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Identity Crisis: Making Sense of Post-Apartheid Relationships Between Whiteness and Antiracism

Justin Bradshaw

SIT Study Abroad, jbrad@brandeis.edu

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Identity Crisis:
Making Sense of Post-Apartheid Relationships Between Whiteness and Antiracism

Justin Bradshaw

Shifra Jacobson, Advisor

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights

School for International Training, Study Abroad, a program for World Learning

Cape Town

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Abstract

This independent study project sought to explore white South African antiracist identities during post-apartheid South Africa and how the ways of making meaning of an antiracist identity contribute to and reflect the conceptual frameworks that already exist. Furthermore, this study intended to illuminate how white identifying antiracist persons in post-apartheid South Africa can be allies in the struggle for a more racially equitable society. The frameworks involved in this project are the academic study of whiteness, critical race theory, and antiracism.

In this study the researcher interviewed four white South Africans who, in one way or another, are intellectually involved with antiracism. The interviews combined two methods: life history interviews and critical evaluation interviews. The life history interviews sought to explore each individual's cognitive subjective understanding of antiracism, their personal motivations towards a white antiracist identity, and the internal work necessary in becoming antiracist. In this other section, the critical evaluation interview, subject participants were asked to engage critically with the current manifestations of racism in South Africa, the current issues concerning white involvements with antiracism, the responsibilities of white identifying antiracists, and the proper ways for white identifying persons to be allies in the struggle to end racism.

Based on these interviews, it is evident that a white South African antiracist identity is subjective, an individual expression of one's intellectual understanding of what it means to be antiracist. It is also collective, however. Subject participants surfaced common themes of a white antiracist including the admission of a racist and racialized way of understanding the world, the necessity to establish close relationships with people who do not look, act, or talk in similar ways, the need to interrupt racist spaces, the need to relinquish positions and associations of power in antiracist workings, and to be a listener, acting when called upon by those black counterparts who should be leading.

Introduction

Project Overview

Understanding the role of whites in the struggle towards antiracism has long been studied in sociological academia. This study is directly linked to the study of whiteness, the study of race, and the study of racism. Historically, the foundational creator of the study of whiteness is contested. However, we can imagine and credit authors like William J. Wilson, in his essay “What Shall We Do With the White People?” in 1860, Langston Hughes’, in *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), and W.E.B. Du Bois, in his essay “The Souls of White Folk (1920), for their contributions to the field. Implicit in this research is the study of the intersectionality of privilege associated with whiteness. This includes the perpetuation of economic, political, intellectual, social, and physical advantage afforded to those racially categorized as white.

This project maintains its importance because the position of whites in antiracist workings has long been contested. Historically, whites have dominated spaces of transformation for racial minority groups. Here I am referring to the tendency for whites to think that they know the best way to liberation for oppressed groups. Other problems in this field include color-blindness. This promotes the idea that race is no longer an issue and that the problems associated with race were terminated with international historical moments like the Civil Rights Movement and local moments like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This idea constitutes the erasure of the actual experience of racial minority groups and the present salience, repercussions and disadvantages of race everywhere. More problems contributing to the importance of this study include the problematic motivations of ‘antiracists’. The desire to be seen as antiracist is in fact racist. This usually manifests itself in the creation of relationships with minority racial groups for the purpose of being identified as antiracist. All of these contributions, and more, contribute to the importance and necessity of this study.

Identifying the historical and international contributions to the study of whiteness and antiracism, while also exposing the problematic nature of the position of white people in antiracist workings, creates the space to think critically about the identity and the role of

white antiracists in South Africa, specifically. In conducting 4 interviews with white South African antiracists it is my contention that I will offer new insight into this sociological literature. I expect to ascertain testimonies that further our understanding of a white antiracist identity and white identifying antiracist persons' position in antiracist workings.

Objectives

With this project I hope to garner a better understanding of what a white antiracist identity looks like, specifically in South Africa. Moreover, I want to make sense of how one unlearns a racialized way of understanding the world and the intricacies of an antiracist identity. It is not my goal to use the experiences of these four subject participants to condense a white South African antiracist identity. It is my purpose to use them as a platform for personalizing and localizing the current sociological academia surrounding whiteness and antiracism. The objectives of this project, then, are: to gain a subjective definition of antiracism dependent upon each individual subject participant's understanding of antiracism, to discover what motivated each participant towards antiracist workings, to understand the personal investments in antiracism, to make sense of the personal work necessary in becoming antiracist, to uncover the current issues surrounding white involvements with antiracism, to illuminate more proper ways for white identifying persons to be allies in the struggle to end racism, and to determine the responsibilities and characteristics of white identifying antiracists.

Structure

This ISP consists of three sections. The first section considers the historical significance of whiteness during apartheid. This essentially lays the foundation for understanding how whiteness and its associations have transitioned from apartheid into today. The second section demonstrates how Cape Town remains a colonial and racist space in modernity. The purpose of this piece is to provide the justification for understanding why this study is important. The third, and final section, presents how a white antiracist identity can be interrogated and understood. In this section, the different problems, contradictions, and confusions surrounding a white antiracist identity will be unpacked and analyzed.

Primary vs. Secondary Material

I used a combination of both primary and secondary sources including:

Primary:

- Conducting personal interviews

Secondary:

- I analyzed academic and non-academic literature

Limitations of Study

In any study there are limitations that often prohibit the researcher from actualizing and creating the work that they intended. It is my contention that limitations, in fact, may sometimes stem from a problematic position of the researcher. This position can surface itself in the way that researchers begin a project with a certain outcome in mind. If this outcome is not attained, or if it is transformed in a way that is undesirable, the researcher most likely would identify those things that prohibited her/him from completing their idealized work as 'limitations.' This becomes problematic because of the academia associated with and written about the relationship between the researcher and the subject participant. In their article, "Redefining the 'Other' in Multicultural Research", D.V. Tanno and F.E. Jandt claim that researchers must stop asking questions with an outcome in mind. Rather, their questions must permit full subjectivity of the participant, allowing them to navigate between the ranges of possible answers to a specific question (1993). By extension, this can translate into the researchers' anticipation of a proposed 'outcome' of a study. Instead of beginning with the end in mind, the researcher must allow the study to carry and transform itself in a way that may be unfamiliar to her/him. Therefore, in thinking about limitations, the researcher may move away from thinking about those things that prohibited the realization of the study he/she wanted to complete and into understanding limitations to be external forces that did not hinder, but rather allowed the research to find itself and to exist as itself in its present state. With this in mind, I would like to move into examining the time, which ultimately shaped and controlled my research findings. In this four-week period, I was able to complete 4 interviews with white South

African's who were able to critically engage with the idea of antiracism and the understanding of a white antiracist identity. Other things that have shaped the outcome and the learnings of this research include my being a white American intellectual. By nature of my positionality, combined with my studying in South Africa, this research allowed me to understand a different way of knowing white antiracist identities. Other things, including the subject participants' engagement with the interview questions shaped the outcome of my study. In some interviews, the participants strictly adhered to the interview questions. In others, they may have answered one or two questions while paying close attention to what they thought was important for my research. It is in these moments of difference that created the present research findings. The individuals and their autonomy in the interviews transformed my research into what it currently is.

Literature Review

Historical Context – normative white identities under apartheid

Mainstream South African white identity has historically been marked in time as static. During apartheid, the construction and the actualization of a white South African identity indeed served its purpose—the celebration of whiteness and the subjugation of blackness. It is through the dominant narrative of ‘white supremacy, black inferiority’ that we can understand the construction of whiteness as something that remained unchanged throughout the history of South Africa. This historical construction of whiteness in South Africa is predicated on the parasitic relationship of whites and blacks. In biology, this relationship demonstrates the profit of one species at the expense of the other and often leads to the death of the organism that is not benefitting from this association. In a similar way, through this lens, we can understand the historical correlation between ‘whiteness’ and blackness during apartheid. It is true that racism helped white people shore up their identity as white (Ballard 2004). It was a strategy of otherness that sought to dehumanize blacks and to expose them as ‘lazy’, ‘licentious’, ‘criminal’, and ‘dirty’ (Ballard 2004). Essentially, this colonial discourse shaped and articulated the South African master narrative of whiteness. It is through this relational narrative of whites and blacks that Richard Ballard (2001) can safely say, “the identity of ‘white’ people became cast as ‘white’ supremacism” (52). However, this was not the only narrative of whiteness during the apartheid era.

