use gender to co-construct and interlock discursive gender-race entanglements as they attach death and dying to simultaneously racialised and gendered bodies. We see how necropolitics creates gendered zones of death and living death and how as Butler asserts in their challenge of normative understandings of vulnerability as internal to a particular body or population, that bodies are not vulnerable in and of themselves, but *made* vulnerable, *made* precarious, by being pushed into and predetermined as deserving of conditions of necropolitical and gendered death and gendered abandonment.

33. Through casting African death as ungrievable and African conditions of life as inherently precarious, this discourse functions as a type of necropolitical violence through omission—through what Butler calls "violence of derealisation" (Butler, 2004, p. 35) and which produces what Mbembe calls sub-humanity (2003), that advances necropower by spectating and gazing on—and thus naturalising and strengthening insensitivity to—human suffering. As Butler (2004) argues, it is through the production and maintenance of these discursive insensitivities to the suffering and death of others that the violence of dehumanisation and unhumanity, and thus the violence of necropolitics, can be accomplished. By denying the suffering and death of others, whilst *inflicting* this same death, necropolitics creates its liminal spaces, Mbembe's the third zone referenced in the previous analysis chapter, where those brutalised by racism live "between subjecthood and objecthood" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26) and possess neither life,

nor death, but are suspended in a perpetual act of dying and become unhuman long before they die.

34. The preceding analyses show us that the mechanisms of power and death that divide us into protected and advantaged and valued groups, on the one hand, and brutalised and dying groups, on the other, also work by intersecting and interlocking with other additional processes of gendered and sexualised differences and forms of domination and control that deepen the vulnerability and precarity that are assigned to some lives and some conditions of life. These productions illustrate that it is not just race by itself that fences in and overdetermines whose lives can and cannot be mourned or celebrated. These necropolitical determinations are co-calibrated and co-configured through gender, too. We see here whose deaths we mourn and whose lives we assign vulnerability to. We see who we grieve when they die. We see whose lives are grievable and who was recognised as alive enough to die. Butler's work on vulnerability is of key relevance to this study's interest in advancing an understanding of the discursive distribution of vulnerability during the pandemic. These discourses show us that the acts of and right to mourn death and grieve the loss of life in public discourse are key elements of how contemporary necropower takes place. By denying discourse grieveability and mourning of black queer death and black gendered death, necropolitical discourse further naturalises its right to kill by refusing the value of the lives of the dead, in which the silencing and unmarking and neglect of the death and dying and suffering of black men in Danish media on COVID-19 constitutes a form of gendered abandoment.

35. These reflections wrap up the third analysis chapter and lead us to the final analysis chapter, a critical interrogation of how necropolitics mobilise racialised geopolitics as a key element of its death-making and death-dealing strategies during this particular conjuncture of pandemic discourse in Danish mainstream media on COVID-19 and 'Africa' in 2020.

8. Analysis chapter 4: Geopolitics and necrotime within necropolitical configurations of ‘Africa’

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1. In the following chapter, I examine the connection between necropolitics and borders and migratory discourse in the context of my data to show how necropower mobilises geopolitical discourse during the coverage of COVID-19 and ‘Africa’. In the second half of this chapter, I will also introduce and examine the concept of ‘necrotime’, the confluence of chronopolitics and necropolitics, in which temporality and death are read together to illuminate how discourse on ‘Africa’ during the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds along a racialised timeline that produces death in ‘Africa’ as faster and life as slower.

2. By applying Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics at large, I will facilitate an analysis of how the mobilisation of a migratory and geopolitical dimension of white supremacist discourse moves during the coverage of the pandemic and ‘Africa’. To do this, I have chosen to hone in on two important solitary public and political figures: 1) Rasmus Prehn, Minister of Development at the time of writing and 2) Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, an important figure on the Danish political scene, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark from 1982 to 1993, was leader of the Danish Liberal Party from 1984 to 1998 and President of the European Liberals 1995–2000 in order to analyse their overall discursive themes as they narrate them in mainstream media throughout my sample data.

3. As I have chosen to bring forward a case study of the discourses perpetuated by two solitary political figures in the first half of this analysis chapter, the following quotes depart from the organisation that determined the quotes in preceding chapters. Previously, the quotes were a representative synthesis offered up as textual evidence of the necropolitical relegation of bodies across the sample cluster of data in this study. This time they describe a discursive trend that is

limited to single figures and may connect to themes throughout the data, but do not represent a generalised and recurring trend. I have chosen to pursue this analytical case study not because I conceive of or aim to position necropolitics in individual terms or in relation to simple appearance or representation or even through static and solitary figures. Rather, by critically interpreting and deconstructing Prehn and Ellemann-Jensen's discursive productions and configurations, it is my aim to provide context to how the pandemic has been instrumentalised in everyday discourse for decidedly political and politicising discourse and to advance an examination of how pandemic discourse is used to further and strengthen a racialised, necropolitical agenda. In the second half of this chapter, where I examine necrotime and its utilisation in my sample data, I revert back to a representative synthesis of my textual data in which I will perform an examination of the overarching and intertextual themes that the relevant quotes contain, as well as a close critical discourse analysis of select, discrete sentences.

4. The following quotes are extracted from one interview with Rasmus Prehn in his capacity as Minister of Development and an opinion piece written by him, published in Politiken and Jyllands-Posten respectively. As in previous chapters, I will perform an examination of the overarching and intertextual necropolitical themes that these quotes contain, as well as a close critical discourse analysis of discrete sentences.

Unembedded case study

Headline: "Coronavirus increases fear of new steady stream of refugees and migrants from Africa"
—Rasmus Prehn in Politiken (20 March, 2020)

“»Africa? Who cares about worrying about Africa these days, when the fear of coronavirus is turning our own lives upside down? Right now, Africa is even further away than usual, which says a lot.« (...) »It is obvious that when we put this much effort into creating jobs, creating education, creating hope in Africa, it is because we know that the alternative may well be that these desperate young people are moving north.«, he says.”
—Rasmus Prehn in Politiken (20 March, 2020)

Heading: “People already die like flies”
—Rasmus Prehn in Politiken (20 March, 2020)

“In recent days, Rasmus Prehn has called around to Danish ambassadors to Africa to get an overview of how the corona is developing. But it is not easy on a continent where militias and terrorist groups make it too dangerous to move around in certain areas.”
—Rasmus Prehn in Politiken (20 March, 2020)

“»The attitude in Africa has been a bit that: Well, it's just an extra thing on top of a thousand others. And that's completely true, but it's also scary.« Prehn lists a few more numbers: In Africa, 917,000 die each year from respiratory infections. AIDS-related diseases: 719,000. Diarrhea: 653,000. Maybe Danish development aid can make a difference. Right now, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working on a 'here and now' package for Africa, which will contain information about the corona, locally produced hand sanitizer and various other things.”
—Rasmus Prehn in Politiken (20 March, 2020)

“I ask Rasmus Prehn whether the corona crisis reinforces fears that even more refugees and migrants will come to Europe. »It is part of the picture«, he answers and explains that the increased focus in Denmark and the EU on

helping Africa »is probably as much« about »the challenges and problems associated with increased migration« [as it is about helping Africa]. »[Migration] is very difficult to deal with. And it has caused a lot of unrest and problems in Europe as well.« (...) An increasing flow of migrants could also drag out the fight against the corona if Africans continue to bring the infection to Europe. »When you have such a large continent with so many weak people and so little of a health sector, you can imagine that it can be allowed to go on for a very long time. And hit a lot of people,« says the minister."
—Rasmus Prehn in Politiken (20 March, 2020)

"In Denmark, we properly social distance and disinfect our hands all the time. But what happens when coronavirus hits Africa? I can't help but think of the city of Kaya in Burkina Faso that I visited in the month of January. In a room the size of an average Danish bedroom, at least 40 women were sitting with their small children on their laps. They were completely pushed together. They had to sit up and sleep to be able to all fit in there. There was very limited access to water, almost no food and several were sick already. Healthcare and medical clinics were nowhere to be seen. And a trip to the nearest clinic would mean running a great risk of being shot or raped by Boko Haram terrorist militias. What happens when corona soon hits Kaya? I fear a terrifying catastrophe that will make the many problems that Africa is already suffering from even worse. Coronavirus can spread in Africa like a wildfire, causing terrible damage and pulling the rug out from under the hope of the future for a very long time."
—Rasmus Prehn in Jyllands-Posten (24 March, 2020)

5. The following quotes are extracted from an opinion written by Uffe Ellemann-Jensen in his capacity as a former Minister of Foreign Affairs and influential political figure and player, published in Berlingske:

Unembedded case study

Headline: “Debate: Europe’s borders are hit by a double threat”
—Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Berlingske (4 March, 2020)

“At the same time as fears surrounding the spread of the COVID-19 infection in Europe have caused all systems to go into emergency mode, a recurrence of events in 2015 threatens when one million refugees and migrants squeezed into Europe in an attempt to secure a better and more peaceful life.”
—Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Berlingske (4 March, 2020)

“[A] spread of infection is likely to be far more difficult to manage if people emerge from the unfortunate conditions they have lived under in overcrowded refugee camps to Europe's borders.”
—Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Berlingske (4 March, 2020)

“At the same time, rubber boats are once again seen at sea with unhappy people on board, reaching towards the promised land in Europe.”
—Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Berlingske (4 March, 2020)

“[We risk] that the door to Europe will remain open - and that the pressure will grow so strong that it will be impossible to resist.”
—Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Berlingske (4 March, 2020)

“[Our health authorities] have approached the [COVID-19 situation] very professionally, and deserve all the recognition and support that can be given to them. But, of course, their task will not be easier if Europe's borders are suddenly challenged by the millions of people who are pushing in the Middle East and North Africa. And one has to ask whether enough has been done to learn from the experiences of the last time, when borders were threatened.”

—Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Berlingske (4 March, 2020)

6. **Discourse: Necropolitical mobilisation of borders and migratory discourse to construct and dehumanise Africans as threats.** The preceding textual evidence are indicative of the discursive production of 'concern' for 'Africa' and are frequently occurring throughout the sample data. Exemplified through Prehn and Ellemann-Jensen's discourse, they serve as a proxy for expressing and constructing white Danish necropolitical anxieties over the perceived growing presence and danger of African migrants.

7. Just imagine how safe and secure Denmark would be without migrants?

8. Just imagine how safe and secure Denmark would be without late-colonial consequences of our own actions?

9. I wonder how different Rasmus Prehn and Uffe Ellemann-Jensen's Denmark is to the Denmark accessible and knowable to marginalised and brutally racialised communities in Denmark.

10. Is Denmark legible as a site of solidarity and sharing of burdens to all that inhabit the country?

11. Certainly, Danish colonial history—past and current—and black lived experience across Denmark and its occupied territories expose a radically different version of Denmark, one so different to the one Prehn describes that it speaks to the notion of ontologies and worlds contained within and superimposed upon the same site.

