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Whiteness Under Pressure: Race, Masculinities, and the Negotiation of Power in a Transforming South Africa

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WHITENESS UNDER PRESSURE: RACE, MASCULINITIES, AND THE NEGOTIATION
OF POWER IN A TRANSFORMING SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

This study expands upon whiteness studies that aim to interrogate whiteness and render it visible in contexts where it may operate as the norm, and explore its relationship with expressions of dominant and subordinated masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa. Using the lived experiences of white men in South Africa, the researcher examines themes of power and dispossession in relation to expressions of masculinities during the country's recent economic, political, and social transformation. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data surrounding participants' experiences of transformation, the majority of which took place at a bowling club outside of Durban. Findings indicate that the majority of participants did in fact experience a sense of disempowerment as white men in the economic, political, and social sectors, and used specific discursive tactics to continue to elevate whiteness as the norm and reinforce racial divisions. This division manifested in the promotion of idealized capitalistic masculinities in tandem with subordinated African masculinities. The study's one younger participant offered an entirely different perspective, suggesting a new sense of agency amongst youth in direct contrast to the hopelessness of older participants.

Introduction

South Africa has undergone a remarkable social, political, and economic transformation over the past 23 years—a transition that has relocated power and taken privilege from the hands of a white minority. The colonial narrative has been largely discredited and whiteness is no longer inherently equated with power and dominance. This change has created an ideal environment for studying the effects of historical transfers of power on the fluid constructs of race and masculinities. The constructions of whiteness and masculinities intersect in a fascinating way, as both concepts relate to power, domination, and subjugation. While more recent work has begun to address the masculine identities of white men in the new South Africa, further research on the ways in which this previously privileged group continues to cope with transformation is necessary in a world that is reconciling with its violent colonial history and hopefully moving towards gender and racial justice.

This study aims to address the multifaceted disempowerment of white men in South Africa, and explore the continued use of discursive tactics to normalize whiteness and promote racial differences. Tactics used to elevate whiteness as a “master narrative” exist in tandem with discursive tactics that privilege certain dominant forms of masculinities at the expense of alternative forms of masculinities. The facilitation of the majority of interviews at a bowling club outside of Durban also lends insight into the role of exclusive, majority-white spaces in these discourses. By including a participant from the younger generation, the researcher aims to address how the fluid constructs of race and masculinities may be evolving over time, and present a point of contrast to the narratives of the older participants. South Africa’s transforming environment lends itself to a critical analysis of how white men’s identities are evolving in the face of changing power dynamics.

The paper first includes a Historiography section that illustrates the historical construction of white male privilege in South Africa, specifically in relation to European colonialism and the apartheid era. This section also includes a background on specific economic policies implemented by the South African government since 1994, which is necessary for later discussions surrounding participants' economic disempowerment. The Literature Review then summarizes the robust research that has been conducted on constructions of race, masculinities, and the fundamental ways in which they intersect in both general and South Africa-specific contexts. Following a section describing the methodology utilized by the researcher, the study's findings are presented in a thematic manner. These findings are analyzed through the lens of transformation, privilege, and the interdependent constructs of race and masculinities. In the final section, overall conclusions are made and the researcher provides recommendations for further study.

Historiography

European colonialism in South Africa

An understanding of South Africa's colonial history is critical to understanding the deep racial divisions that precipitated the system of apartheid and its subsequent dismantling. Jan van Riebeeck, an official of the Dutch East India Trading Company, established the first European colony at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, initially intended to serve as a refreshment station for traders on their way to the Asian continent. As Dutch settlement on the continent expanded, the colonialists came into contact with indigenous Khoikhoi pastoralists, and by 1659, quarrels between the indigenous pastoralists and Dutch settlers escalated into warfare. The settlers became increasingly violent towards their indigenous neighbors and presented the Khoikhoi people with the option of leaving their land or remaining as servants of the Dutch (Thompson, 2001). Thompson (2001) describes how the Khoikhoi were already becoming a "subordinate caste" in colonial society, set apart from the European settlers by appearance and culture (p. 38). These racial distinctions began to sow the seeds of a society in which whiteness was a mark of power that arguably legitimated violence against others.