Historical Context – antiracist identities under apartheid

Not all white South Africans contributed to this dominant narrative of the celebration of whiteness and the subjugation of blackness. There were those whites who were empathetic to racial oppression, and who sought to re-identify themselves as antiracists by way of their ideologies or their actions in racially just workings. The historical construction of a white antiracist identity, however, had its problems. Steve Biko, known as the father of the Black Consciousness Movement, was a prominent writer and scholar on the identities and contributions of white antiracists. Biko called these white

people 'black souls in white skins'. The coinage of this term refers to those whites that consider themselves devoted to the liberation and integration of blacks and whites. Usually finding a label as a liberal, a leftists, or even an antiracist, these people, according to Biko, are in fact not devoted to the cause of liberation and integration at all. The problem with white liberals, according to Biko (1996), is that they "are the people who claim that they too feel the oppression just as acutely as the blacks and therefore should be jointly involved in the black man's struggle for a place under the sun" (20). This manifested itself in power relations, where whites would control black spaces. In organizations such as NUSAS (National Union of South African Students), white students occupied positions of authority and believed that they knew the best way to affect change. Furthermore, it is concerning to Biko that the white liberals' idea of integration is focused on the integration of blacks *into* white society. He claims that white liberals' idea of integration is "a breakthrough into white society by blacks, an assimilation and acceptance of blacks into an already established set of norms and code of behaviour set up by and maintained by whites" (Stubbs, 1996 p. 24). Any form of integration that sponsors the assimilation of one group of people into an already existing structure is, in fact, not integration at all. Under apartheid, white people identifying as antiracists or involved in antiracist workings maintained a problematic position. They focused on assimilation, control of power, and domination of black spaces. These problems continually manifest themselves in a modern antiracist white identity in South Africa. So then, what are the current problems and academic thinkings surrounding whiteness and antiracism in modernity?

Current academic thinkings about white antiracist identities

Assimilation

Extending our understanding of apartheid ideology to include the idea of assimilation, we can understand those white antiracist identity formations that encourage the absorption of black South Africans' sense of self into white South African identities. Nearing the end of apartheid, there was motivation to allow a select few 'educated', 'civilized', and 'modern' non-'white' people into the economic market (Ballard 2004). Essentially what this promoted was an abandonment of one's non-whiteness in order to be

remotely identified in the economy. This transformation continually manifests itself in class mobility in modernity. Today, though it is acceptable for some blacks to transcend their class specifications, it is imperative that they do so in a white or Western ideology (Foster & Salusbury 2004). Many whites who believe that they are working towards racial justice and advocate for the expansion of economic opportunity for blacks in South Africa are essentially asking black identifying persons to exist outside of themselves in a market that was founded on the exploitation and destruction of black identity. This allows little movement for blacks into the middle class but proactively reinstates White English Speaking South Africans (WESSAs) occupations of economic power. It is important to note that this is acceptable because WESSAs are rarely articulating their identity in terms of their whiteness. Instead, they are identifying in terms of their 'ordinariness' as citizens of a modern, westernized world (Ballard 55). Essentially, they are detaching these identifiers from race so as to move unnoticed in their institution and practice of assimilation. Though not easily identifiable, these markers have direct historical connections to race that cannot be undone. In an attempt to define what it means to be white and antiracist in South Africa, those advocating for assimilationist ideology have given a bad name to white antiracist identities.

Non-racialism

In a more authentic attempt to identify as white and antiracist we approach the white liberal. This positionality encompasses what I believe to be a convergence of traditionalist and revolutionary ideology. On the one hand, they try to empathize by claiming that they do not see color, while simultaneously ignoring the actual experiences and reality or racial categorization in South Africa. They have left the place of traditionalist thinking but they are not quite to full realization of antiracism. These people believe that they are completely unracialized and they protest personal innocence to the historical association of whites to apartheid (Steyn 2001). In fact, some Afrikaners are actively discarding visible aspects of their identity. They are trying to disassociate stereotypes, history, and culture with their present identity and even disregarding the importance of Afrikaans as their dominant language (Verley & Quayle 2012). These disassociations are attempts at disconnecting their present relationship to the culture that committed

genocide. However, though these Afrikaners are trying to disconnect from their culture, they nonetheless maintain their white identity (Verwey and Quayle). Possibly because it is difficult to refute the racial make-up of a white person, but most likely to maintain the associations that whiteness has to power, these Afrikaners are most certainly claiming their identity as whites. It turns out that these liberals are closer to the traditionalist side than they are to the revolutionary idea of a white antiracist identity. It is in this line of thinking that motivates the shift away from color-blindness and the 'good' liberal (Matthews 2011).

Defining oneself as the 'other'

A revolutionary way of approaching and thinking about a white antiracist South African identity is defining oneself in terms of the 'other', specifically black South Africans. Historically, and not specifically to South Africa, white identity has been constructed with disregard for any other race, culture, or ethnicity. This is exemplified by the gamut of colonizers identified as white. However, in regards to the historical construction of a white South African identity, as mentioned previously, its formation was structured around the centering of society around whiteness. Some could argue, however, that during apartheid, the colonizers were in fact constructing a white identity in terms of blackness. This argument only goes so far as we are willing to accept the implications of this statement. This statement asserts that the nationalists were dedicated to structuring a society that existed on the condemnation of blackness. Therefore, they were indeed forming their identity with regards to black South Africans. For the purpose of my argument, I will entertain the former concept now and touch on the latter later. In a society that is now politically controlled and dominated by black South Africans, whites are reacting and responding to the way that they are controlling the society. Essentially, for the first time in the history of South Africa, whites are having to ask: "what do blacks want?" (Steyn 2001). In so much as progress is possible, this is it. However, this is not as stopping point. In the idea of progressing towards a more multicultural state, it will be imperative that this idea evolves into considering what all races, nationalities, and ethnicities want and deserve.

Some white identifications in terms of blackness are not so forward thinking. The dissonance in the historical and current economic opportunity between the races provides

a comparable basis for identity creation. WESSAs reaffirm and reclaim their white identity in terms of their black counterparts. It is maintained that the lack of economic opportunity afforded and available to black South Africans provides a basis for which white South Africans reaffirm their economic identity (Foster & Salusbury 2004). This is the exact opposite of progressing towards a positive construction of white antiracist South African identity. Furthermore, it is similar to the way in which the nationalists were structuring their identity during apartheid. It focuses on the negative aspects of black South Africans to position white identity in a positive way. However, there is progress to be made.

Re-establishing Comfort Zones

Constructing and thinking about a white antiracist South African identity requires existing outside of traditional comfort zones. Historically, white comfort zones have been defined by the marginalization of blacks because of the fear of those characteristics which were prescribed to them by whites: 'dangerous', 'animalistic', 'licentious', 'criminal'. In the process of constructing a white antiracist identity, and possibly along side it, it is important to re-evaluate what it means to be comfortable. Are there racial implications in one's level of comfort? During this structuring we can move into ways of living that are not so highly regulated and constrained, which allow us a better sense of freedom and movement (Ballard 2004). Matthews (2012) claims that, "Perhaps the kind of identity required is one that accepts the 'inbetweenness' of white South Africans and involves a commitment by white South Africans to strive to find an appropriate way to belong in Africa and thus aim at becoming African" (12). This inbetweenness offers whites an opportunity to understand what it means to not have one's identity validated. It includes actively finding ways to demonstrate solidarity with blacks, creating the space to become connected to different parts of Africa, while being aware of the effects of colonial exploration. (Matthews 2011). It is also engaging with and establishing mutual relationships with people who do not look or talk like you. All of these things, though idealistic, create the foundation for constructing a white antiracist identity. It is true that the historical presentation of whiteness did exactly the opposite.

In the acceptance and engagement with difference, the process of making sense of a white antiracist South African identity has already begun. Post-apartheid elections brought

about the acknowledgment and validation of an ideal multicultural state. This engagement with difference is restructuring all identity, and it is true that successful South Africanism, a term incorporating the whole of South Africa, will represent versatility in both white and black aspects of society (Steyn 2001). We must extend the concept of racial fluidity to include national identifiers like 'African' in order to better understand the ephemeral nature of all identities, recognizing them as consistently being shaped and redefined by those individuals making meaning from within.