12. The Ellemann-Jensen quotes illustrate how migrants are mobilised and narrated as threats and undesirables. According to these discursive constructions, it is migrants who threaten white supremacy; not white supremacy that has institutionalised threatening environments for migrants over the course of

centuries. Black migrants are framed as a threat, to the exclusion of discourse on the acknowledgement or reflection on how black migrants have been exposed to a threatening environment long before forced migration and COVID-19.

13. Further, migrants are framed as having the ability to choose whether they are a threat to Europe and Denmark—and thus deserving of death or not—and thus deserving of continued brutalisation in their respective postcolonies.

14. It is not migrants who feel threatened by the brutality they exist under. It is Europe—an antrophomorised continent with emotions and affective registers—who feels threatened.

15. But has Europe not always been dangerous to the world, a threat to others?

16. Who is this new normal new to? Who is this new refugee ‘crisis’ new to? For whom is sheltering in place or forced migration or forced confinement or displacement new?

17. It can’t be new for people who endure processes of epicolonisation or for those brutalised by processes of racialisation. It is not new for disabled or queer people. For these groups, this forms part of a lineage or genealogy of spatial confinement and exclusion.

18. Sara Ahmed argues that nations are not only “geographical or geopolitical” but also, and more importantly, “discursive” (2000, p. 98). For Ahmed (2000, p. 97) nations “are produced and constructed as places and communities” in which forms of belonging and inclusion occur. Ahmed continues to argue that nations are constructed as familiar spaces against that which is unfamiliar. So the unfamiliar figure embodied in the stranger, or the racialised body is constructed “as a way of containing that which the nation is not, and hence as a way of allowing the nation to be” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 97.). So the nation, the nation state

and thus the nationals recognise themselves through the discursive construction of the stranger as out of place, as an alien and therefore dangerous and weak and dying.

19. To further complicate and necropoliticise this argument, as Mahmood Mamdani reminds us in *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* (2020), the nation state was born of colonialism. In case after case around the globe—from the New World to South Africa, Israel to Germany to Sudan—Mamdani illustrates how the colonial state and the nation state have been mutually constructed through the politicisation of a religious or ethnic majority at the expense of an equally manufactured *permanent minority*.

20. From these perspectives, every state is an Apartheid state. Racialisation and nation become interdependent and co-constructed through affective registers of necropolitical exclusion and biopolitical inclusion. National identity and belonging, the right to be let into Denmark or included in the Danish nation-making project as Danish and not as a 'threat', is an affective production, in which the nation state becomes discursively produced as a state of racialised identification. The term 'nation state' is apt on multiple levels, as the nation operates as a state of being and feeling.

21. Mbembe himself (2018) suggests that decolonisation entails, at the heart of these projects, borderlessness instead of nationalisation, and peoplehood instead of nationhood, and offers up two paradigms: Western and African, citizenship vs membership, border vs crossroad and intersection. The Western idea of identity is categorical, whilst the African is intersectional. Indeed, *before* the pandemic, he wrote that "the global belief that the world would be safer, if only risks, ambiguity and uncertainty could be controlled and if only identities could be fixed once and for all" (Mbembe, 2018, para. 1) is gaining traction and explained how risk management techniques are increasingly becoming a means to govern mobilities, particularly "the extent to which the biometric border is

extending into multiple realms, not only of social life, but also of the body, the body that is not mine." (Mbembe, 2018, para. 1)

22. By reminding us that "the western archive [of the world at large] is premised on the crystallisation of the idea of a border" (Mbembe, 2018, para. 14). Mbembe forces us to consider "[under] what conditions [could we] re-engineer the utopia of a borderless world, and by extension, a borderless Africa, since, as far as I know, Africa is part of the world, [and] the world is part of [Africa?]" (Mbembe, 2018., para. 2)

23. How might we train Mbembe's notions of borders and borderlessness onto identity and body?

24. For whom is the pandemic an apocalypse? For whom is an apocalypse a discreetly approaching event on a future horizon and not something they have survived before already? According to Moulay Driss El Maarouf,Taieb Belghazi and Farouk El Maarouf (2021) in their article, *COVID – 19: A Critical Ontology of the present*, these apocalyptic discourses of the pandemic and its global horrorism form part of a congeries of apocalyptic experiences that have long been part of the fabric of white supremacist colonialism.

25. Prehn and Ellemann-Jensen's particular framing of their 'threat' discourse is only possible by utilisation of additional necropolitical strategies of ignorance and obfuscation and denial. Any other, even cursory glance at the historical connections and complicities between Europe and 'Africa' alert us to how Europeans have represented nothing but a continual threat—to the livelihoods and cultures and environments and histories—of African peoples since the advent of colonialism. Only total disregard for the history of European devastation on the African continent for the past 500 years and African lives as they have been mediated by European brutality could account for assuming that it is 'Africa' and African migrants that pose a 'threat' to Europe.

26. According to Miriam Ticktin, gendered violence has become what Ticktin (2008) calls a language of border control. To borrow from and supplant Ticktin's (2008) argument, in which she argues that gender has become a mechanism and language of border control, Prehn's discourse shows us that racialisation under the guise of public health and economic concerns function as necropolitical border control. By repeatedly asserting and reproducing a public and political focus on the alleged 'threat'—epidemiological and socioeconomic—posed by 'African' migrants against 'us'—a proxy for Denmark and whiteness and white supremacy—serves to define the boundaries of the nation-state and national belonging. By producing a public focus on the alleged 'threat' posed by potential migrant 'Africans' against white women, Prehn's discourses show us that racialised violence and necropolitics have become a language of border control.serves to define the boundaries of the nation-state and national belonging. Not only that, but this 'threat' discourse is cloaked in a charitability and white saviourism. This 'threat' discourse has been reinvigorated in the aftermath of the European refugee 'crisis' in 2015-2016, during which a larger-than-usual number of refugees arrived (Keskinen, 2018). This reinvigoration forms part of an increasing interconnection of national identity politics and migration policy in social discourse and political practice.

27. This invigoration of a discourse of 'threat' posed by 'outsiders' is intimately familiar to the Danish and European nation-building and nation-making practices and projects - and is in fact a reinvigoration—that is not just always present in European and white discourse, but integral to European and white supremacy. Prehn's bolstering and strengthening of this discourse during the pandemic forms part of an increasing interconnection of national identity politics and migration policy in social discourse and political practice. In the last decade, this phenomenon has been studied increasingly by European scholars across a multitude of disciplines who point to a growing interconnection of national identity politics and immigration policy in public discourse and political practice (see for

example Pedersen, 2018; Vieten and Poynting, 2016). In Denmark, in particular, there is an accumulating body of research on the “civic turn” (Borevi, Jensen & Mouritsen, 2017) in naturalisation and citizenship politics.

28. This is where necropolitical mobilisation of geopolitical discourse collides - ascribed onto the body - and where representations of ‘Africa’ come to life and entangle with deadly migratory politics. These are some of the moments in which the potential for discourse to affect material violence becomes clearer: Certain bodies cannot be let into the country because it is a representation of a nation we exclude. This is not a free body that has agency and rights or a person with a personhood, but a proxy for a nation. This is how bodies become nations and how disease nationalises bodies.

29. By advancing necropolitical discourse that mobilises geopolitics, Prehn and Ellemann-Jensen contribute to the protection and strengthening of borders, citizenship, national identity and belonging as racialised projects that function as mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. This links to the work by Luiza Bialasiewicz (2021) who describe how COVID-19 has ushered in “a new doctrine of ‘health security’” (Bialasiewicz, 2021, para. 1) in which “global cartographies of danger" produce and strengthen divisions between “healthy and unhealthy, ‘risky’ and ‘less risky’ spaces and peoples” (Bialasiewicz, 2021, para. 1), which are used to bolster and strengthen border regimes and racialise citizenship. These stratifications mobilise and reinvigorate old and enduring colonial and necropolitical separations between those who belong to the world of life and protection and health, and those who get pushed to the world of death and abandonment and disease.

30. In particular, as it emerges in my sample data, pandemic discourse on ‘Africa’ assists in shoring up and strengthening a wide array of necropolitical epistemic and ontological myths about the nature of borders and nations. That borders, for instance, supposedly precede racism and work as a defense against the dangers

associated with those produced as ‘threat’ rather than acting as a producer of threat. They co-construct each other, and they are inseparable, both lending legitimacy to each other. Which is to say, we cannot talk about borders or imagine a borderless world where there is freedom of movement—before, during or after a pandemic—without imagining a world in which white supremacy has been abolished. The idea of a borderless world is the idea of a world where racism does not exist.

31. In the preceding first half of this analysis chapter, I have chosen to pursue this analytical case study not because I conceive of or aim to position necropolitics in individual terms or in relation to simple appearance or representation or even through static and solitary figures. Rather, by critically interpreting and deconstructing Prehn and Ellemann-Jensen’s discursive productions and configurations I have interrogated how the pandemic has been instrumentalised in everyday discourse for decidedly political and politicising discourse and to advance an examination of how pandemic discourse is used to further and strengthen a racialised, necropolitical agenda.

32. Ultimately, Rasmus Prehn’s discourse shows how necropolitics casts a wide net in its techniques and collaborates with notions of border and bordering. The discursive strategies identified in Prehn’s texts show that discursive pandemic violence and border violence are part of the same function. Border violence is not just *at* the border, but, as Harsha Walia (2021) reminds us, *of border itself* and that the border(ing) itself identified across this data functions as a necropolitical force that discursively asserts who can access life-sustaining health care and who must be abandoned in or relegated to zones of despair and death.

33. As evidenced in the two case studies, necropolitical discourse during the pandemic redraws and strengthens borders and boundaries through racialisation and radicalisation of migratory discourse. It is against this geopolitical backdrop in which lives and deaths and worth and mobility and movement unfold and get

assigned differently by slowing down or speeding up access to or denial of futures and survival, that necropolitics and temporalities and the confluence of time and boundaries emerge as a dimension of analysis relevant to this study. In the following chapter, I will examine how necropolitical and racialised discourse assigns COVID-19 to particular bodies at particular points in time and space.

34. **Discourse: The production of necrotime and chronopolitical dimensions of the configuration of 'Africa'.** In the second half of this analys chapter, I examine the confluence of chronopolitics and necropolitics, in which temporality and death are read together to illuminate how discourse on 'Africa' during the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds along a racialised timeline that produces death in 'Africa' as faster and life as slower.

35. The following quotes are once again a representative synthesis of my textual data that I offer up as evidence of the employment of necrotime in my sample data. I will perform an examination of the overarching and intertextual themes that these quotes contain, as well as a close critical discourse analysis of select, discrete sentences.