The introduction of slavery into the colonial society greatly deepened this racial hierarchy and intensified the system of racial subjugation that had already emerged. The Dutch East India Trading Company sent its first shipload of slaves to the colony in 1658, comprised of people from Madagascar, Indonesia, India, and Ceylon (Thompson, 2001). From 1710 onward, the adult slave population outnumbered the adult colonial population by as much as three to one. South African History Online describes how the Cape had become a "fully-fledged slave society" that simply could not function without slave labor ("History of slavery and early colonisation," 2011).

Dutch reign over the South African colony came to an end when Britain overtook the Cape Colony in 1795. After a string of capitulations and treaties, Britain established sovereignty over the colony in 1806. In 1811 and 1812, British troops ruthlessly forced Xhosa inhabitants from their land, and in 1820, a new wave of settlers came from the British Isles who began to call the earlier Dutch settlers *Boers*, a term that came to have derogatory overtones. Britain passed the Abolition of Slave Trade Act in 1807, however it remained legal to own slaves and trade slaves within the colony. White men maintained complete economic and political control of the colony, a power enhanced by a racist ideology that had become pervasive amongst Europeans, North Americans, and white South Africans. White colonists continued to conquer African communities and incorporate Africans into a capitalist, white-dominated economy. While the African community outnumbered the white community by a quarter million to eighteen thousand, the white colonial community owned the majority of the land and controlled the legislative branch of the government. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were also more Indians than whites in Natal, as Indian indentured workers contracted by the British government first arrived in Natal in 1860 (Thompson, 2001). The discovery of diamonds and gold by the British imperialists intensified the exploitation of African labor in a mining industry that was fundamentally divided into whites with skilled or supervisory roles and poorly paid blacks forced into the dangerous, unskilled roles. This system functioned to vest economic and political power in a white minority and instill a racial hierarchy that pervaded most facets of life.

In the context of discussing white masculinities in South Africa, it is important to note the secondary divisions that existed within the white race itself. The descendants of the seventeenth and eighteenth century white colonists identified as Afrikaners, while the descendants of nineteenth century immigrants were majority British and maintained a degree of separation from

the Afrikaners. Thompson goes so far as to say that these British whites “despised” Afrikaner language and culture and “underestimated their achievements” (p. 112). These tensions continued to manifest as the largely Afrikaner National party took political control of the country in 1948, and arguably still exist today.

While this only offers a very brief history of an incredibly complex and transformative period of South African history, it demonstrates the essential role of colonialism in creating a race-based, hierarchical society that sowed the seeds of white dominance and human rights abuses that ultimately culminated in the establishment of the apartheid system in 1948.

The apartheid era (1948-1991)

Apartheid, translated from the Afrikaans word meaning “apartness,” was a system of racial separate development and oppression instituted by the National Party in South Africa in 1948. Primarily engineered by academic Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, apartheid made segregation the law and forced different racial groups to develop, work, and live separately. The system operated on the idea that whites, as the civilized race, were entitled to complete control of the government and their interests would always prevail over the interests of the non-white population (Thompson, 2001). The Population Act of 1950 required all South Africans to register according to their race group, which was divided into White, Coloured, Indian, and African. This classification built the groundwork for the following apartheid policies that determined the treatment and standard of living of these groups.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 divided urban areas into zones where only members of one specified race could live and work. In many cases, blacks were forced to leave areas that had been zoned for white occupation, a process often referred to as “forced removals.” Additionally,

in 1951, the government created eight territories that eventually became “homelands,” or African nations that were to develop independently, ruled by Bantu authorities (Thompson, 2001). The division of the African population into these “nations” served to make the white nation, comprised of Afrikaans and English speaking South Africans, the largest nation in the country despite their numerical minority. Conditions deteriorated in these confined areas as more and more black South Africans were forced to move into the homelands, with the exception of those whom white employers needed as laborers (Thompson, 2001). Legislation such as The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950 further entrenched the separation between racial groups, as they made marriages and sexual relations illegal across the racial divide.