Implicated in Apartheid?

Moving beyond transcending traditional white comfort zones and accepting and engaging with difference, it is imperative in the construction of white antiracist South African identity that whites recognize the historical and present implications of race in South Africa (Matthews 2012). In the same way that our identities cannot be divorced from our pasts, the effects and existence of those historical connections are also salient in our present day lives. In this way, it is important for white South Africans to come to terms with their history, attempting to understand their positionality in present day South Africa. Identifying their construction and institution of an apartheid state and how this has influenced white identity construction is an important part of coming to terms with South African white history (Steyn 2001). From this position, white South Africans must stand in solidarity with Africans, feeling the pain of and also celebrating the achievements of the continent (Matthews 2012). In identifying and recognizing this history and ones place in it, white antiracist South African identity construction becomes easier. Melissa Steyn (2001) writes, "South African 'whites' can play a part in creating post-colonial South Africa only if they themselves, their own identities, become post-colonial spaces" (170). White South Africans must actively work towards creating the least colonial and least imperial minds and material realities. When these spaces are recreated, but conscious of their history, it can be understood that the identities of white South Africans can become more antiracist.

Continually undoing 'whiteness'

Part of creating and sustaining a white antiracist identity involves the continuous undoing of whiteness. The historical associations to whiteness including power and

privilege consistently manifest themselves in new ways in the new dispensation. It is the job of anyone that is white attempting to identify as antiracist to involve themselves with relinquishing these occupations of power. Sally Matthews (2012), in her article, “White Anti-Racism in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, claims, “Dealing with past racial injustices in post-apartheid South Africa must involve working to dismantle remaining and new forms of racial injustices. This means that white South Africans have to reflect upon and respond to continuing white privilege” (175). Essentially, identifying as antiracist equals an identity not at rest. In this, I am referring to what Matthews claims as ‘new forms of racial injustices’. These injustices manifest themselves differently every day and therefore create the space for white identifying antiracists to re-evaluate their positionality at every moment. Part of racially just work as a white identifying person in South Africa is the never-ending recognition, criticism, and surrender of these new forms of privilege and oppression.

Separatism and whites teaching whites

In her article, “Playfulness, ‘world’ –travelling and loving perception,” Maria Lugones (1987) claims “the way in which white people move into other spaces can actually reinforce rather than challenge white privilege”. White people involved in antiracist workings have historically inserted themselves in black spaces. This often manifests itself in the way that whites infiltrate and take over organizations with racially just platforms. However, it continues into geographic movements, whereby whites travel through different spaces in order to gain different perspectives on life. This geographic movement is problematic because it exposes the ‘difference’ of the ‘other’ at the expense and personal gain of the traveler. In response to Lugones’s article, Sally Matthews (2012) says, “white people who recognize their privilege and its intractability ought to be very careful in deciding when their engagement with black people is and is not appropriate” (176). Essentially, it is important for whites to determine whether their insertion into a certain space, is warranted, acceptable, or even desired. Instead of understanding ones whiteness as longed for or needed, white identifying antiracists must ask the question: “Am I being beneficial in this space”?

However, it is also important to consider the problems associated with this line of thinking. Essentially, when whites are asking this question, they are deciding for themselves whether their presence is needed. This leads to an erasure and complete disregard for blacks desires and motivations. Matthews (2012) later claims, "It is up to black people to decide on the roles white people can play in anti-racist struggles and if white people exclude themselves from such struggles, black people are prevented from deciding when black separatism is, and is not, appropriate (181). If white people decide for themselves that they need to be isolated or that they must engage with antiracist workings, they are creating the terms for when black separatism is warranted and when it is not. This is problematic because it reinforces the ideology present during apartheid that claimed that whites were far more educated about the issues concerning blacks than blacks were. It is important then to determine the place of white people in antiracist workings.

White people must start educating white people about racial injustice. Steve Biko claims that white people should work on making other white people more aware of white privilege and more willing to recognize the injustice of it (Stubbs 1996). In this call from Biko, it is evident that white people need to do a lot more work within their own community, rather than trying to take over the work of blacks in black spaces. This is not to say that they must remain completely separate and isolate in creating relationships with black people. Rather, they must begin engaging with people who occupy similar positions of power and work towards enlightening these people so that they may also dismantle and relinquish these occupations of control.

Listening & Educating

One of the appropriate recognized ways of identifying as white and antiracist is to educate yourself and to be a listener. As mentioned previously, whites should take notice and be aware of when blacks desire separatism and when they do not. Extending this line of thinking, it is important to always listen to blacks when working towards racial justice. Furthermore, it is necessary to educate oneself about racially unjust issues. Sally Matthews (2012) says, "The most appropriate way of unlearning whitely habits is... the perusal of books and listening to voices rather than the playing of an active role in black people's struggles and spaces" (182). Whites must learn and they must actively listen. However, it

is important to not stop at reading. When one reads, they may gain an ideological understanding and connection to racial injustice but lack the physical associations to racially unjust happenings. Matthews (2012) continues, "When reading a book, watching a film or reflecting on one's experiences one is ultimately in control of how to relate to these images" (183). Matthews is explaining that it is not enough to simply relate to racial injustice on an intellectual level. Whites must move beyond this linear way of making sense of our unjust society. Instead, white antiracists must relate personally with people identifying as black.

Personal Engagement

Engaging personally with black people is required for the identification as a white antiracist. Matthews (2012) claims, "Personal engagement with real people is different. In such an engagement, other people can insist upon points one would rather ignore and can reiterate points one wishes to de-emphasise" (183). Ideas of separatism and educating oneself are important if deemed appropriate and necessary by blacks leading antiracist struggles. However, separatism has its flaws. In remaining separate and not communicating and establishing relationships with black persons, whites are simply being let off the hook. Once again, they can establish what they think to be the problems associated with antiracism. In an all white space, without the presence and relationships to their black counterparts, white people can lose site of the actual problems and concerns affecting blacks everywhere. Moreover, those things that remain problematic in white society can manifest themselves in an all white space and go unnoticed and unchallenged. It is imperative that whites engage personally and, I believe, create individual and intimate relationships with black identifying persons, in order to be fully accountable for white privilege. This is not to say that white-identifying persons should establish relationships for the purpose and end goal of becoming enlightened, for that is also highly problematic. It is to say, however, that through the creation of authentic relationships with black people that organically expose the privileges of whiteness, one intending to be antiracist has different and more natural ways of recognizing and unworking their privilege.

Alleviating Consciences

Another problem affecting white antiracists are their motivations for racial work. White people do antiracist work in order to make themselves feel better (Stubbs 1996). Ultimately, their privilege has caused them guilt, and instead of relinquishing that privilege, they choose to do some sort of racial justice work in order to stop that white guilt from overtaking them. Derek Hook (2011), in his article entitled, “Retrieving Biko: a Black Consciousness critique of Whiteness”, is concerned that no matter how white people get involved in anti-racist struggles their involvement will always be tainted by the possibility of their receiving ‘narcissistic gains’. Essentially, the work is not so much about those blacks that are affected by the status quo. Rather, it is selfish motivations that breed action from these white people. They desire to be distanced from ‘bad whites’, where they can occupy and maintain their privilege while simultaneously being opposed to racial oppression. Ultimately, they are concerned with alleviating their consciences – relieving themselves from having to feel guilty for the occupations of power that they possess and the current and new manifestations of the power associated with whiteness. This is the problematic identity of a white antiracist.

The problem of validating and creating a white antiracist identity

To not mention the problems associated with attempting to study and make up a white antiracist identity would do this project great injustice. In literature surrounding whiteness and antiracism, it is evident that identifying as a white antiracist has its problems. Hook (2011) claims, “meaningful antiracism is not preoccupied with validating, redeeming, or consolidating the identity of the anti-racist subject” (29). To him it is clear that efforts associated with identifying as white and antiracist are in fact not what white people devoted to racial justice should be concerned with. Rather, they must do this work outside of themselves. By this I mean that their motivations for antiracist workings should not consider the validation and consolidation of their own identity. It should consider the benefits and conditions of the objects of antiracism, namely, their black counterparts. Therefore, one must be skeptical of the possibility of white involvements in antiracism that do not re-centre white people in problematic ways (Matthews 2012). To this end, it is important to offer a counterargument. Through a psychological lens, we can attempt to

understand where the desire to consolidate ones identity comes from. In every interaction, it can be argued, we attempt to ensure our own benefit. This line of thinking can extend from the friends we decide to create relationships with to the organizations we get involved with. In every situation, it seems, we are thinking about how *we* can benefit. This is not to say that it is valid to join racial justice workings as a white identifying person to validate ones antiracist identity. However, it is to make sense of the white person falling into this trap. Nevertheless, it is important to get involved.