36. The 'Africa' we encounter in these texts is suspended in an in-between zone of recognition where death and life come together in a temporal standstill, where we see that a confluence of chronopolitics and necropolitics in which time and death and death along certain timelines are important to how COVID-19 is imagined in and of 'Africa'. The 'anticipatory dying' of African lives under the discourse of necropolitics in this in-between zone is tied to the management of life and death of populations through the politics of rightful killing and shows how temporalities themselves—past, present and future—in which narratives of anticipatory catastrophe reveal necrotemporal aspects of COVID-19's configuration.

37. One of the most prominent discourses emerging in the sample data is the recurring reporting on and attention given to 'the strange case' of COVID-19's

different—and seemingly less fatal—development across the African continent. These discourses are accompanied by a kind of attendant speculative necropolitics, what I have chosen to call necropolitical fantasy, that takes the form of alternative hypotheses that provide 'acceptable'—for instance, eugenicist or essentialist—explanations to the avoidance of otherwise anticipated catastrophe and rely on a connection to temporal dimensions of the pandemic, what I have chosen to call 'necrotime'. The majority of the articles reporting on COVID-19 in 'Africa' that I could identify in my sample data expresses some degree of bewilderment, if not outright disbelief and disdain, and repeatedly positions it as unbelievable and unexplainable but also unavoidable at some point in the near future, in relation to the mysterious trajectory of the pandemic across the African continent—to the notable exclusion of any reflection on or credit given to the rapid and coordinated response by African governments to the pandemic in its early months. Below are quotes that I offer up as evidence of these discursive trends.

Embedded in-text

"Both WHO and experts point out to Jyllands-Posten that it is almost »a surprise« and »sheer luck« that COVID-19, as the infection is officially called, has only reached Africa now."
—Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)

"»But at the same time, a number of African countries have also developed experiences with dealing with epidemics, especially in connection with the Ebola outbreak between 2014 and 2016. (...) Several countries, including the Ivory Coast, which already put people in quarantine several weeks ago, have learned from Ebola just how important it is to prevent the infection from spreading,« says Morten Sodemann."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)

Headline: “Four corona-conclusions for now”
—Politiken (17 February, 2020)

“But there are other hypotheses [than underdiagnosing] that may explain why Africa has been less affected. (...) »The continent has lots of viruses, from Ebola to measles, but has never been particularly plagued by influenza. And some countries have very little contact with the outside world. Some have only a few flights a week. Infection from foreign nationals is also slowed down by the fact that foreigners and locals do not live in the same areas. Both Europeans and Chinese people often live in isolation from the rest of society in their own neighborhoods, and the Chinese have their own shopping malls,« says Morten Sodemann.”
—Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)

“If—or when—the infection becomes serious, it can become uncontrollable, partly due to the poor sanitary conditions, especially in the urban slums with high population density and poverty. (...) And perhaps the apparent absence of infection in Africa has only been an optical illusion, fears Mathias Altmann of the Department of Public Health at the University of Bordeaux (...)."
—Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)

“Debate: CORONA: What is the truth about corona in Africa? BUT WHAT IS the truth about corona in Africa? How nervous should we be about the infection from there? (...) Denmark's embassies must call on their partners internationally and ask the World Health Organization and other relevant actors to find out whether we have the right information or whether we are actually facing under-reporting [by African regions].”
—Politiken (12 March, 2020)

“[Africa is] on the periphery of globalisation. When the infection does not seem to have spread, it is primarily because most of Africa is not as integrated into the globalised economy as, for example, Europe.”
—Information (14 March, 2020)

“At best, the rapid move towards a general European state of emergency will now reduce the risk of further corona imports into Africa (...)”
—Information (14 March, 2020)

“[In] addition to spreading the message of social distance and good hygiene—in itself a challenge in such [populous Liberia] with such poor health conditions—they must also deal with widespread fear in the population. An anxiety that stems from the previous Ebola outbreak. (...) The social isolation and uncertainty about the disease means that the traumas of the Ebola era are returning.”
—Berlingske (3 April, 2020)

Headline: “UN Secretary-General: We can learn from Africa’s efforts against coronavirus.”
—Jyllands-Posten (21 May, 2020)

“»COVID-19 has progressed much less (in Africa, ed.) than was initially anticipated,« says the Secretary-General, pointing out that much of the credit for the limited infection should go to African governments who chose to shut down in time.”
—Jyllands-Posten (21 May, 2020)

Unembedded evidence

“Coronavirus loses power, but is more contagious than what has been assumed. And then Africa is the great fear.”
—Politiken (17 February, 2020)

Headline: “Africa is the biggest mystery of the corona-crisis: Why are the mortality rates so low?”
—Berlingske (2 May, 2020)

38. In the evidence above, I have identified seven discursive hypotheses connecting and interlocking with necrotime, all obscuring and undermining the notion that institutional and social capacity could have anything to do with pandemic containment across ‘Africa’, that white Danish media have advanced to apply necrotemporal dimensions to the explanation of why ‘Africa’ is *not yet* hit by a devastating COVID-19 catastrophe. There are many more hypotheses embedded in the above quotes, but for the sake of brevity, I have chosen to hone in on the seven hypotheses that occurred most frequently in the data sample, though they are by no means exhaustive. In no particular order, below are seven necropolitical hypotheses and quotes that evidence their discursive construction:

39. **Hypothesis: The impact of COVID-19 across the African continent appears to be less fatal because the fatalities have not happened *yet***. This particular hypothesis is the most recurring one. It can be traced back to the very first article that mentions COVID-19 in connection to the African continent from 6 March 2020 and it continues throughout my data sample. As Kristeligt Dagblad writes on 6 March 2020: “If—or when—the infection becomes serious, it can become uncontrollable, partly due to the poor sanitary conditions, especially in the urban slums with high population density and poverty (...) And perhaps the apparent absence of infection in Africa has only been an optical illusion, fears Mathias Altmann of the Department of Public Health at the University of Bordeaux (...)” (Kristeligt Dagblad, 6 March, 2020). This single sentence is one of the most

troubling—one that most densely compacts a wide array of necropolitical and racist discourse—I have come across in the cluster of 3764 articles. In one fell swoop, it manages to make reference to many of the oldest and most harmful tropes about ‘Africa’ as a place of disease and poverty. It revitalises the trope of demographics. It constructs the pandemic in ‘Africa’ as something that is characterised by chaos—uncontrollable—and thus forms part of an enduring racist fantasy in Denmark that positions ‘Africa’ as an inherently unmanagable place or, more precisely, a place that imparts the quality of unmanagement and uncontrol on events and people and places. A pandemic that *is* controllable in Denmark shifts its characterisation and becomes uncontrollable in and through ‘Africa’, making the idea and discursive construction of ‘Africa’ function like a prism that refractures everything into chaos, a kind of portal of entropy that stuff—space-time-matter—will pass through and be inherently changed by.

40. And then there are the first three words: *If—or when.* The temporal dimension of racism. Anticipatory black death and grief. Never mourning despite real deaths, just never-ending wondering why the tragedy has not struck yet. ‘Africa’ as a natural and inevitable carrier of tragedy.

41. As with the preceding chapter, we see the same discursive strategy that Chigdu (2021) theorises in his work when he describes how ‘Africa’ is always produced as the last bastion, and it is imagined that ‘Africa’ will be hit without having adapted to what has happened in the rest of the world. We must either be protected from what comes from ‘Africa’ or we must protect ‘Africa’.

42. This mechanism functions like a reversal, like a kind of mirror opposite, of ordinary, everyday construction of pain and suffering always attributable to black people individually. Usually, white supremacist discourse goes to great lengths to place the burden of responsibility, any burden of responsibility, on the moral or behavioural failings of black people. Unless that burden of responsibility moves in a positive direction. Then the mechanism shifts and seeks to place responsibility

on anything else above and before the moral or behavioural successes of black people and nations. Danish mainstream media will sooner attribute the containment of COVID-19 to inanimate and intangible phenomena like the climate or youth or luck or time itself, creating more and more tenuous alternative explanations, before attributing any of the variance of pandemic containment to black skill and proficiency. What these juxtapositions indicate is that the mechanisms of racist discourse rely on internal contradiction for its maintenance and add to the vast lexicon of speculative reasons as to how and why 'Africa' will not and cannot avoid tragedy—certainly never through its own people and only perhaps marginally through white foreign saviours.

43. Pre-colonial. Pre-pandemic. Post-colonial. Post-pandemic. The temporal expressions 'after', 'before' and 'when' are used to indicate that something happens in the past, present, or future. Likewise, the prefixes 'pre' and 'post' are used to indicate the beforeness and afterness of events.

44. Where is the presence? Why are we always before or after the violence? Anticipating it or past it? Does it tie to Gloria Wekker's ideas of white innocence (Wekker, 2016) and the inability - the refusal - of whiteness to sit with our debts and violences? To deny or project them? To locate them in the past or other geographies?

45. According to Sara Ahmed (2004), the duration of racist violence is long and slow. Violence is slow and long. It does not unfold in a brief flash and then it is over. It is protracted and nonlinear. It ebbs back and forth. There is nothing helpful about trying to understand racist and colonial violence and its discursive contours by plotting it on a linear timeline.

46. One of the quotes evidenced above—the one that headlines with "Four corona-conclusions for now" (Politiken, 17 February, 2020)—are from one of the first articles to reference COVID-19 and the African continent in Danish

mainstream media. The article appeared on 17 February 2020. In February 2020, the pandemic had started to travel from China to the rest of the world, but was still in its early stages and very little was known about its trajectories and characteristics. Yet this article headlines with the promise of conclusions, arguably something no one was even remotely in possession of at the time, and follows up with speculatory fears and doubts. A conclusion is ordinarily understood to be a judgment or opinion reached on the basis of reasoning. It is misleading to lay claim to the presentation of conclusions and then go on to present a type of catastrophisation that relies on marking the African continent as inherently untrustworthy and incompetent. The article makes references to a vague 'many' that doubts official messages and an 'everyone' who fears how 'Africa' will, or won't, handle the pandemic, and how it is an—any—African response to the virus that represents the greatest fear. The virus is not as dangerous, in and of itself, as the virus in 'Africa'. The article also positions Chinese bodies, another racialised population, as carriers of disease by speculating that if the virus is brought to the African continent, it will be brought back by Chinese migrant workers. With an emphasis on one, the article states, very plainly, that miserable African health care systems do not have the capacity to contain even a single infection. And then, as the article proposes, the positive development carried out elsewhere, but never on the African continent, will turn, and the entire battle will be lost. Positive developments happen elsewhere, and 'Africa' is likely to ruin the fight against COVID-19, even before the virus has arrived on the continent. It is important to note, too, that the article does not express concern for the virus reaching the African continent, in and of itself, or sympathy for the African lives that could be lost if this happens. Rather, it is concerned that positive developments pre-Africa will change. In other words, if the virus reaches Africa, through Chinese carriers, 'Africa' and its Chinese populations and its incompetent health care systems and its lying government officials will not just ruin it for the rest of us, and we were just doing so well, but 'Africa' will be to blame for the entire battle being lost.