Over time, the National government eliminated every aspect of black participation in the central political system by using its majority in Parliament to systematically eliminate the voting rights of the non-white population. The government’s legislation continually served to elevate the white population politically, economically, and socially using the strict racial divisions. All of this meant that the white South African, who made up only a quarter of the population in 1948, lived a life of entrenched privilege (“History of elections in South Africa,” 2014). With their separate superior school system, their geographic control of urban areas, and dominance of high-level positions in business, the majority of white South Africans arguably lived on an entirely different plane of existence than the majority of black South Africans. Apartheid was a “cradle to grave” system in which Afrikaner children were exposed exclusively to a Nationalist world perspective. In schools, white children learned a political mythology derived from a distorted history that served nationalist interests. For example, God was associated with the victory of the Afrikaner army over the Zulu at the battle of the River Blood, reinforcing the

divine right of the Afrikaner to the South African land (Thompson, 2001). Thompson describes how whites were conditioned to regard apartheid society as “normal,” having been granted with privilege in every capacity of life from birth. Social custom and spatial segregation kept many whites from seeing how non-white South Africans lived, a fact that was often used by the white population following the dismantling of apartheid to suggest that they did not realize how poorly the non-white population was being treated. Despite their ideological and spatial separateness, the white population fundamentally depended on the labor of the non-white population to maintain their economic privilege.

Transformational economics: Affirmative Action and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment

Following the country’s democratic transition in 1994, addressing the deep racial inequalities that defined the country’s economy was a priority. Economic policies such as Affirmative Action (1998) and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (2003) have aimed to intervene in the economy in order to create more opportunities for black representation in the workforce, especially in managerial positions. Affirmative action was defined in the Employment Equity Act No. 55 in 1998 as “Measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce of a designated employer” (“Affirmative action,” 2017). These designated groups were defined as black people (including Africans, Coloureds, and Indians), women, and people with disabilities. The court emphasized that if applied correctly, affirmative action does not amount to unfair discrimination (Shepstone & Wylie Attorneys). Employers designated by the act are required to prepare and implement

their Employment Equity Plans, and adjust their plan as time progresses. This plan requires a certain proportion of these designated groups to be represented in all levels of the organization, including at the management level (“Affirmative action,” 2017).

In 2003, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) recognized that South Africa’s economy still excluded “the vast majority of its people from ownership of productive assets and the possession of advanced skills” (Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, 2012). The BEE Act defines B-BBEE ‘Codes of Good Practice’ which provide the structure for a BEE Scorecard and claiming BEE points. Employers can get varying levels of BEE certificates based on their level of contribution to supporting the integration of black South Africans into the economy and the level of black employees at ownership and top management levels in their businesses. BEE can be defined as a reporting exercise that encourages specific activities in a business (“How does the BEE Social Program work?,” 2017). These economic policies aim to address the racial inequalities that continue to exist in the workplace as a result of South Africa’s history of colonialism and apartheid.

Literature Review

Shifting Whitenesses

Defining 'whiteness'

When discussing the perspectives of white men in South Africa, it is essential to first define what it means to be 'white.' There is arguably a consensus among scholars that there are no "clear biological markers" that neatly divide humans into distinct racial groups, so then what exactly is race? (Matthews, 2015, p. 116). If race is not biological, is it a social construct? An identity? A historical position? Many authors have attempted to answer this exact question, especially as the meaning of whiteness in South Africa has been further thrown into question by the dismantling of the institutionalized white privilege that defined apartheid. In "Shifting white identities in South Africa: White Africanness and the struggle for racial justice," Matthews (2015) concludes that 'white' people are those who have come to hold a privileged position in society as a result of European colonialism, a position that is maintained by certain practices, including the overt and covert dehumanization of people of color. Steyn (2005) echoes this point of view in her piece titled "White Talk: White South Africans and the management of diasporic whiteness," defining whiteness as a social positionality that has "accrued to people of European descent as a consequence of the economic and political advantage gained during and subsequent to European colonial expansion" (p. 121). As discussed earlier, the colonial project used skin pigmentation primarily as a means to justify exploitative economic and political relationships under the guise of biological inequality. The privileged positionality of whiteness has been termed by many authors as 'invisible,' as whiteness is normalized and rendered unremarkable in mainstream society. For this reason, Whiteness Studies, growing in popularity since the early 1990s, aim to render whiteness 'visible' and deny its ability to "distort societies without

detection” (Steyn, 2005, p. 122). Whiteness studies redirect the scholarly gaze from the margins, or the ‘other,’ to the center of power as it operates invisibly as the norm. Steyn argues that the practice of keeping attention fixed on the margins has problematically kept attention fixed on ‘others’ as the problem needing explanation, rather than interrogating the center of power and how it maintains itself (Steyn, 2005, p. 120). Redirecting attention towards the center of power will require the promotion of self-reflexivity amongst white people and a willingness to engage critically with one’s privilege.