Conclusion

The construction and analysis of a white antiracist identity has its problems. For the purpose of this research, I have chosen to acknowledge how attempting to define and make sense of a white antiracist identity, in fact, perpetuates privilege and domination of white people over black people. However, I have also chosen to attempt to understand what an antiracist white identity looks like, how it is made up, and if there even is an antiracist white identity. Through the lens of these academic thinkers and creators, I will attempt to localize white antiracist identities to Cape Town, South Africa. Not by interviewing self-identifying antiracist, but by involving myself with white people who think critically about antiracism, non-racialism, and whiteness, I hope to create a better understanding of what it means to be white, antiracist, and South African. In terms of validating my research, I look upon this quote by Alison Bailey (1999). She claims, “surely white people’s refusal to contribute to anti-racist struggles because they cannot find ‘philosophically sound’ and pure ways to be involved might seem narcissistic and self-indulgent as white people’s attempts to be involved in ways that centre and validate themselves” (101). For the future of white people’s refusal to be involved with antiracist workings, I hope to find more organic and less problematic ways for white people to engage with antiracism. Bearing in mind the academic literature surrounding this area of study, I will engage critically with my research and make sense of it through the lens of those creative thinkers before me.

Methodology

I conducted my primary research for this project through four formal interviews. These interviews were a combination of life history and critical evaluation interviews. For the purpose of understanding each subject participants' individual motivations, their personal investment in antiracism, and the personal work that is necessary in order to make sense of an antiracist identity, the life history interviews were used. In an attempt to uncover the current issues surrounding white involvements with antiracism, to illuminate more proper ways for white identifying persons to be allies in the struggle to end racism, and to determine the responsibilities and characteristics of white identifying antiracists, the critical evaluation interviews were used. These interviews were all conducted in Cape Town. All of the subject participants carried a bachelor's degree or a higher level of qualification and have studied subjects including but not limited to Social Justice, Transformation, Identity, Race & Gender, Human Rights, Critical Race Theory, Whiteness, Social Sciences, Fine Arts, and Anthropology. From these interviews I gained access to a few local understandings of a white antiracist identity and how that identity manifests itself in post-apartheid South Africa.

I decided to use interviews because I felt that I would be able to garner a more authentic perception of what it means to be a white South African engaging in a relationship with antiracism. I conducted one-on-one interviews to create a space that was comfortable, organic, and intimate. In these person encounters, I believe that the subject participant and I felt very natural, for oftentimes it was more of a mutual engagement and less of a formal interaction. The demographic that I chose to use was academic intellectuals, as mentioned previously. My reasoning behind this is predicated on the belief that the more we discuss identities, the more confusing they become. This is to say that I wanted someone who was able to and who has previously engaged personally and critically with themselves on the subject. This is not to erase the experiences of those who are not academics that are also able to analyze and think seriously about a white South African antiracist identity. However, with the limited time afforded, it was imperative that I go straight to the source of those who literally symbolize intellectualism – academics.

When choosing whom to interview, I first got in contact with an organization that ran a workshop based in Johannesburg. This organization conducted an experiment on global conversation with a focus this year on the differences between nonracialism and antiracism. From this position, I interviewed someone who was foundational in the workshops creation and execution. I then began researching academics that were involved with studies including Whiteness, Critical Race Theory, Nonracialism, Race & Gender, Identity, and Transformation. I ended up finding two subject participants from this search who were excited to engage with me on the topic. An academic mentor recommended the fourth subject participant to me. Regarding the length of my interviews, the subject participants and I agreed that an hour time slot would suffice. For the most part, we filled the time block reserved.

Before and during my interview process, I engaged critically with secondary academic literature surrounding the construction of whiteness specifically during apartheid, and then I moved into issues of whiteness, antiracism, and racism on an international level in the present day. This historical understanding of whiteness created the space for me to make sense of the local implications of being white in present day South Africa. Through the current literature involving whiteness and antiracism, I was able to better understand the problematic identities of white antiracists and how navigating an antiracist identity is a comprehensive task. The issues that arose in the literature are used as a lens through which to comprehend a local white South African antiracist identity. They motivated my research questions and ultimately my findings.

Ethical Reflexivity

In any interview, and similarly, in any situation in life, we must be aware of our occupations and presentations of power. As a white American man, I occupy a specific status that I must be conscious of when communicating with others. This is not to say that these positions of power comprise my entire existence, but they are salient. Furthermore, specifically focusing on interviews, it is important to recognize the power the interviewer has. Essentially, I had the power to shape the outcome of each interview. However, understanding this dynamic is crucial to conducting an authentic interview. It was my job as the interviewer to let the subject participant guide the interview. I was simply posing questions to spark the creative genius of that particular individual. Their story had the power to shape my research and thus my research should not have shaped their story. In this area of study, I do not believe that the subject participants were vulnerable or at risk in any physical or emotional way. In fact, for most of the subject participants, recounting and reevaluating their involvements with antiracism evoked positive emotions. The interviews served as reminders for the continuous work that still needs to be done with antiracism.

Informed consent does not end with the subject participants' signature. Instead, it is a continuous process that should take place throughout the entirety of the interview. If at any point during the interview the subject participant felt vulnerable I asked them to inform me and we could stop. However, this did not occur. In terms of reciprocity, it was my pleasure to offer each subject participant an emailed copy of the ISP so that they may see how I have used their contributions. Moreover, depending on the circumstances and location of the interview, I provided small delicacies like a cup of hot coffee, tea, or even biscuits. Maintaining the anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and integrity of the participants is a very important component of ethical research. To this end, I created pseudonyms where appropriate. I also maintained the confidentiality of any institutional affiliations that the participants may have.

As mentioned before, it is my job to best accurately represent my participants through my research findings. In this way, it was important to allow the experiences and testimonies of my participants to shape my ISP and guide my research. It is true that my

positionality most likely influenced my research questions. This may have manifested itself if I asked questions that lead the participant in a certain direction. However, it is pertinent that all researchers create the space for the most neutral and unbiased interview possible. When researchers allow the subject participants to actively create and validate knowledge alongside them, this bias and positionality tends to disintegrate. With all of this in mind, it is important to explain that I would continue this research in the United States. However, it would be specific to the racial struggle that is happening in the U.S. Though the struggles have similar characteristics, they are distinguishable. In fact, every struggle is.

Interviewee Information (some names have been changed)

1. Kelly Gillespie (18/11/2014 | 4:30-5:30 PM): is a 38-year-old female-born, kind of feminine queer-aspirant. She was raised white, and is English speaking. She resides in Johannesburg / Salt River, Cape Town / Newlands, Cape Town. She has a PhD as her level of qualification and she is an academic.
2. Leonard Shapiro (19/11/2014 | 10-11 AM): is a 54-year-old male, white Jewish South African. He resides in Gardens, Cape Town. His level of qualification includes a Bachelors degree in Social Science and a Bachelors degree of Fine Arts (Honors). His occupation is education.
3. Stacey Doppleton (19/11/2014 | 1-2 PM): is a white female. She resides in Cape Town.
4. Katy Perry (20/11/2014 | 2-3PM): is a 38-year-old white female. She resides in Cape Town, Southern Suburbs. She holds a PhD and is a lecturer.