47. These discourse creates a narrative of racialised and geographised disease that is locationally and contextually dangerous, dependent in danger on whose body and what space it is assigned to and inscribed on. Its danger is contingent on its geography, a geographically mediated degree of seriousness, making geography and context function as instruments that relativise disease and strengthen white supremacy. Don't worry, in Denmark COVID-19 is controlled and relatively safe to contract, we know what we are doing, we have the right healthcare and resources. But when that same virus appears somewhere else, far away from *here*, it becomes deadly. Not just to that context, but to us.

48. Not *yet*.

49. *For now*.

50. As if COVID-19 reaches into the time-space continuum itself and bends it to its will. As if COVID-19 has temporal dimensions: an African one and ours.

51. It was only three months into racist speculation and moral panic around 'Africa' and what is surely an *impending*, soon-to-unfold catastrophe that I came across a single sentence in an article that, if read generously, frames 'Africa' in positive terms and acknowledges governmental and institutional African capacity. On 21 May, Jyllands-Posten published an article with the headline: "UN Secretary-General: We can learn from Africa's efforts against coronavirus." (Jyllands-Posten, 21 May, 2020) The article goes on to state that, "»COVID-19 has progressed much less (in Africa, ed.) than was initially anticipated,« says the Secretary-General, pointing out that much of the credit for the limited infection should go to African governments who chose to shut down in time." (Jyllands-Posten, 21 May, 2020) It is not willing or able to preserve a positively loaded discourse, however, and immediately challenges its initial framing by reverting back to the by-then established and well-worn racist speculations around the 'mysterious' containment success on the African continent. This is

achieved by activating white British discourse and ‘expertise’. Like when Politiken called up a white American man, John Campbell, on 19 March 2020 and spoke to him about ‘Africa’ on his phone in his home office in Washington, as discussed already in the second analysis chapter: “»In my opinion, we basically do not know how the virus came to Africa. Where does the media get it from? In most cases from the local health authorities«, says John Campbell. (...) »The only thing we can say with certainty is that Africa will not have the capacity to deal with it«, says John Campbell on the phone from his home office in Washington.” (Politiken, 19 March, 2020)

52. I mention this quote again because the image is truly arresting and haunting. Throughout my work, I have kept coming back to it, and I have kept imagining how that conversation must have gone. A white Danish journalist calls a white American researcher to not just discuss the capacity—*the* singular capacity—of the entire African continent, to insinuate that the data on COVID-19 transmission and development in ‘Africa’ is uncertain because it is derived from ‘local authorities’, but to then also go on to exclaim *certainty*—derived from what, I wonder; a gut feeling?—about how ‘Africa’ does not have the capacity to deal with the pandemic.

53. This construction—that we cannot trust African authorities on issues related to ‘Africa’, but we *can* trust John Campbell’s broad assessment on the entirety of ‘Africa’ from his home office in Washington—is at the very heart of what racist, white supremacist, necropolitical discourse looks like.

54. Why does everything always happen either slower or faster in ‘Africa’? Why is ‘Africa’ constructed as last and never first? Behind, never in front? It is a kind of slowness that connects to Jasbir Puar’s arguments (2021) around ‘slow life’ in relation to the militarised regulation of Palestine, in which Puar describes how infrastructural and bureaucratic violences are not just a key aspect of occupation in and of itself, but link to the logics of debilitation and lead to “calibrations of

various types of movement render specific stretchings of space and time", what she calls 'slow life', that reinforce the protracted state of terrified waiting for death that the Palestinian population endures.

55. Positioning 'Africa' as 'behind' or 'slow' achieves the same violence as positioning 'Africa' as 'far away'. Whilst 'far away' represents a geopolitical regulation of violence that produces 'Africa' as a place that is marginal to the rest of the world, so is 'behind' a necrotemporal regulation of time in 'Africa' where people die faster and slower in 'Africa', where death unfolds along different timelines altogether, and where 'Africa' is left behind in time as well as space, in geography as well as temporality.

56. **Hypothesis: No, it's due to sheer luck.** On 17 February, Jyllands-Posten wonder, on the back of unnamed 'experts' and the World Health Organisation, if it is simply due to sheer luck that 'Africa' appears to be less fatally impacted by COVID-19: "Both WHO and experts point out to Jyllands-Posten that it is almost »a surprise« and »sheer luck« that COVID-19, as the infection is officially called, has only reached Africa now."—Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020) First off, there is the initial hypothesis that it is *sheer luck*.

57. **Hypothesis: No, it is because Africans are lying about their infection and mortality rates.** On 12 March 2020, Politiken writes: "Debate: CORONA: What is the truth about corona in Africa? BUT WHAT IS the truth about corona in Africa? How nervous should we be about the infection from there? (...) Denmark's embassies must call on their partners internationally and ask the World Health Organization and other relevant actors to find out whether we have the right information or whether we are actually facing under-reporting [by African regions]."—(Politiken, 12 March, 2020) What is the truth about corona in 'Africa'? What an illuminatingly supremacist question. It is almost rhetorical in nature. Every time I go over it, it seems less and less interested in an answer and more

and more interested in offering up a conclusion in the softer guise of a question. It is easier, more passive-aggressive, to ask what the truth is about COVID-19 in 'Africa' than to state there is no truth about COVID-19 in 'Africa', a question creates room to purport innocence. But this is not a genuine question. We know this because there is a 'but' added to the beginning of the phrase the second time it is repeated. *But* what is the truth? *How* nervous should we be? 'But' and 'how' predetermine the answers to those questions. The article pretends, at first, to be wondering about the truth, but—*but*—swiftly moves on to wondering about the extent of the lie. 'But' signifies a juxtaposition or inversion of some sort, a past inquiry whose properties are almost always contrary to those presently inquired into. 'Africa' reports one thing, *but* are they telling the truth? We don't want to know *if* we should be nervous, but how nervous we should. These degrees matter. are now questioning the degree of truthfulness and nervousness. Better encourage Danish embassies to call on international partners, another proxy for white partners, to verify the truth about 'Africa'.

58. Only Danish embassies and international partners can access and know the truth about corona in 'Africa'. Only Danish embassies know what's up in 'Africa'. Because Danish embassies are trustworthy and competent, unlike African governments and agencies, which spread misinformation and lies.

59. Do we, white spectators, know what 'Africa' exists outside our perception of it? Outside our judgment? Do we know that there is a parallel reality, a parallel universe, far more material and real in an ontological sense, in which a fully formed 'Africa' exists independently of our violent and supremacist ideas of the continent, one we can never access? Or do we simply think that 'Africa' is always up to debate—by us? Always malleable, something that can be speculated upon and about, something we don't believe in, something transmutable that can be changed to fit current predicaments? Always epistemic, never ontological. Something that exists for us to describe, exists only in our descriptions of it and in our wonderings about it?

60. **Hypothesis: No, it's thanks to European lockdowns.** Then there is this quote from Information on 14 March 2020, where the journalist concludes the following: "At best, the rapid move towards a general European state of emergency will now reduce the risk of further corona imports into Africa (...)"—Information (14 March, 2020) This quote is an example of overtly racist discourse, a kind of classic supremacist narrative, in which Danish discourse constructs Europe's lockdowns as partially or fully responsible for the reduction of pandemic impact on 'Africa'. And if it isn't thanks to European governance and institutional agency far away from the African continent, it is thanks to European behaviour on the continent, as illustrated in this rich quote that seamlessly speculates across multiple hypotheses all at once: "But there are other hypotheses [than underdiagnosing] that may explain why Africa has been less affected. (...) »The continent has lots of viruses, from Ebola to measles, but has never been particularly plagued by influenza. And some countries have very little contact with the outside world. Some have only a few flights a week. Infection from foreign nationals is also slowed down by the fact that foreigners and locals do not live in the same areas. Both Europeans and Chinese people often live in isolation from the rest of society in their own neighborhoods, and the Chinese have their own shopping malls,« says Morten Sodemann."—Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020). Over and over, we see how European, which is to say white, capacity is juxtaposed directly with African capacity. Even when—especially when—pandemic impact is shaking Denmark and Europe's national and supranational identities. We theorise and hypothesise that the lack of impact is attributable to unreported figures and incompetent health care systems and institutions, which is a discourse that contributes aggressively to the vast body of knowledge that posits African nations and their people as politically and institutionally incompetent, as failed and failing, and lying to cover up these failures. In the same breath, we position our governance as so expert and powerful that we are able to intervene on and control a continent that can't

control itself, just as we are able to control and assist with the pandemic in ‘Africa’ by getting our embassies to collect the right data and the right knowledge.

61. The stunning mythology that underscores these remarks goes something like this: Even as European lockdowns were unsuccessful at containing the pandemic in Europe, those same lockdowns had a positive effect on the containment of the pandemic across 54 nations thousands of kilometers away.

62. **Hypothesis: No, it’s because Ebola traumatised all of ‘Africa’.** On 3 April 2020, Berlingske writes the following: “[In] addition to spreading the message of social distance and good hygiene—in itself a challenge in such [populous Liberia] with such poor health conditions—they must also deal with widespread fear in the population. An anxiety that stems from the previous Ebola outbreak. (...) The social isolation and uncertainty about the disease means that the traumas of the Ebola era are returning.”—Berlingske (3 April, 2020) This quote is illustrative of the speculative hypothesis that ‘Africa’ responds to COVID-19 through the continent’s traumatic experience with Ebola. Even though the piece in Kristeligt Dagblad from 6 March, which details African vulnerability and incompetence throughout, seems to attempt to end on a ‘positive’ note—“»But at the same time, a number of African countries have also developed experiences with dealing with epidemics, especially in connection with the Ebola outbreak between 2014 and 2016. (...) Several countries, including the Ivory Coast, which already put people in quarantine several weeks ago, have learned from Ebola just how important it is to prevent the infection from spreading,« says Morten Sodemann.”—Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)—these narratives imply that ‘Africa’ relies on generating knowledge and response through previous lived experience with disease and tragedy and learns from disease and trauma itself—not from scientific research and intervention and public education. These narratives starkly contrast with how Denmark’s ability to handle the pandemic is configured precisely through our reliance on scientific expertise and intervention and not because we have a traumatic history with epidemics. The implied differentiation

between ‘their knowledge’ and ‘our science’ is another strategy of racist discourse, in which binary distinctions that rely on competition and normative valuation—theirs and ours, good and bad—are continually asserted to reinforce ideas of hierarchy. This functions in opposition to non-hierarchical counter differentiations *between* frameworks: For instance, ‘amaXhosa science’ and ‘Euro-American science’ instead of ‘their knowledge’ and ‘our science’. Again, these discourses represent the complete absence of any generative reflection on the possibility that African countries have systems for organising and transmitting knowledge and that African scientists exist and develop practices, teachings, and laws based on careful experimentation and observation, codes of ethics, rigour, intelligence, and a drive to understand the world.