Both Epstein (1998) and Steyn (2005) argue that contrary to many authors’ conclusion that whiteness is privileged in part through its invisibility, this theorization is not entirely applicable in the South African context where whiteness has in fact been made very visible as the controlling norm. Throughout apartheid, white South Africans were acutely aware of their racialization as the system relied on the visibility of whiteness and non-whiteness to maintain power—printing it on birth certificates, passes, the spaces people were permitted to occupy, and the property they were allowed to own (Epstein, 1998). This makes South Africa an incredibly engaging and unique environment in which to conduct Whiteness Studies, as the frankness with which race is addressed lends itself to critical conversations about whiteness.

Post-apartheid white identity reconstruction

The advent of democracy in South Africa has precipitated the disintegration of overt institutionalized white privilege and introduced a society that intends to function more representatively and democratically. Steyn (2005) eloquently describes this transformation when she says: “the buttresses that held white identity in place in the old South Africa have collapsed,” and white identities must be renegotiated (p. 119). Institutionalized white privilege is not only no

longer legally condoned, but is also actively disciplined socially. Whiteness is arguably perceived as being under threat, as evidenced by the mass emigration of white citizens following the democratization of South Africa, shrinking the white population by sixteen percent between 1995 and 2005 (Steyn & Conway, 2010, p. 288). The reconfiguration of white identity in South Africa is further complicated by the fact that while the white minority has been stripped of political power, white capital still disproportionately dominates the economic arena. For example, although the black African population has increased as a proportion of the country's total employment since 1994 while the white population has declined as a proportion of total employment, the lowest increase in skilled labor (defined as a manager, professional, or technician) took place within the black African population. While the unemployment rate among the black African population has technically declined by 3% since 1994, it still remains at 40% in comparison to the white population's unemployment rate of 8% (Statistics South Africa, 2014). These statistics suggest that while the country's transition has in fact led to increased rates of white unemployment, this rate is still incomparable to the rate of unemployment among black South Africans. These facts show that despite allegations that whites have become the "underprivileged" class in the new South Africa, this loss of privilege is more nuanced and complex than it first appears.

Steyn (2005) uses the term "White Talk" to describe the discursive practices used by white South Africans to manage their positionality to their greatest advantage and therefore maintain a sense of privilege in the new democratic society. "White Talk" defines the individual as the primary social unit and emphasizes discourses of business. The denigration of the African continent and the victimization of whiteness are common tropes used to covertly maintain a sense of superiority and ironically paint the white man as the victim of a more equal society

(Steyn, 2005). In “Repertoires for Talking White: Resistant Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” Steyn and Foster (2007) discuss two specific discursive repertoires that often work in tandem to covertly maintain privilege: “New South Africa Speak” (NSAS) and “White Ululation” (WU). NSAS consists of opinions and attitudes that stress values such as “democracy, social development, non-racialism and non-sexism, reconciliation, equality and freedom” (p. 28). This type of discourse serves to maintain positive self-representation and act as a defense against accusations of racism. Culpability on the part of whiteness is downplayed by appeals to the “universality of our common human nature,” diverting attention away from the scope of western colonization and slavery (p. 32). The second repertoire, “White Ululation,” uses heightened emotional language and promotes the extension of white privilege in post-apartheid South Africa. It presents the changing status quo as a threat to the “established good that operates in the best interests of all” (p. 35). This repertoire is full of tropes meant to paint whites as the victims of transformation and enforce the assumption that the New South Africa is a “fiasco,” as predicted. NSAS can be strategically used as a cover for WU discourse, however at its core the repertoire remains hostile to the new social order and cements the common perception that the country is in decline.