Findings and Analysis

Argument

In this Independent Study Project (ISP) I will be arguing that white antiracist identities are multidimensional, difficult to understand, problematic, contradictory, confusing, and that their creation and consolidation is ultimately a way to maintain white privilege. It is not my goal to quantify a white antiracist identity in post-apartheid South Africa. It is my objective to make sense of white identities and white persons' relationships with antiracism. Often when thinking about identities we get locked into a linear way of understanding. By this, I mean that we quantify identities. For example, if someone identified as a father, we immediately make judgments that they are most likely heterosexual, married, and working. To no fault of our own, this is society's way of making sense of an individual's identity. However, when we think of a relationship with someone or something, we tend to think much less rigid. We can imagine a relationship with someone or something that has its peaks and its valleys. It is a more fluid understanding. For the purpose of my argument, I am attempting to make sense of white identifying peoples' relationship with antiracism. In doing this, I believe that we may better understand the contradictions, problems, failings, victories, and complexities of the relationship. From interviews with white academics that have critically engaged with the antiracism and whiteness, the complex relationship between whiteness and antiracism is illustrated.

The history of whiteness in South Africa

Before I enter into how my findings support and engage critically with my argument statement, I must first define antiracism from the perspective of each interviewee. Defining antiracism was one of the key components of each interview. In understanding the relationship between whiteness and antiracism as complex, one can recognize that the definition of antiracism is, in fact, multifaceted. Each interviewee declared a unique and subjective definition of antiracism. Kelly Gillespie described it as undoing racism at each level when one confronts it – the work of recognizing racism, its locations, and a commitment to discovering ways of undoing and critiquing it (Interview 1, Nov. 2014).

Essentially, she described antiracism in terms of an action. It is an active, rather than passive, form of uprooting things that can be deemed racist. Stacey Doppleton claims that being antiracist requires recognizing the structures of racial oppression and desiring to work towards an end to those structures, an extension of wanting to end individual acts of racism that occur between people (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Her definition attached antiracism to an identity. Essentially she claimed that antiracist individuals have a political and a personal commitment to antiracism, whereby they work interpersonally and politically to end all forms of racial discrimination. Katy Perry described it as “the recognition of the racist nature of our society and the racist structure. The way in which race kind of permeates the structure of our society, and our values, and how that is kind of internalized by everyone” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). For Perry, antiracism requires the recognition of a racist structure that exists before us, and how that structure permeates our values and our identities. It is the recognition of how that structure affects our decision-making and our way of understanding the world. Leonard Shapiro defined antiracism in a different way when he claimed that people have a hard time swallowing the word ‘anti’. He proclaimed that he would rather say, “...pro-equality and human rights. What I consider antiracism is ... I conscientize myself to identify racism and try to identify subtle forms of racism” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). At first Shapiro claimed a more positive definition of antiracism, one that was easier to take in and make sense of. He then moved into understanding antiracism as a personal journey of bringing himself to awareness about issues and subtle forms of racism. All of these definitions contribute to the multidimensional understanding of antiracism. From this position, we can move into interrogating and making sense of localized racism in Cape Town today.

Cape Town as a racist city today

Before we begin to analyze the relationship between whiteness and antiracism, it is first necessary to discuss the current manifestations of racism in Cape Town today for if this city were not affected by racism, this study would have no merit. From my findings, it is evident that Cape Town remains a colonial space, affected by structural and every-day racism.

The structure of Cape Town physically remains a colonial space. The city carries the history of colonialism considering that this city was built on the labor exploitation of black and brown people. Kelly Gillespie claims that Cape Town was “created in and through racial encounter and racial exclusion.. um.. it is structurally organized, both through the circulation of money, the history of removals, relocations, and the territorialization of the city, into a hyper-racial structure” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Essentially, one cannot divorce the history of Cape Town from its presence. Furthermore, the city’s history has laid the foundation for what it is today. Gillespie continues, “You see the manifestations of that every day.. um.. for example, in who comes to work in whose homes, who has to travel what distances to go to work, who takes home what salaries” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). The structure of Cape Town continues to regulate who has access to the city. Essentially, the structural conditions of this ‘post-colonial’ place have not changed. Blacks are still feeling the effects of forced removals and relocations in the distances they travel to work and which jobs they are occupying. Thinking about structural and every-day racism together is an important part of antiracist work. Gillespie argues that working on undoing the personal encounter, at the same time as the structural encounter, is detrimental to antiracism (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Aside from the structural racism and its manifestations every day, interpersonal racism still plagues this city. The interactions between white and black people in South Africa often lead to demonstrations of whites making known the power they still have over blacks in this country. Most often this manifests itself in the way that white people talk to black South Africans in passing. In extreme cases, it is shown through the use of racially charged words and even physical violence.

Interrogating a white antiracist identity

Where do whites fit in?

Navigating your relationship with antiracism is the responsibility of white people. Attempting to understand what your position is, where you should be, how you should be contributing, if you should be contributing, is all an important part in understanding what white identifying persons’ relationship with antiracist work actually is and should be.

When one does this, they dismiss the idea of shoring up an antiracist identity. In fact, it is a lack of identity that comes from this process. This lack of identity is an important step in a relationship with antiracism that is not focused on white privilege. When actively thinking about and critically analyzing one's position with antiracism, it is an inbetweenness that white people occupy. This inbetweenness is an important part of redistributing power for an identity not at rest, or not validated, is something that white people have rarely experienced throughout the history of this country. In an attempt to make sense of how white people who have a relationship with antiracism should be held liable, Katy Perry claimed "Part of the responsibility is working to figure out what are responsibility is and how do we work with our fellow citizens to create a better place ... part of it is to actually figure out, not withdrawing and not dominating" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Perry clearly states that it is the responsibility of those who want to have a relationship with antiracism to figure out what the correct position is. In this statement, Perry does not claim that whites should be deciding for themselves what the appropriate relationship is. In fact, she leaves it open to the interpreter. It is worth mentioning, however, the problems of one interpretation of this quote. In an extension of this, it could possibly be understood that it is not the job of the objects of antiracism to decide upon the position that whites should be taking.

Through my academic research, as stated in my literature review, when white people decide their position in and relationship with antiracism, it takes away the autonomy of their black counterparts. This, in fact, maintains the powerful positions that whiteness has historically and presently occupies in this country. I believe that Perry was calling for a multi-dimensional investigation into the appropriate relationship of whites with antiracism. This call is what guided my research in terms of making sense of white people's relationship with antiracism. This can manifest itself in many ways, including but not limited to, identifying as racist, reading and educating yourself as a white person, listening to blacks who should be leading the struggle, not denying difference or advocating non-racialism, consistently undoing whiteness and the privileges associated with being white, constantly undoing the leadership training that this country has afforded white people, not being insensitive to issues of identity in an effort to expedite antiracist processes, waiting to be invited to join antiracist workings, establishing and feeding close

relationships with blacks, being willing to make mistakes and take responsibility for those mistakes, attacking white racist spaces and then recognize yourself as a beneficiary of the racist power structure.

"I'm racist"

Identifying as racist, and that one has a racialized way of understanding the world, is necessary in one's relationship with antiracism. In a similar way to admitting that one has a problem with drinking, it is first necessary, in order to move in a positive direction with one's relationship to antiracism, to recognize the racisms that exist within one's body. However, it is necessary to understand that one should not attempt to make sense of an antiracist identity by claiming that they have accepted responsibility for their racisms. In fact, this only promotes privilege, affording white people the opportunity to accept their racisms and then shore up an antiracist identity. In an effort to better understand individual journeys to antiracism, I asked each interviewee about the personal work that was necessary in the process of becoming antiracist. It is now clear to me that there is in fact no 'journey' or 'process' to antiracism. And furthermore, antiracism should not be an end goal, for it maintains a problematic position to seek to identify as antiracist. Thinking in this way, we can interrogate the idea of a 'fixed' antiracist identity, something that can be achieved. If one desires to boast an 'antiracist identity' there must be a clear and quantifiable process by which one can achieve this identity. Even though Kellie Gillespie, in response to the aforementioned question, said that at first it requires recognition that one is racist even when you know that racism is bad (Interview 1, Nov. 2014), it is my contention that antiracism is not quantifiable. We can think about her response in terms of the beginning stages of white people's relationship with antiracism, rather than thinking about it as the foundation for creating an antiracist identity. In the early phases of working with and through antiracism, it is necessary to identify as racist. Leonard Shapiro extends these beginning stages with a call to action when he claimed, "So you have to acknowledge that racism is in you ... and then you have to deal with it, and exorcize it from yourself ... through educating yourself and challenging yourself" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). This is a very important part of white identifying persons' relationship with antiracism and antiracist workings.