63. **Hypothesis: No, it’s because Africans are different and have a special kind of immunity.** One of the most prevailing alternative hypothesis in Danish—and more, broadly, Minority World contexts—coverage of the pandemic in and across ‘Africa’ is the eugenicist and biologist theory that ‘Africa’ is avoiding pandemic impact because ‘Africans’ have different degrees of immunity—essentially different bodies—and constitute renderings contribute to the historical legacies of a white supremacist mythology that posits African bodies as different and unhuman.

64. **Hypothesis: No, it is because the continent is so isolated from itself and the rest of the world.** On 14 March 2020, Information writes: “[Africa is] on the periphery of globalisation. When the infection does not seem to have spread, it is primarily because most of Africa is not as integrated into the globalised economy as, for example, Europe.”—Information (14 March, 2020). On 2 May, Berlingske notes in a similar vein that “Africans account for only two percent of international air traffic, they cross borders less frequently and travel less between cities.”—Berlingske (2 May, 2020). These two quotes are indicative of a trend throughout the sample data, in which Danish journalists speculate that pandemic containment can be explained because the continent is so isolated from the rest

of the world. This functions in opposition to the earlier hypothesis that European lockdowns are attributable to pandemic containment in ‘Africa’ and retrenches the construction of ‘Africa’ as simultaneously unreachable, but shaped by and configured through European geopolitical actions. In these texts, the low number of reported cases in ‘Africa’ is hypothesised to be because the continent is still disconnected from global exchanges of goods, people and resources, yet again to the exclusion of any discussion of the role colonial and epicolonial histories and trajectories play in structuring present affordances of ‘African’ nations. There is also an absence of any reflection around the fact that peripheries are concepts whose applicability is decided by the author’s own relative distance to a place. ‘Africa’ is not and cannot be peripheral to ‘Africa’ itself. Only to Denmark.

65. Danish discourse on COVID-19 is so invested in explaining away or excusing successful containment on the African continent that even an article that purportedly reports on its success immediately reverts back to and mobilises eugenicist and biologist explanations—race as biological difference—to subvert institutional and policy and behavioural successes in African countries.

66. When read altogether, these hypotheses show us that Danish mainstream media constructs ‘Africa’ in a way where Africans can ever only be helped or achieve change and transformation through outside forces. Through luck, earlier epidemics or European intervention. They are born with it or it is coming. Time has just not unfolded as it will quite yet. Africans move on an inescapable, undisruptable timeline towards inevitable catastrophe and death. There is no agency in ‘Africa’ by Africans. They do not determine themselves or their lives—nature does or we do. Which is a discursive construction closer to an admittance of colonial and epicolonial violation and brutality trained by European systems onto ‘Africa’ than I presume any journalist intended.

67. In these hypotheses, Africans are not real people who enact change and exert control over their own lifeworlds. They are passive subjects folded into worlds

governed by necrotime. Time before, during or after death. Time as death, in which Africans exist in a slow life, where nothing happens by them, and in fast death, where death happens to them.

68. There is a noticeable degree of scrambling panic in these articles and I was left with the sense that the juxtaposition of a Europe plainly devastated by the pandemic and an ‘Africa’ containing the pandemic produces a direct challenge to and crisis of white supremacy. This is not usually how the story goes. ‘Africa’ functions as a backdrop against which Denmark constructs itself as more powerful, more functional, safer, cleaner, better. *Better.* A place of life. These shapeshifting characteristics of necropolitical, racist discourse and its ability to flow in different, often perfectly conflicting directions of logic, form part of what makes it so durable.

69. Because how do we deconstruct and confront and abolish a force that counters criticism by offering up another explanation?

70. How do we take apart something this slippery?

71. This avoidant?

72. This atmospheric?

73. At the time of writing, more than two years into the pandemic, an outright catastrophe never did visit ‘Africa’. COVID-19 remained less deadly (Nolen, 2022) in ‘Africa’ than elsewhere. The catastrophe happened to Minority World geographies, something unthinkable to white supremacy. Danish media did not succeed—not for a lack of trying—in obscuring its own catastrophe by hyperfocusing on and investing in a speculative, future African catastrophe. When I deconstruct the white supremacist set of questions—“But when is Africa’s far worse catastrophe going to hit? Where are all the bodies in the streets in the

part of the world that is supposed to be poorer than us?"—that the majority of the articles in my archive on 'Africa' ask themselves in either explicit or implicit ways, what I am left with is a more complex and vulnerable set of questions:

74. How did so many Danish people die? How was Denmark vulnerable to a pandemic? In what ways has the pandemic, as it unfolded and unfolds in Denmark, been entangled with Danish necropolitical conditions of slow violence and zones of abandonment and death that all precede the pandemic?

75. Here is a final question to wrap up this chapter: Might all this speculative and necrotemporal fantasy point to a pandemic that does not just represent a health crisis, but a crisis of ideology, a crisis of white supremacy?

9. Discussion of key findings

1. This chapter will bring together and reiterate the thematic discourses that have been identified throughout the analysis chapters to elucidate the multiple and interlocking matrixes of necropower and politics manifest in my sample data.

2. The most central finding of this doctorate is that media discourse—in this case of the African body and nation produced by Danish media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020—act as a constitutive supplement to the production and maintenance of race through a (re)organisation and strengthening of necropolitical logics during a time of disaster. The key findings of this study point to these media representations achieving this reorganisation and strengthening through the following discursive techniques:

3. By producing necropolitical configurations of 'Africa' as a 'death world' through discourse that constructs 'Africa' as 1) overcrowded and overpopulated; 2) as in perpetual crisis—past, present and future; 3) as unable to provide health and safety to its people; and 4) as a space not just of pandemic crisis, but pandemic catastrophe.

4. By producing necropolitical configurations of Africans as 'the living dead' through discourse that constructs African lives as 1) contingent on white supremacy and saviourism; 2) as relegated to a third zone of the living dead; and 3) instrumentalises African opinions and expertise to support necropolitical logics.

5. By mobilising gender within necropolitical configurations of 'Africa' through discourses that 1) gender suffering and death in 'Africa'; and 2) produce African lives as ungrievable.

6. By mobilising geopolitics and chronopolitics within necropolitical configurations of ‘Africa’ through discourses that 1) intertwine migratory discourse with necropolitics to construct and dehumanise Africans as threats to the nation state; and 2) intertwine temporality and necropolitics to construct a concept of necrotime, in which ‘Africa’ is constructed as a place where time always moves towards death by advancing multiple chronopolitical hypotheses on and around how and why the pandemic is not *yet* as bad in ‘Africa’.

7. The overarching techniques, in turn, are comprised of a plethora of smaller, intertwining discursive technologies, listed below in a loosely chronological order:

8. ‘Africa’ is constructed through a reliance on binary mythologies: War or disease? Dying of COVID-19 or starving to death? Contracting COVID or getting hit by a bomb? Romanticised for its nature or demonised for its people?

9. ‘Africa’ itself is a vast and impenetrable continent. But ‘Africa’ is also a singular, homogenised country.

10. African governments are corrupt and institutionally incompetent, and African government officials can’t be trusted and fabricate and lie about the spread of COVID-19.

11. Africans are sick and malnourished and victimised and inferior and naive, and there are too many of them. They act like animals, They flock together in nests and they die—never like humans, but—like flies. They make bad personal and cultural and political choices. They are mistrustful and superstitious and dirty and diseased.

12. But white people on the African continent are not. The only good, trustworthy people in ‘Africa’ are the white NGO workers, ambassadors and journalists. They know more about ‘Africa’ than Africans and they are—ever only—charitable and

knowledgeable and skillful and proficient. The disease and dirt that is everywhere in ‘Africa’ does not attach to the white people in ‘Africa’. Maybe because they live in their own better neighbourhoods.

13. Africans cannot produce or possess knowledge, but are suspended in a space between ontology and epistemics. Within this space of epistemic tension and unbecoming, Africans can’t produce knowledge or conditions that sustain knowledge themselves, but must depend on deferred knowledge.

14. This is why Denmark needs to help ‘Africa’. Like we always have. For self-gain and self-protection and charity and because we know—and are—better than them. But mostly because we don’t want them to migrate to our part of the world.

15. ‘Africa’ is full of gendered and sexualised death and abandonment in which only African women, children and queers suffer and die, whilst the muted, silenced and invisiblised African men appear only as perpetrators of violence—never as its victims.

16. There is no food in ‘Africa’. There is a health and climate crisis of biblical proportions. There are civil wars, trauma, conflict. There is sickness and disease and malnutrition. There are crises, catastrophes and disasters. There are epidemics and pandemics. Sometimes there is a miracle. But no infrastructure, no schools, no sinks to wash your hands in, no chairs to sit on. In fact, there appears to be no cities in ‘Africa’
17. No celebration of black life and love and survival and resistance. No mourning of black death. No male death. No men at all in all of ‘Africa’. If there are any, only black men as migrants who come to our part of the world—the good part—to destabilise and threaten our security and safety. .No culture and no joy. No everyday life. No love. Never just someone’s home.

18. And finally, no past and no future in ‘Africa’, just a protracted present moment, a necrotemporality, that always moves towards death.

19. Throughout all the preceding discourse, both the overarching and smaller subsets, we see how the mechanisms of necropower works to narrate us into us into two distinct groups: The protected and advantaged and valued group, on the one hand, and the brutalised and exploited and dying groups, on the other. These productions work by intersecting and interlocking with other additional processes of gendered and sexualised differences and forms of domination and control that deepen the vulnerability and precarity that are assigned to some lives and some conditions of life and reveal that it is not just race—by itself—that fences in and overdetermines whose lives can and cannot be mourned or celebrated. These necropolitical determinations are co-calibrated and co-configured through bodies, through gender, through sexuality, through nation, through border, through movement, through matter, through space, and through time itself.

20. We see whose deaths we (cannot) mourn and whose lives we assign value or vulnerability to. We see who we grieve when they die. We see whose lives are grievable and who was recognised as alive enough to die. These productions show us how the acts of—and rights to—mourn death and grieve the loss of life in public discourse are key elements of how contemporary necropower takes place. The silencing and unmarking and neglect of mourning black death in ‘Africa’ in Danish media on COVID-19 constitutes a form of racialised and gendered abandoment. By discursively denying and neglecting grieving black death, necropolitical discourse further naturalises necropower’s right to kill by refusing the value of the lives of the dead.