Verwey and Quayle (2012) further discuss the contradictory discourses used by white South Africans (specifically Afrikaners) in the post-apartheid context in their article, “Whiteness, racism, and Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa.” The researchers found that while the participants may have been willing to publicly deny certain elements of their Afrikaner identity, they were much less willing to let go of their whiteness. Participants created sanitized versions of Afrikaner identity that had the potential to decrease their accountability for the “sins” of the Afrikaners before them. However, the participants still claimed their whiteness and shared

their identity with English South Africans who experienced a “shared threat” (Verwey & Quayle, 2012, p. 573). The researchers discovered an intriguing interplay between public and private sentiments as participants acknowledged that they were more vigilant about not being perceived as racist in public, while still condoning covert racism privately. This strict management of private and public discourses adds a new dimension to the negotiation of white identities, as the social acceptability of overt racism in certain environments has radically changed since the democratic transition.

In “Subjectivities of Whiteness,” Nuttal (2001) continues to discuss discourse and the previous use of the term “settler” as a means of understanding white identity in a postcolonial African context. The term “settler” suggests a master-slave dialectic based on the dispossession of native owners of land and carries a means of identity-making based on “one party acting and another being acted upon” (Nuttal, 2001, p. 117). In the post-apartheid context, the white population’s colonial constructions of identity have been challenged and the potential now exists to belong to the country as an equal citizen. Nuttal emphasizes that belonging can no longer be assumed by whites in South Africa and must now be renegotiated by a process of “mutual recognition.” The belonging “separately” of apartheid has been replaced with “belonging together” (or sharing), and white South Africans must choose to participate in this renegotiation process of belonging (Nuttal, 2001, p. 118).

It is important to note Kelly’s (2005) argument that as long as white men are continually constructed as barriers to transformation and are not engaged in the process, most white men will continue to dissociate themselves from responsibility in the country’s democratic processes. For this reason, researchers need to further explore the alternative ways in which whiteness is being constructed and create a theoretical language for white people who view themselves as both

white *and* anti-racist (Kelly, 2005). While studies such as those discussed here have begun the process of critically analyzing whiteness, further exploration is needed to interrogate how master narratives of whiteness are being challenged and perpetuated in order to detect points of intervention and space for alternative discourses.

Intersections of Masculinities and Race in South Africa

Hegemonic masculinities

R.W. Connell's defining works, namely *Gender and Power* (1987) and *Masculinities* (1995), identified multiple forms of masculinities including hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized masculinities, a concept that has been utilized by a wide range of disciplines and constantly refined by academics. Hegemonic masculinity is described as a "culturally exalted" form of masculinity that is marked by a "successful claim to authority," and can vary at local, regional, and global levels (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Hegemony is unfixed as changing historical contexts and developing societal expectations can erode the dominance of particular masculinities and create space for a new hegemony. This aspect of masculinities is crucial in the South African context, as the dismantling of apartheid has led to huge social, political, and economic ramifications that have disrupted hegemonic patterns of the past. Conceptualizing "masculinity" as a single entity is highly problematic, as it imposes a "false unity" on a fluid and plural reality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 836). For this reason, the researcher uses the term "masculinities" as a means of recognizing the fluidity and multiplicity of the construct.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) further describe hegemonic masculinities as "the currently most honored way of being a man, [that] required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and [that] ideologically legitimated the global subordination of men to women"

(p. 832). It is crucial to note that hegemonic masculinities are not necessarily the most widely practiced forms of masculinities, but rather idealized masculinities that ascend through culture, institutions, and persuasion. Subordinated masculinities are positioned in relation to hegemonic forms in such a way that lends legitimacy to the dominant form as the cultural ideal. These dominant and subordinate discourses are interdependent and their relationship lends critical insight into how power is maintained in changing sociopolitical environments such as South Africa (Epstein, 1998).

While Festus and Gennrich (2010) suggest that hegemonic forms of masculinities during apartheid were the “way white men behaved in sport and as a dominant group in society as a whole,” Kelly (2005) points out that one cannot assume that the Euro-American versions of masculinities were and are the only hegemonic masculinities, as that in itself would be an act of “cultural hegemony” that assumes that Euro-American versions of masculinities are inherently dominant (p. 114). Morrell (2012) posits that there were at least three masculinities that were historically hegemonic in South African history: a “white” masculinity that was represented in the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class, an “African” masculinity that was perpetuated through indigenous institutions such as chiefship and customary law, and a “black” masculinity that emerged in the context of the development of spatially separate and culturally distinct African townships (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012, p. 12). Morrell, Jewkes, and Leindegger (2012) further suggest that there can be multiple levels or contexts in which masculinities can be hegemonic, and that masculinities can be contested and shifted while remaining hegemonic.