“Open a damn book”

Educating oneself about racism, its different forms, one’s position in it, and one’s benefits from it, is imperative to establishing a healthy relationship with antiracism. Essentially it is the job of white identifying person’s to raise their level of awareness using their own time, their own energy, and their own space. There is contestation, however, about the effectiveness of an intellectual understanding of antiracism without the actual experience of the effects of racist encounters on the lived realities of black people. It is in this statement that exists the problematic goal of trying to identify as antiracist, for if white identifying persons seek to create an antiracist identity on the premise that they have educated themselves about issues specifically affecting blacks then their ‘antiracist’ identity essentially exists on the need and exposure to black pain. It is in the combination of the intricacies, the confusions, and the actions involving antiracism that create a relationship between whites and antiracist work. However, I will make sense of the first point – to educate oneself. Kelly Gillespie, in talking about her exposure to the work of Steve Biko, claimed, “It was his [Biko’s] writing that really kind of woke me up to the fact that I was in fact a white liberal and I need to do something about that and, so ya know, I started a very long process of trying to figure out how to do that. And I am still on that journey” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). In this encounter with an academic framework for understanding the white liberals’ problematic position in antiracist workings and relationships, Gillespie came to consciousness. With this education, she began to understand how she was implicated in the racist power structure and how her well-intentioned white liberal ideologies were flawed.

The physical and emotional realities of racism, however, offer a different level of connection to antiracism. As mentioned previously, it is problematic to create a white antiracist identity on the learning about black pain and suffering, even if it comes from a good place. Instead, through the understanding and critical engagement with the idea of intellectual verses emotional education, one can make better sense of a relationship with antiracism. Stacey Doppleton, when thinking about the role of whites in antiracist workings, claimed,

So while its completely essential [white people educating themselves in white spaces], and while there are all sorts of problems with exploitation of black pain for white learning ... I don't know how to resolve it because I don't think that white people actually get it without knowing the pain that it has caused by the system. You can find out on an intellectual level and you can get it in your head, but that it doesn't seem to set in until you actually see it"

It seems that the complications of making sense of an antiracist education contribute to problems associated with the exploitation of black pain for white gain. Doppleton does not believe that it is possible however to create an authentic relationship with antiracism if you do not have these personal experiences and connections, however. In these contradictions and uncertainties surrounding the relationship with antiracism, it can be understood that white people maintain problematic positions in their associations. In an effort to contribute to a more authentic and more positive relationship with antiracism, white people must start listening to their black counterparts.

Listening

Listening is a necessary attribute in one's relationship with antiracism. In the historical relationship between whites and antiracist workings, whites have dominated conversation, overtaken organizations, and set agendas that they knew nothing about. In an effort to minimize the damages caused by whites in antiracist work, it is imperative that they start listening. In the construction of an antiracist white identity, one could say that being a good listener could be a marker. However, it is important to understand that if one was to quantify their antiracist identity by claiming that they are an active listener to black identifying persons, their proclamation would insist on the glorification of themselves and not the grave nature of antiracist work. Furthermore, shoring up an antiracist identity by claiming to be a good listener is too simplistic. Instead, listening must exist in a relationship with antiracism, along with the aforementioned qualifications. Kelly Gillespie, when talking about the defensive posturing of those whites that get called racist, claimed, "My feeling and my commitment is that when someone accuses me, or if there is any inkling that something I might be doing is racist that I have to listen. I need to shut up. I have to listen. I have to inquire about whether that might be true ... that defensive posturing is the last thing that is needed" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Though she was talking about the

listening that should follow someone interrogating you as racist, Gillespie's point can be applied to the entirety of a white person's relationship with antiracism. Instead of being at the forefront, whites must take a passive position in antiracism and listen to those voices, namely black voices.

In terms of establishing a relationship with antiracism, Stacey Doppleton extends listening into the idea of love. She said, "I move towards love as a kind of revolutionary space ... fully loving requires the recognition of a whole humanity" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Essentially, Doppleton does not believe that listening is enough. In this line of thinking, we can understand that listening to someone does not require the recognition of humanity and it does not necessarily require respect. However, when one brings love into the relationship with antiracism, it seems as if the dynamics change. Exploring this 'revolutionary space' in relation to the association of whiteness with antiracism, it becomes clear that shoring up an antiracist identity in terms of just listening, is impossible. For, relationships between and within whiteness and antiracism are constantly changing, transforming, and growing.

"Do not deny my difference"

An integral component in establishing a positive relationship with antiracism is to not deny racial difference. Oftentimes, denying racial difference takes the name of nonracialism, colorblindness, racelessness, and postraciality. This line of thinking exists from those positions and platforms that believe we are in a post-racial society. These ideologies assert that differences and disadvantages, whether economic, socio-political, or cultural, are in fact not associated to race. They maintain that the racial structure established during apartheid has been undone and was abolished with the democratic elections of 1994. However, this is simply not true and it is therefore important to recognize race as an avenue of difference and discrimination. It is important, though, to not allow recognizing difference to comprise the entirety of white perceptions of black people. Furthermore, it is necessary to not let this way of thinking contribute to a white antiracist identity, for making sense of an antiracist identity by only acknowledging the suffering and disadvantage of blacks is indeed problematic. Though it is important to recognize race and its present implications, it is also necessary to acknowledge the humanity and individuality

of every person. It is for this reason that one cannot stake claims to an antiracist identity. If a white person were to boast about an antiracist identity on the terms that they acknowledge and feel responsible for the current manifestations of racialism, they would understand blackness only in terms of its disadvantages and inequalities. However, in establishing a relationship with antiracism, a white person may have the opportunity to move more fluidly through acknowledging difference and recognizing humanity. In a relationship with antiracism, and black people, whites would have the opportunity to navigate their way through the intricacies and delicacies of antiracist politics. Stacey Doppleton claimed, "There has to be a space where humanity is claimed without denying difference" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Essentially, in a relationship with antiracism, one must acknowledge both the individual humanity and the current implications of race, to not deny difference. It is also important, in this process, to undo whiteness at every level.

Undoing Whiteness

In a relationship with antiracism it is necessary to undo whiteness, and its present implications. The present associations of power and privilege to whiteness have deep historical roots in apartheid and its structure. Though apartheid physically ended, as mentioned before, the remnants remain in the form of white privilege and white superiority. In the structural layout of Cape Town and the occupational positions of whites and blacks in the city today, it is clear that whiteness is still directly linked to power and blackness is associated with subservience. However, it is problematic to attempt to comprise an antiracist white identity on the terms of undoing privilege. If this position is taken, it seeks to make up an identity that is focused on the undoing and disruption of privilege. This is problematic because it heroizes those whites seeking to be involved with antiracism. It makes it seem as if they are doing the world a great service by denying the power and privilege associated with the color of their skin. Therefore, it is necessary to create more of a relationship with the denial of privilege instead of boasting it as a marker of ones identity. Kelly Gillespie said that there must be a willingness to undo whiteness to be a part of antiracist struggle (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). In one's relationship with antiracism, they must be actively concerned with undoing their privilege while being simultaneously disinterested in sharing with the world what they are doing. Stacey

Doppleton claimed, “You’ve got to move to the dental hygiene understanding of racism ... bits of it build up on your teeth all the time and you’ve got to, ya know, go and clean it off and take a look” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Through this metaphor we can understand that whites entering or involved in a relationship with antiracism must consistently return to themselves to undo their whitenesses. Not boasting their return, but quietly acknowledging and undoing those things that maintain their level of privilege and status is important in any relationship with antiracism. Moreover, in an extension of undoing the power of whiteness through thoroughly examining oneself, whites must also undo the leadership training that they received in South Africa through the education system.

“No more leaders, please”

In creating a relationship with antiracism it is necessary to undo the leadership training that all white people were beneficiaries of under the apartheid state. Historically in antiracist work in South Africa, whites have knowingly and unknowingly inserted and positioned themselves in leadership roles in antiracist work. This is a product of the education system instituted during apartheid that trained white people to be leaders and black people to be unskilled laborers. However, it is important to not attempt to create an antiracist identity based on the removal or the handing over of leadership positions. When white people seek to identify as antiracist because they have ‘knowingly’ and consciously transferred their power to black identifying persons the problem of the white savior surfaces. Though this is true, Kellie Gillespie claimed that there is the “necessity to undo this training to kind of be at the forefront of everything, which is also a part of white privilege ... I think that’s one of the most difficult things to undo. You don’t need to lead; you don’t need to be the person at the forefront. You can be the person licking envelopes, ya know?” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Essentially, it can be understood that white involvements and relationships with antiracism need to exist in a way that assures the non-consolidation of an antiracist identity. They need to be relationships whereby whites work towards antiracism in the way that black leaders expect and ask them to. However, it is also problematic to illuminate only black voices.