21. We see how African bodies are consistently produced as already suffering, already diseased, and African sites as already devastated, already out of control, either as a reality, but more frequently only as moral panic and anticipatory

fantasy. We see how configurations of ‘Africa’ rely on apriori processes of knowledge creation, in which white Danish mainstream media’s stories about ‘Africa’ are almost always acquired independently of any real experience of or engagement with ‘Africa’ as an actual place in the world. Instead, the majority of the sample data engages overt discursive conjectures about ‘Africa’ to speculate around when and how and why ‘Africa’ will be struck down by a future, hypothetical COVID-19 tragedy.

22. We see how the discourses unfold in ways that assign different responsibilities to ‘Africa’ and Denmark during the pandemic. ‘Africa’ must *stop* an inevitable catastrophe from unfolding, while Denmark must *prevent* a crisis. The two are subtly but importantly different. We stop an event that has already begun, and we prevent something that is yet to happen. Denmark controls the pandemic and ‘Africa’ is a victim of it. If ‘Africa’ is spared, it is either a miracle or it is due to the will of the pandemic, not the agency of African societies.

23. In Denmark, COVID-19 is narrated as a managed and manageable crisis. In ‘Africa’, COVID-19 is narrated as an uncontrolled and uncontrollable catastrophe. In Denmark, governmental response is responsive and responsible. In ‘Africa’, governmental response is slow and incompetent. In Denmark, this is a unique, singular, discrete event. In ‘Africa’ it is a continuation of unabating catastrophe. In Denmark, containment is due to scientific intervention and compliance. In ‘Africa’, containment is due to luck and miracles. Denmark is an active player, ‘Africa’ is a passive one. Danish foreigners in ‘Africa’ function as saviours. African foreigners in Denmark function as threat. Danish foreigners in ‘Africa’ assist in containing the pandemic. African foreigners in Denmark spread the pandemic. Danish lives are configured as grievable. African lives are configured as pathological and ungrievable.

24. ‘Africa’ and the productions of it as a death world marked by disease and unsafety and suffering provide Danish discourse with the necessary framework to

imagine ourselves, even out-of-text, even implicitly, as clean and healthy and safe and *well*. In 'Africa', control is conceptualised as virtually impossible—"[the pandemic] can become uncontrollable" (Kristeligt Dagblad, 6 March, 2020)—or, at best, *reactive* in a space of dysfunction and poverty. In Denmark, control is conceptualised as so proactive and precise in a space of functionality that it is possible to charitably export these modes of control to 'Africa'. Parallel to the productions of 'Africa' is the mirror opposite narratives of how COVID-19 is negotiated in relation to and negotiates white bodies and white space. The discursive strategies that characterise the white framework that makes 'Africa' comprehensible to a white Danish audience—'Africa' and blackness, always, *in relation to* and contingent on whiteness, never as it exists in and of itself—foreground or imply narratives of white heroism and courage, white selflessness and compassion, white competence and skill, white scientific thought and intervention. These concurrent representations work to strengthen and promote white supremacy and nationalism by undermining the black body and nation, whilst exalting white bodies and white nations. Whilst white efforts are personalised, named and celebrated, black efforts rarely deserve any mention. If they are mentioned, they get lumped together as generalised statistics.

25. These discourses reveal an overarching strategy of 'us' and 'them', 'self' and 'other'. It ties together the necropolitical othering of the African nation and the parallel occurrence of the biopolitical configuration of the Danish body and nation. Through the constant reiteration of 'them' and 'us'—'them' vs. 'us', more accurately—national unity and identity get configured. Notably, these discourses function through a series of simple, historic dualisms: black and white, good and evil, clean and unclean, indispensable and dispensable, us and them, including, as Mbembe argues (2003), alive and dead. They draw on what Yasmin Nair calls "two discursive inevitabilities" (Nair, 2015, para. 1) within a very narrow set of frameworks: "social construction versus essentialism, whiteness versus blackness, guilt versus innocence, and so on" (Nair, 2015. para. 10). These

dualisms fold in on themselves and function in an enmeshed and entangled manner where they, despite belonging to theoretically distinct and opposing categories, are mutually dependent on each other for their respective existence. The enmeshment of the configuration of the African nation and the Danish nation demonstrate our interconnected history and present.

26. The binary discursive inevitability of setting up a distinction between Danes and ‘Africans’, a stand-in for white people and black people, relies on a willfully erroneous reading of the historicity between ‘Africa’ and Europe, on one that creates separations between white nations, such as Denmark or the US, and former colonies, and labours to ignore that, rather than being distinct, these histories are, as Gurminder Bhambra puts it, “in fact [one and the same], inextricably entwined” (Bhambra, 2015, para. 11). The gap in welfare and living standards between Denmark and African nations is not an arbitrary gap. It was created and continues to be upheld by “practices emanating from richer countries, and by those same countries' deficient understandings of their own global dominance” (Bhambra, 2015, para. 7).

27. Another recurring theme that also relies on willful ignorance of the intertwined histories between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is the appeal to provision of aid out of sheer white compassion. Some of the sample articles take the time to remind readers that, yes, there is reason to offer humanitarian aid to ‘Africa’ because, long-term, it yields protective and socio-economic benefits to Danish society. But this particular narrative, which emphasises self-interest as the raison d'être for taking global responsibility, further relies on necropolitical logics and a refusal to take the shared histories between the Minority and Majority world into account.

28. Through Mbembe’s necropolitical framework, we are also able to pursue how those whose lives are positioned or produced in relative closeness to hegemonic or dominant power have more value assigned to their life and existence. Simultaneously, the further away from dominant power and intersections of

structurally embedded advantage someone's life is produced, the more effectively the conditions of this life are subsumed by conditions so precarious they lead to dying and death. We see this clearly when we consider how far away from dominant power African lives are constructed—relying on white epistemics for self-constitution and knowledge, produced away from ontological or epistemic power, pushed into a third zone of dependence, where African people are constructed as the passive recipients of white action and intervention. We see this through the techniques of white saviourism and black incompetence and superstition. The closer African lives are to whiteness, the better off they are. Consider, as an illustrative example, this quote in Jyllands-Posten on 24 March 2020: "Denmark has, for decades, fought to stabilise the continent and worked to create a future for the African population." (Jyllands-Posten, 24 March, 2020) For decades, *decades*, Denmark has fought a valiant battle to create a future for all of 'Africa'. Because it is only once white countries step in that there might be a future. Only once white aid workers show up, there is a chance of survival and redemption. Once white anthropologists walk the streets of Burkina Faso, there is a chance of protection. Once white commentary trains its gaze on 'Africa', there is hope of real and reliable perspective—and not just the falsified data that 'Africa' itself generates on its own conditions. Once whiteness enters the scene, discursively and too often literally, there is hope for Africans. Whiteness brings better knowledge, better systems, better ideas. Whenever African life is constructed in isolation from white interference, it is constructed entirely through the reliance on internally contradictory and brutally racist colonial tropes of a people who are diseased and dirty and childlike and dangerous—to themselves and to Europe—in their superstitious naivety.

29. In these ways, necropower both asserts and obscures itself by masking exploitation and violence as kindness and charity. What better way of hiding brutalisation than by calling it help? By positioning white bodies as the primary social and political and cultural actors *in 'Africa'*, who are empowered and empowering, whilst never reflecting on or mentioning how many very real

dangers whiteness and white supremacy and, not least, white people in ‘Africa’ have posed and continue to pose to black people and the African continent, these discourses seek to diminish black agency and action across all contexts—on the streets, in their homes, in governments. No matter where black people are described and no matter what they are doing, white people could do it better. Even, or perhaps especially, white Americans phoning in from an office in Washington. Strength and action and knowledge are assigned to white volunteers and researchers and experts, whilst African people are positioned as bad actors, whose superstitions and passivity cause and escalate suffering.

30. These forced positions draw on the pernicious history of tying behaviours, cultures and customs of African people with unhuman and antihuman behaviour and naturalise the widespread structural violence and brutality—as well as both real and discursive death—that these very same discursive strategies utilise to justify their positions by contributing to the regulation of Africans as sub-humans who may live, but who are not alive.

31. Ultimately, that is how these texts accomplish their necropolitical productions: They move everything towards death, organising everything around the principle of death, even time itself, so that there is never (any) time for anything else in ‘Africa’ other than dying—now or later—whilst white people and the lucky few in the proximity of whiteness survive and live on.
32. Ultimately, these discourses reveal how a global health crisis, which threatens white comfort and security, reorganises itself—instantaneously—as a crisis across all political registers:

33. A social crisis, political, environmental, cultural and, ultimately, a crisis of white supremacy.

34. Bringing the politics of death to life in vivid colours.

10. Concluding remarks

> The pandemic is a portal.
>
> —Arundhati Roy (2020)

In the introduction of this study, I asked: Who gets to live and who gets to die when a pandemic ravages the world? We see now that the question is slightly, but importantly different: Who should live and who should die when a pandemic ravages the world? By pursuing how Danish mass media enacts mechanisms of racial violence by entrenching discourses of black degeneracy and white middle-class superiority, I have sought to show how race becomes normalised and rendered as 'real' through an unrelenting circulation by dominant media institutions. By tracing how Danish mainstream journalism interprets reality under COVID-19; I have been seeking to trace how necropolitical and racialising views of disease strengthen practices that are responsible for contributing to the construction of race and racial brutalisation as real. The analysis also reflects on how Danish textual productions of gendered racism and white supremacy are currently being reconstituted and fuel discursive and embodied necropolitical state violence. Through a mobilisation of the concept of necropolitics at large (Sumba, 2021), I have analysed how death and racial violence are mobilised and produced in ordinary everyday discourse. My analysis has identified how the discursive response to the pandemic that has surfaced, and which remains ongoing, underscores how Denmark—through mundane everyday discourse—attempts to revitalise power in relation to 'Africa' to resurrect itself from the pandemically-induced crisis of white supremacy.

When read together, as one metanarrative, the themes and subanalyses I have detailed throughout my study, combine to produce a supranarrative of nationalist white supremacy that reveals the hidden logic of necropolitics: That a certain amount of brutal death is not just a necessary, but a reasonable price for *other* people to pay to protect

our nice little corner of the world. As Achille Mbembe (2018) points out: “Asserting the boundaries of the nation goes hand in hand in that model with the assertion of the boundaries of race. Now, defining the boundaries of race within that model requires a proper definition of the boundaries of the body; *the centrality of the body in the calculus of both freedom and security*.” (Mbembe, 2018, italics added, para. 11) In this supranarrative, I want to suggest that discursive productions of nation, race and body exist as interdependent and fully entangled mechanisms that regulate and hierarchicalise our lives and politically calculate and assign worth and value attached to our lives and our deaths, and that the discursive production of nation, race and body exist so intimately entangled that it makes sense to theorise them as one and the same thing, as expression of *border*. Nation as border. Race as border. Body as border. And thus also body as nation. COVID-19 renewed a desire from both citizens and their respective states for an intensification of deadly politics of colonial borders and tighter control of mobility, drive towards enclosure, an intensification of the dialects of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, a dialectics of opening and closure. Throughout my study, I have not conceptualised life and death as each other’s opposites, as a binary, but as two parts of the same necro-bio mechanism. By drawing on textual analysis, it has been my implicit argument that the distinction between ‘life’ and ‘death’ dissolves in the face of the banality of discursive and real death in the zones of abandonment that form part of constituting Minority World nation states. As I have interrogated and traced the distinctions between valuable and pathological lives by attending to how constructions of black, abjected lives as marked for death are co-constituted with and through the overt or indirect construction of white, protected lives as folded into life, the conceptualisation of life and death as distinct has dissolved more and more.