There exists a problem, I believe, in progress when we claim that only black voices should be heard and white people should just insert themselves when they are asked. This

point of view comes from the idea that if an end result is a postracial society, whereby race is not a factor, then we must actively work towards that together, without the marginalization of any voices. This is not to say that white voices should have a grand position in antiracist work and relationships, but that they indeed have *some* merit and place. Gillespie continues, while thinking about how politics shouldn't be based entirely on experience, when she claimed, "So its not because you've suffered or been injured that you have a right to speak, but there is something about understating what the political condition is, that that experience gives you quicker access to it [speaking]" (Interview, Nov. 2014). Any relationship with antiracism maintains its confusions, its intricacies, and its different dimensions. It can be understood that the experiences of black persons most certainly give them direct access to antiracist work. White identifying persons' relationship with antiracism must maintain the surrendering of leadership positions and leadership ideology, while at the same time trying to navigate the spaces that their voices do have merit. However, it is a difficult task.

"Lets just get on with the work already"

Paying attention to identity politics is a very important part of white peoples' relationships with antiracism. There is much debate surrounding how much focus should be given to issues of identity and the proper relationships that whites have to antiracism. Oftentimes, white people, instead of focusing specifically on how they should be contributing, listening to the voices of black leaders of antiracist workings, claim, 'lets just get on with the work, already.' This position ensures a problematic white antiracist identity formation. Essentially, what this advocates for is an erasure and disregard for the desires and aspirations of black people. Instead, it focuses on an agenda of moving into a post-racial society in the way that suits and is familiar to white people - leading. This is problematic because it creates an antiracist white identity that promotes and maintains the white power structure of leadership training. Nevertheless, Kelly Gillespie claimed, "Its always this tricky thing of how sensitive should one be to whether one speaks and whether one doesn't ... how much time do you take up worrying about how to be an ally, just get on with the work of undoing this stuff" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). In a relationship with antiracism it is very important to navigate and attempt to make sense of one's place in the

work. However, it is highly distasteful to insert oneself in a position that ignores the voices, the identities, and the requests of black people who should be leading antiracist workings. In any relationship with antiracism, it is pertinent that white people listen to their black counterparts, and contribute to the antiracist workings when asked.

By invitation only

In an extension of how white identifying persons should be listeners in their relationship with antiracism, it is important that they wait to be asked to be involved with antiracist workings. This ensures that white people are not creating an antiracist identity that exists on their insertion in antiracist spaces. However, it too has its problems. If one were to make up an antiracist identity with the condition that they were asked to join antiracist workings by their black counterparts, they would be distinguishing themselves from other white people, claiming a certain connection to antiracist workings that other whites are marginalized from. This creates an identity based off a connection to antiracism that is highly sought after, one in which white people may establish relationships with black intellectuals and activists for the purpose of being invited to join the workings. In this way, it is important to think about how one relates to antiracism instead of how one identifies as antiracist. If white people can relate to antiracism on a conditional basis, whereby they make sense of their position with antiracism in terms of its present affiliations and not its lasting implications, we are making progress. In any effort, Kelly Gillespie claimed that she waits to be asked to join contemporary struggles in South Africa. She said, "I don't volunteer myself unless it's for a sort of task that nobody else wants to do ... bringing a particular set of skills that I have in part because of my privileged education that I can do that other people can't do, or can't do as quickly (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Essentially, she inserts herself where she sees a job that she can fill that no one else can or else she waits for someone to ask her to do something. Katy Perry also claimed, "My tendency is to kind of go and find out what they are doing and join in. But I know that this is not what is necessary, actually. What is necessary is for me to, yeah, actually just do what I'm told in a way. And contribute and support when I am asked" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Both subject participants understand that their position in and relationship with

antiracism is on a conditional basis whereby they are passive unless approached, asked, and invited to join in the workings. Furthermore, they recognize the harm that can come from inserting themselves into an antiracist space that is not theirs. In a white persons' relationship with antiracism it is important to listen, and to wait patiently until one is asked to contribute. White people must also create relationships with those people they are seeking to work together with.

"I'm supposed to be friends with blacks?"

Though it may seem obvious, it is imperative that whites seeking to create a relationship with antiracism establish friendships and intimacies with black people. It is problematic to attempt to create an antiracist identity, however, on the condition that one has black friends or a black partner, as this is actually racist. Parading and showcasing your black friends and partners to demonstrate that you are not racist and are actively involved in a relationship with antiracism is only a display of a problematic attempt to create an antiracist identity. However these relationships are important. These connections, I believe should exist as authentic moments in people's life that transpire like any relationship does, organically and naturally for the most part. They should not be forced and they should not be planned with a certain agenda. Leonard Shapiro, in talking about his trip to Egypt, spoke about how exposure and engagement with different people broke the stereotypes he had about them. He claimed,

The bowl of prejudice was actually broken by actually engaging with people there [Egypt]. In the same way, what apartheid in South African did, it kept people separate. And when you are kept separate, those fantasies or prejudices you are taught... when you are kept separate, those prejudices can stay rooted in you, but once you meet and you talk with people and you socialize with people, those prejudices start to disappear (Interview 1, Nov. 2014).

In this way, the engagement and establishment of authentic relationships with black people destroys those ways of thinking that made up a racist white identity. These connections create new ways of understanding difference and they have the power to contribute to a re-socialization. This is not to say that one can shore up their white antiracist identity in these

moments. It is to say, however, that they may find new ways of understanding and engaging in a relationship with antiracism.

The relationships that whites establish with black people also can create the space to connect to the lived experiences of black bodies in South Africa. As mentioned previously, it can be problematic to exploit black pain for white gain, but in an authentic and mutually beneficial relationship between white and black people, and on the terms of both individuals, these relationships can also help white people to better understand what it is like to be black in a racist society. Katy Perry claimed, "... You start to gain insight into other peoples lives, their worlds, and have inside experiences. And you become friends with them and interested in their well-being. And you start to realize, 'hey, this s*** actually affects people every day'" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). These personal connections and friendships that are established create real concern for the health of both parties. In these actual friendships, it is evident that an authentic white relationship with antiracism is one that, in fact, does not boast connections and partnerships with black people, but that focuses on the formulation and intricacies of that relationship.

"But what if I mess up?"

Another important part of one's relationship with antiracism is the willingness to make mistakes. No form of antiracism or the establishment of a relationship with antiracism is without its flaws. This is not to say, however, that one can attempt to identify as antiracist and simply brush mistakes to the side of their identity. In fact, it is disconcerting to think about a white antiracist identity in this way. White people hoping to shore up their identity as antiracist while sweeping their mistakes under the rug is indeed problematic. Instead, white people should be trying to create a relationship with antiracism where they acknowledge and take accountability for the mistakes that they make in the establishment and proliferation of that connection. Katy Perry said that white people must be "willing to making mistakes, be willing to mess it up, and willing to be accountable for those messes and, ya know, kind of roll with the punches as it were" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). In the relationships that white people create with antiracism it is important to hold oneself accountable for the mistakes and misunderstandings that happen

along the way. Moreover, it is imperative that white people hold other white people accountable for their mistakes.

Attack. White. Space.