This final chapter will function as an overall summary of the key findings discovered in the analysis and their implications. It will consider the contributions of this study to the existing scholarship and fields of research and its relevance for future engagement with race and racism, necropolitics, and critical discourse analysis. This chapter will also discuss the limitations of the study, as well as introduce future research and action

suggestions that could develop and interrupt the themes explored in this study. This study has examined discursive constructions of African nations and bodies within Danish mainstream media during COVID-19 in order to facilitate an enhanced understanding of ways in which necropolitical logics are inscribed and produced at an everyday discursive level of seemingly mundane power. This approach, that has pursued a critical discourse analysis of these discourses from a necropolitical strategy of analysis, has enabled us to consider how the use of discursive production and configuration within these ordinary contexts function as micro-assertions of power whose repetitions impact deadlier mechanisms of political action and control. By exploring how pandemic discourse attaches to ‘Africa’ in Danish mainstream media, we gain an enhanced sense of how necropower and politics of death are maintained and strengthened through the everyday discourses that shape our social and epistemic realities.

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Contemporary racist violence functions on a continuum with the everyday structural and informal violence faced by black people living in Denmark to racialised second class citizenships and deportations to the erasure of racially-motivated killings. The following incident is a salient example of the material implications of mainstream media’s production of necropolitical and racist discourse about ‘Africa’ and all those associated with the continent. The following incident is an intertextual, in the broadest sense of the term, example of how discursive violence trickles out over the page and takes on the shape of embodied violence. When mainstream media repeatedly depicts ‘Africa’, a proxy for blackness, as inherently bad, it has real-life, presently discernible effects on black lives and freedom in Denmark. When racism deepens in the media, racism deepens on the streets and in institutions and people’s homes, as well. In the box below is the first case study. It is a story that Ekstra Bladet brought on 10 August 2020 written by Emma Buus Mosegaard (2020).

Mayor apologises: Somali child rejected by nursery

A woman in Aarhus has experienced the last few days' 'hetz' against the Somali minority in the city

Quresha Harun was on her way to the crèche Mælkebøtten (English: The Dandelion) in Aarhus on Thursday morning when the phone rang. She was in a hurry because she was going to the dentist.

Staff from the nursery informed her on the phone that she could not take her daughter, Maida, through until the family had had a corona-test, even though no one from the family had shown symptoms of coronavirus.

The message from the staff came as new infection figures had been published the day before, which showed that more than half of the newly infected in Aarhus Municipality had a Somali background.

And even though she received an apology from an employee at the nursery the next day, Friday, the experience has settled in the body of Quresha Harun, who studies at VUC on a daily basis.

- Now I do not feel safe at that nursery, she says.
- I will keep my daughter at home or find another nursery.

Quresha Harun is sad that she was singled out by the nursery, while ethnic Danish parents were not.

- It makes me sad that I am not allowed to take my daughter through, she says.
(...)

Clearly distance themselves

In a letter to the association AarhusSomali, which Ekstra Bladet has come into possession of, Jacob Bundsgaard, who is mayor of Aarhus, clearly distances himself from the episode in the crèche Mælkebøtten and gives his unreserved apology.

'We clearly distance ourselves from the incidents that happened last week in Mælkebøtten.

We would like to apologise for the rejection of Quresha Harun Hussein's daughter. ' 'All children are welcome in the Aarhus crèches and kindergartens. Of course.

Therefore, there was an immediate follow-up with the staff in Mælkebøtten, and the affected parents have received an apology from the institution,' writes Mayor Jacob Bundsgaard and councilor Thomas Medom in the letter.

Ekstra Bladet has tried to obtain a comment from the nursery's manager, Annette Torntoft, but she refers to the municipality.

Must be safe

The head of children-and-young people in Aarhus Municipality, Susanne Hammer-Jakobsen, states that they are in dialogue with the parents to find a solution.

- Clearly, parents must be able to drop off their children safely, no matter what situation we are in.

She says that they now want to communicate to the leaders of the Aarhus day care services what the procedures are and that there can be no discrimination as it happened in the case of Quresha Harun.

We see in this example starkly how mainstream media are institutionally prone to exaggerate and sensationalise incidents and events. This amplification of fear-mongering narratives runs the risk of frightening the general public into panic mode and legitimising racist and emotional everyday decisions, like calling a mother and telling her to keep her Somali and therefore probably diseased child at home, to come into effect. According to Adeyanju (2010): media insensitivity, however unintentional, proves pivotal in perpetuating prejudiced and racist attitudes in everyday settings (Adeyanju, 2010). These actions contribute to an othering of black people as people who are either diseased or bring disease, who either have problems or who create problems. Race functions as an organisational principle in framing reality along the lines of what is normal, acceptable, and desirable. The reactions to heuristic cases of non-COVID-19 in black people in Europe only “resonate meaningfully with an already racialised audience already inured to/by race-logic for making sense of the world.” (Adeyanju, 2010, p. 13) We see, as we have seen through this study, how pandemic discourse on ‘Africa’ in Denmark reveals that you do not have to pick up a gun in Denmark to be a threat to its ‘democracy’. You do not have to harbour refugees in your home to be produced as part of the civilian infrastructure of ‘terrorism’. Though both of those actions will do the trick. All you have to do to be discursively produced as a threat to Denmark is outside of your control: You just have to be constructed by society as black.

Through tandem techniques of erasure and normalisation, necropolitical discourse regulates and maintains the death and structural violence and dependency lived daily by black communities across the world, including the lives lived by indigenous Inuit communities in Greenland under contemporary Danish colonial rule. As we have seen throughout this study, it is, in part, the discursive normalisation of contemporary white

Danish colonialism in Greenland that produces today's refugees in Kibera or assaulted women in South Africa or migrant refugees by the Greek border *as legible to Danish readers as discrete and 'reprehensible' events* that have nothing to do with 'us and that are different from and distinct from a Somali woman and child in Denmark being barred from a creche. It speaks to the success of necropolitics and its ordering logics that a Somali child excluded from an institution through techniques of racialisation that assign blackness and disease to an innocent child are produced as somehow apart from and qualitatively and politically different to the women and children suffering in 'Africa'. It is the success of necropolitical structures that these are made literate and readable to us as two distinct and separable events, both of which we are the innocent spectators of, rather than different aspects of the same mechanism that we are directly culpable for upholding and reproducing.

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COVID-19 is perhaps the best thing that happened to white people in my lifetime. I say this not to be polemic or contrite, but because it is my hope that this pandemic will act as an opening, as something that will heal and transform, as, in Aryandhati Roy's words, "a portal to a better world." It is my hope COVID-19 is also a glitch in the Matrix, a path to our shared humanity, something that will, if we let it, pry open our hearts to more equitable futures. It is my hope that COVID-19 can act not just as a force of devastation, but as an opportunity for white people to catch a glimpse of what it feels like, in our bodies and in our bones, to live under embodied and continuous threat, to live under marginalisation. This is a moment of profound empathy and compassion and should inspire us to push towards a system that serves us all. Nothing is the same anymore. Everything is under threat. That is a good thing. This moment is an opportunity as much as it is a threat. Nothing could be worse, for everyone else, than a return to *before*. Wanting to go back to pre-COVID times is a marker of privilege. This crystalline moment in time welcomes us to how 'the other half' has been forced to live under our exploitations, and by 'the other half' of course is code for 'the other 90% of the world's population and almost everyone who isn't white'.

Danish mainstream media in my data sample speak of this conjuncture, relentlessly, as a moment of anguish and fear. But a moment of anguish and fear for whom? A new normal, and not just an old normal, for whom? COVID-19 is configured as a threat to those of us who are unfamiliar with being threatened. It represents a crisis to those of us who are accustomed to a soft life. There are many to whom this feels intimately familiar, like nothing new, like how it has always been. How do people brutalised by poverty and police violence distinguish between a national lockdown and incarceration? How do disabled people distinguish between being involuntarily quarantined through stay-at-home mandates and a society that does not provide access to assistive devices?

This is the way millions of people most marginalised by socio-economic systems—black people, displaced people, disabled people, trans people, not to mention those who live in the compounding intersection of each one of these configurations all at once—live every day as they are pushed to the margins of society. So much Danish media discourse frames COVID-19 in near-apocalyptic terms that position the pandemic as a kind of rupture that has ushered in these entirely new problems. As though the pandemic has brought with it a host of entirely unseen and unpredictable problems, falling from the sky. But this is nothing new to a majority of people in the world. It is the same old wounds—deepened yes, but all the same. In fact, the deepened inequalities that we are forced to reckon with are not just pre-existing, but *predictable* products of centuries of cultural, political, and economic conditioning.

While necropolitics have not provided a strong foundation for intersectional and global solidarity and compassion, it is my hope that it may, as a critical strategy of analysis, contribute to a more radical vision for future discourse—and by extension, future ways of breaking and intervening against necropower that protect all life, not one that bolsters its own power by accepting and administering death along the way. As Arundhati Roy (2020, para. 47) instructs, we can use this pandemic and its death as fuel:

> Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. (...) It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred. (...) Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

Even though we are in the midst of continual and escalating planetary threats—from my vantage point and at the time of writing, environmental and climate catastrophe, inflation, war in Europe, the continuation of COVID-19 and the additional threat of a monkey pox epidemic, the unrelenting war on all marginalised genders and on disabled and sick and divergent bodies, as well as the generalised necropolitical conditions of death that every black life is under siege of and within—I am still hopeful. I am hopeful that there is yet time for equality. That there is yet time for Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2020) dawn of de-Westernization. That there is yet more time. And if there is not enough time for equality, there may still be time for these crises to lead us to an apocalypse so vast and totalising in its effects that necropolitics and white supremacy break all around us. We see the breakages in the midst of crisis already. As detailed in the background for this study, Denmark became the fifth country in Europe to introduce a ban on facial covering in public in 2018. The specific wording of these policies were resultant of the technical need to circumvent the legal protection of freedom of religion. But for years, the practical consequences of this ban of 'facial covering' has been the gendered and Islamophobic legal and social punishment of Muslim women who wear veils, such as the hejāb or niqāb. COVID-19 has ruined that, as Denmark also introduced pandemic face mask legislation that made it mandatory to wear a face mask in public. In other words, in less than two years, 'masks' went from being prohibited—in service of Islamophobic necropolitics—to being mandatory—in service of new, urgent biopolitics. What this small, yet illustrative example shows us is both the tension of bio- and necropolitics, but also that there might be generative possibilities of worlds of freedom within the shifts and splits between necro- and biopolitics and an undoing of

necropolitics for marginalised groups *within* the confines of biopolitics—and that even in death, we can be free.

Limitations of the study

The most disconcerting and troubling limitation of this study is how the study repeats and therefore reinscribes representational violence. By reproducing discursive violence in my descriptions and interpretation of it, as Ahmed has pointed out in her descriptions of ethical encounters in research, I totalise the textual recognitions of the issues and subjects I describe. In other words, the discourses I re-tell and examine become another layer of representational violence that are always already recognisable and reproduces its subjects "in a reductive totality" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 156). I have carried out the entire study with a continual awareness of this tension and a continual commitment to not just reinscribe and repeat these violences, but to haunt and delegitimise them and look for where they break. It is my hope with this study that confrontation also functions as a contribution to an undoing of what white people think we know, of how we think we know the world, and of our colonial ways of seeing and knowing and doing and, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes, that the "(...) naming of the crisis [gives hope] about a post-capitalist, post-colonial, and post-patriarchal world" (2020, p. 378) that allows us to realise that the future can be different from the present.

As mentioned before, a collection of data is a "perilous matter" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 14) and to make the claim that the different texts are connected says something about my interpretation rather than about the texts themselves. From a data collection perspective, it is important to emphasise that the texts that make up the primary data are a highly incomplete collection of texts on the pandemic and 'Africa' within a contemporary Danish media context. The very construction of a collection of materials, the act of selecting and categorising and limiting articles, is already an important part of the analysis itself, and functions as one of the study's limitations. By sampling I am interpreting and by collecting data I am already analysing and interpreting. Data

collection *is* data analysis. The study falls short of some validity criteria for qualitative studies, namely the ideal of moving the reader and giving thick descriptions. This is due to the choice of theoretical and methodological frameworks. Critical discourse analysis, for example, with its narrow focus does not lend itself to providing moving and full descriptions of the data in question. By engaging in a very specific and intentionally reductive reading of the material at hand, it does the opposite.

Another important limitation concerns the method of analysis. Critical discourse analysis does not provide a consistent methodology, but a tool through which we are able to analyse diverse theoretical frameworks to gain new perspectives and understandings of a wide range of issues. The results of my analysis are highly interpretative and they are informed by a novel theoretical framework, which is likely to have resulted in many specific epistemic assumptions and interpretations being made during the analysis. Further, throughout the study, I have applied my necropolitical strategy of analysis in a way that intentionally 'looks' for necropolitical and racialised discourse within the sample data. Various other strategies exist, and would have yielded tremendously different results. Whilst these assumptions are generally unavoidable within qualitative research, I have attempted to counteract them by being as open and transparent about the strategies of analysis and theorisations and methodologies that underpin the analyses. Quite a few gaps result from an approach like this, which I hope will inspire additional scholarship into this highly interdisciplinary area of research.

Finally, the study is written in English, and parts of the study is expressed in an abstract, academic language. For these reasons, it may not be easily consumable linguistically to Danes as the audience of the context the study concerns itself with. By writing my analysis in crip form, I have sought to heighten some of its relevance to ordinary Danes and global others interested in racial (in)equity.

Contributions of the study

Necropolitics and racialisation are not mechansims that affect only the most marginalised and those most brutalised by racialisation among us. They organise and underpin society and induce and inscribe how our death and life worlds are structured, though these inscriptions and assignments are political conditions and organise life and death worlds very differently for different bodies and populations. This study and its analysis emerge out of an effort to contribute to and expand on this area of research by situating necropolitical discourse analysis within critical psychology as a contribution towards racism and the psychology of race as a political rendering. By advancing a Denmark-situated analysis of racist, necropolitical discourse in media during the particular conjecture of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study combines established theoretical and methodological efforts to examine racist media and representations of 'Africa' in new ways to trace the necropolitical underpinnings of the pandemic. This study fills a gap of research on how 'Africa' is positioned through necropolitical techniques in Danish mainstream media. Additionally, it also forms part of efforts towards acknowledging and engaging questions around race and racialisation as a psychological scholar. By approaching these questions from a necropolitical lens, it has been my aim to build on and disturb and disrupt the epistemic assumptions of normative psychology whose theorising and methodologies presume we all live as equally human under conditions of universal security and safety, and instead make a contribution towards different theorisations of the productions of marginalisation by understanding and interrogating the complexities of power and death and life that do not confuse hegemonic proximity with commonality and universality. By situating racism's political dimensions *within* psychology itself, this study expands on and intervenes against mainstream psychological conceptualisations of race as individually enacted and upheld. By making discourse analysis a concern within psychological research, this study further asserts that discourse matters in how we construct our worlds and identities and in our attempts to build finely-tuned understandings of how mechanisms of advantage, oppression, exclusion and marginalisation work. Theoretically, this study makes the contribution that how we use discourse, and how it functions in texts to

create and oppress identities, is crucial to the discipline of psychology. By pursuing a necropolitical reading of everyday texts, this study situates structural violence as a force that is upheld and perpetuated *by people*, and pursues systemic, structural and political injustice and brutality as individually and relationally maintained. By linking systems of violence with everyday discourse, this study contributes to a widening of the links between how violence gets maintained by and between people, through how people view other people, what we say about them, how we say it, and what we continue to promote.

While there has been an outpouring of research that seeks to examine pandemic outcomes through necropolitical analysis, critical discourse analysis has not often been applied as a method to this theoretical framework. This study builds on existing scholarship by applying a necropolitical theoretical framework to methods of critical discourse analysis, something that is only beginning to be explored within critical pandemic scholarship and something that has been largely underutilised within psychological scholarship. Additionally, this study has sought to add to existing literature by applying an analysis of necropolitical racialisation to Danish mainstream media's production of 'Africa' during the pandemic, something that has not been attempted before. This application adds to a Denmark-situated examination of the regional and contextual variations in how necropolitics and racialisation are discursively produced and maintained. Lastly, by interrogating how this discourse stratifies itself along necropolitical lines of race, gender, time and space, this study has provided additional evidence of how necropolitical power and regulation produce certain bodies as worthy of life, whilst casting other bodies aside as disposable and worthy of death, which may be of use to scholars interested in race and psychology, necropolitics, critical discourse analysis, as well as all other decolonial, anticolonial and developing milieus in which efforts to understand the mechanisms that enact racism constitute a resonant mode of protest against an unequal and violent world system.

Future research

In light of the fact that the field of inquiry of this study and the discourses subjected to analysis constitute an ongoing, unfolding event that represents a matter of material life or death for millions of people, there are uncountable avenues of examination for future research. One starting point could be to expand on the intersectional harms produced by pandemic discourse by interrogating how the pandemic assigns death to disabled and sick bodies. Another avenue for research could be venturing into racist pandemic discourse outside of media contexts and into contexts of political and educational discourse.

As the pandemic has further amplified the racialisation of the lives of individuals and communities across the world, painfully exacerbating the asymmetrically and politically assigned differences in people's risk of and exposure to violence and death, I consider it an ethical issue that we, as scholars of psychology and race, continue to approach and engage questions around race and racism as necropolitical effects, and reflect on our own and our discipline's complicity in the political conditions that constitute the continued neglect of scholarship on these issues in the first place.

The analytical framework of this study should also be applied to both the historical and broader contexts that allow these contemporary discourses to be published and publishable, as well as legible, in the first place. Applying the analysis to historical and broader contexts may allow us to consider how those who write, edit and publish these articles and a majority of those who consume them see nothing wrong with them because white normativity and necropolitical assignments of worth and value function as epistemically embedded facts of existence. A more detailed consideration of the broader context that allows for and, indeed, invests in the production of these discourses may also enable us to reflect on how discursive resistance can disrupt and impede the production of necropolitical violence, as we continue to live through grossly inequitable and pandemic times. On a wider level, we are witnessing an environmental and planetary crisis, in which human rights are subsumed by the logics of the market

under neoliberal capitalism. The theoretical framework and approach of my study may hopefully be useful to future research attempting to bring light to the immense human cost of these processes, as well as the wider implications for liberatory strategies.

As my reflections on this study come to a close, they lead us to some final thoughts in the shape of questions:

1. Can we learn to face, plainly, the realities of the ongoing effects of everyday and state strategies of our white supremacist, epicolonial and terrorist macro- and microstructures, the vestiges of them, the fatalities of them, the clever reconfigurations of them, the brutalisation and abandonment without end, and of lives pushed to the shadows of society by engineered inequity?

2. Can we safely and generatively co-construct vibrant and new projects and practices that emerge from black and indigenous leadership and knowledge within systems of necropolitics and white supremacy? and

3. How do we safely transport them across the world? How can we stay open to each other and to new forms of connectivity and intimacy and to a shared futurity in which all humans thrive?

That third question and its derivatives may be, as Mbembe (2021) himself noted at the onset of the pandemic, the most important question—”the very last” (Mbembe, 2020, p. S62)—left to answer: Will we listen and will we learn before it is too late? “Are we capable of rediscovering that each of us belongs to the same species, that we have an indivisible bond with all life?” (Mbembe, 2020, p. S62)

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Appendix A: Articles cited from sample data

Berlingske (4 March, 2020)
Berlingske (3 April, 2020)
Berlingske (2 May, 2020)
Information (14 March, 2020)
Information (14 March, 2020)
Information (14 March, 2020)
Information (14 March, 2020)
Information (14 March, 2020)
Information (27 March, 2020)
Information (27 March, 2020)
Information (3 April, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (17 February, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (20 March, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten, 24 March, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (24 March, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (28 March, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (28 March, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (9 April, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (16 April, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (23 April, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (30 April, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (21 May, 2020)
Jyllands-Posten (21 May, 2020)

Kristeligt Dagblad (28 February, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (6 March, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (20 March, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (20 March, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (28 March 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (3 April, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (27 April, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (20 May, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (4 June, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (8 June, 2020)
Kristeligt Dagblad (20 August, 2020)
Politiken (17 February, 2020)
Politiken (17 February, 2020)
Politiken, 4 March, 2020)
Politiken (12 March, 2020)
Politiken (19 March, 2020)
Politiken (19 March, 2020)
Politiken (20 March, 2020)
Politiken (20 April, 2020)
Politiken (April 27, 2020)
Politiken (April 27, 2020)