As a white identifying person seeking a relationship with antiracism, it is imperative that one attacks and interrogates white spaces that can be easily identifiable as racist. It is not okay, however, to consolidate an antiracist white identity through the glorification of ones interruption of racism. This is to say that it is not acceptable for white people to interrupt racist spaces with the goal of establishing an antiracist identity. This idea contributes to whites using their privilege to potentially be heard while interrupting racist spaces for the purpose of validating their identity. In a different way, it can be better to make sense of a relationship with antiracism through the work of interrogating racist spaces that white people contribute to. Kelly Gillespie, Katy Perry, and Leonard Shapiro all agreed that one of the responsibilities of white people, in their involvements with antiracism, is to interrupt racist scenes, pointing out when someone is using a racial slur or a racial utterance (interview 1, Nov. 2014). Whites must do the work in white communities where racism is omnipresent. Stacey Doppleton claimed the tendency for white people to dominate black space and shy away from interrupting racism in white spaces comes from the power and privilege associated with being white in a black space. She said, “white people are afraid of other white people ... its much easier to come and work with black people because you still have some unconscious or assumed level of power in that space” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). From this position, in an attempt to create a relationship with antiracism, white people must continue unlearning that level of power and privilege associated with their whiteness. They must move into spaces, mostly white spaces, where their authority and privilege are also going to be challenged. In these spaces they must interrupt, disrupt, and challenge the racism occurring in. This is an appropriate way for whites to contribute to their relationship with antiracism.

“I benefit from racism”

As a white person attempting to create a relationship with antiracism, it is first necessary to recognize oneself as a beneficiary of the historical and current racist system.

This is not to say that it is acceptable for a white person seeking to identify as antiracist to declare an antiracist identity because they recognize their inherent privileges due to the historical and current racist system. If one were to attempt to validate their identity using this as a platform, they would indeed be creating a problematic identity. It seems that this effort at making sense of a white antiracist identity is full of problems. However, in any relationship with antiracism, it is necessary for white identifying persons to accept their benefit and privilege that is associated with the current system. In terms of a historical beneficiary of the racist power structure, Leonard Shapiro claimed, "For the most part, white people in South Africa, of course, the majority of white people benefit from apartheid by virtue of apartheid's design. It was designed to benefit white people" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). Recognizing the historical advantages that apartheid afforded white people is an important part of antiracist involvements. Extending this idea, and understanding how apartheid regulations affect the racial situation of today, Kelly Gillespie claimed, "The racist colonial project was formerly in place here, longer than anywhere else in the world. And, I am a beneficiary of that system" (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). In staking claims to being a beneficiary of the system that existed over twenty years ago, Gillespie is recognizing the privileges that are *still* associated with whiteness. In any relationship with whiteness and antiracism it is important to recognize how one is implicated and benefitting from systems that are long ago destroyed. In any case, there is the question about what can be done by whites involved with antiracism.

Restitution

Part of establishing a relationship with antiracism as a white person is thinking about ideas of restitution. Considering that when the apartheid state fell, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) took over focusing on transitional justice into a democratic society, white people were not asked to give anything up. There was no shift in resources allocated to those people who were oppressed, uprooted, dislocated, and wounded. As a white person, part of recognizing oneself as a beneficiary of the racist system of apartheid is interrogating one's place in the shifting of resources. White people who want a relationship with antiracism must think about the racially unjust implications of inheritances and current occupations of wealth and status. One cannot use this idea and

possible contribution to shift in resources as a display of their 'antiracist identity' however. It is important to remain focused on what is important – shifting resources, not your identity. Kelly Gillespie claimed, “there should be a much more equitable distribution of property in this country. It is clear that political power has been transferred but not economic power” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). To Gillespie, shifting property was a very important part of a white persons relationship with antiracism. She even interrogated the idea of forgoing one’s inheritance for the purpose of transferring these resources. Katy Perry claimed, “There is something about shifting resources, which is important, or contributing to a shift in resources. Its not just about identity ... but I do think there is something about participating in, I don’t know, ‘who was what’” (Interview 1, Nov. 2014). In a similar way, Perry advocates for the white persons contributions to a shift in resources. Again, this involvement with shifting resources cannot be a parading of ones antiracist identity, but rather an authentic gesture in the direction of progress. This is a radical way for white people to navigate their place in a relationship with antiracism.

CONCLUSION

When I set out to discover white antiracist identities in Cape Town, my goal was to explore subjective understandings of a white antiracist identity, to discover the individual motivations and personal investments in antiracism, to make sense of the personal work necessary in becoming antiracist, to uncover the current issues surrounding white involvements with antiracism, to illuminate more proper way for white identifying persons to be allies in the struggle to end racism, and to determine the responsibilities of white identifying antiracists. However, my study illuminated and demonstrated some objectives more than others. In a similar way, throughout my study I became interested in expanding a few of my objectives and paying less attention to some of the others. From this position, my ISP mainly focused and fulfilled the following objectives: interrogating and analyzing white antiracist identities, understanding the personal work necessary in becoming antiracist, making sense of the current issues surrounding white involvements with antiracism, and to demonstrate proper ways for whites to be allies with antiracism. From this study, one can understand that white antiracist identities are problematic in the way that they are created from the use of white privilege.

The shoring up and validation of a white antiracist identity promotes the power and privilege associated with whiteness. This study illuminated that the problematic identity issues associated with whiteness and antiracism include: identifying as racist, reading and educating yourself as a white person, listening to blacks who should be leading the struggle, not denying difference or advocating non-racialism, consistently undoing whiteness and the privileges associate with being white, constantly undoing the leadership training that this country has afforded white people, not being insensitive to issues of identity in an effort to expedite antiracist processes, waiting to be invited to join antiracist workings, establishing and feeding close relationships with blacks, being willing to make mistakes and take responsibility for those mistakes, attacking white racist spaces and then recognize yourself as a beneficiary of the racist power structure. The intricacies and problems in created a white antiracist identity in South Africa demonstrate the broader issue of the relationship between whiteness and antiracism. Through the lens of the experiences of these four South African intellectuals, we have gained localized knowledge about the problems and dimensions of creating a white antiracist identity. From this study, instead of thinking about consolidating white antiracist identities, it is important to make sense of the relationship between whiteness and antiracism.

Recommendations for Further Study

If one were to do further research on this topic, I would suggest incorporating the voices of black South Africans. In attempting to understand the position of white South Africans in antiracist work and their relationship to antiracism, it was a disservice to ignore and marginalize those black voices that could rightfully contribute. I believe that this would provide a more comprehensive understanding of a more authentic relationship between whiteness and antiracism. Furthermore, it would allow black South Africans the opportunity to contribute to and set the agenda for the relationship between whiteness and antiracism.

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Appendices

Interview Questions

History

- Can you define what antiracism means for you?
- What has motivated you to antiracist workings? (academic, political, social, etc)
 - Was there a specific moment in your life that made you empathetic towards antiracism? (a moral shock)
 - Moral shock is the moment in which individuals who possess specific worldviews become shocked in learning that the rest of the world does not have a similar political ideology. (Kristin Luker – prof. of Sociology)
 - Was there a shift in your worldview?
 - A moment when the things you learned and did not question were challenged?
 - Was there something that you learned?
- What is your personal investment in antiracism?
 - How do ‘white’ people benefit from being antiracist?
- Is there any personal work necessary to become antiracist?
- What sort of racial justice work are you involved with?

Present

- What do you see to be the current manifestations of racism in post-apartheid South Africa?
- How are the power and privilege of whiteness reproduced in present day South Africa?
- What are the current issues concerning ‘white’ involvements with antiracism?
 - Are there issues that are specific to South Africa only?
- What are the proper ways for ‘white’ identifying persons to be allies in the struggle to end racism?
 - How do ‘white’ individual’s embrace their racial identity, knowing its historical and present associations to power, and at the same time involve themselves in antiracist work?
 - How does white privilege work itself into antiracist workings?
 - How do you feel about people removing or rejecting their ‘whiteness’?
- What are the responsibilities of ‘white’ identifying antiracists?
- What are the characteristics of a ‘white’ antiracist identity?
- What kind of education will raise white people’s awareness and understanding of their position in perpetuating racism?

SIT Study Abroad

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CONSENT FORM

1. Brief description of the purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to critically engage with the position that 'white' South African antiracists occupy in creating a more racially just South Africa, to understand the historical motivations towards a 'white' antiracist identity, and to further identify the proper place of 'white' activists in antiracist praxis.

2. Rights Notice

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

- a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
- b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
 - a. I _____ give the interviewer consent to use my legal name throughout the entirety of their ISP.
- c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.
- d. **Reciprocity** - If requested, the interviewee will provide the subject participant with a typed transcription of the interview.

Participant's name printed

Participant's signature and date

Interviewer's name printed

Interviewer's signature and date