Researchers have suggested that there is a need for the establishment and legitimization of alternative forms of hegemonic masculinities that encourage gender equality and more

positive ways of expressing manhood. Epstein (1998) points out that the current state of precariousness in South Africa presents an ideal opportunity to intervene in particular sites so that new versions of masculinities are made possible. She calls for young men to develop possible ways of being men that do not involve violence, racism, misogyny, and/or homophobia.

Masculinities, race, and the maintenance of power

Both masculine and racial identities were meaningful factors in entrenching certain privileges in apartheid South Africa and continue to shape the social, political, and economic landscape of the country. Masculinities and racial identities built and maintained during the apartheid era will inevitably have to shift due to the new visibility and progressiveness surrounding race relations in the country. Judith Butler's (1990) description of gender as something that people "perform continually" emphasizes the fluidity of the construct, while Morrell (1996) emphasizes the role of institutions and pastimes in the identification and replication of masculine identities. These theories emphasize the role of external social factors in these constructions, making them susceptible to historical changes such as the democratic transition in South Africa. Constructions of masculinities and race do not exist as two separate entities, but rather are fundamentally intertwined in processes of domination, subjugation, and other-ing.

The intersection of constructions of masculinities and race was essential in European colonial conquest, as colonizers relied on a specific form of masculinity to achieve their goal—one that was dominant and one that was white (Kelly, 2005). The same mechanisms that were used to normalize and prize whiteness were also used to "elevate maleness as a natural category in opposition to women." One of these mechanisms was the depiction of white women as

vulnerable, which was used to oppress black men who were constructed as “sexually deviant and aggressive” (Kelly, 2005, p. 116-7). Tropes such as these not only vilified the masculine identities of black men, but also relegated women to objects of possession and protection. Race and gender hierarchies played off of each other in the ascension of whiteness and imperial masculinity as the “master narrative” in South Africa. Not only was an imperialist version of masculinity celebrated, but alleged “African” forms of masculinities were degraded. As discussed earlier, hegemony relies on subjugated masculinities to lend legitimacy to its project, and this subjugation by imperial forces took both racial and gendered forms. Kelly (2005) discusses the specific attributes of this imperial masculinity, concluding that the enactment of this masculinity in the school environment was most often found on the sports field. This supports Morrell’s (1996) emphasis on the role of sport and rugby specifically in the creation of a “rugged, physically capable and fit” template for colonial masculinity (p. 70). In Uchendu’s (2008) introduction to *Masculinities in Contemporary Africa*, he defines the superior form of British colonial masculinity as “manifested through intelligence, quick wit, power and action” using historical comments from Baden-Powell, a distinguished British colonial military officer. This model of dominant masculinity was espoused in tandem with a subordinated African masculinity that was defined by stupidity, dullness, inertness, and the fact that “simply put, they were not man enough!” (p. 2).

Kelly (2005) explores the ways that narratives of whiteness and masculinities are being reformed or retained in the New South Africa in her chapter titled: “White Men: An Exploration of Intersections of Masculinity, Whiteness and Colonialism in the Engagement of Counter-Hegemonic Projects.” While strategies such as Steyn’s “White Talk” have been utilized by whites to maintain a certain level of privilege in society, Kelly also identifies ways in which

some white men are working to dismantle their power and “inhabit” it differently (p. 113). Kelly concludes that her white male participants do not all engage with the violent hegemonic colonial masculinity in the same way and that the men’s ascendancy to power through school and sport was not an uncomplicated one. She engages with her participants as potential allies in gender and race transformation and determines that “owning one’s racism, taking responsibility for it and confronting it daily” are some of the greatest ways to challenge the colonial hegemony (p. 128). These shifting discourses surrounding race, masculinities, and colonial legacy need to be further interrogated, as understanding the complexities and intersections of these identities could present new ways to interrupt hegemonies and understand how white men respond to losses of privilege. The current state of South Africa offers a unique opportunity to interview men who have lived significant portions of their life in both the apartheid and the post-apartheid era, creating a ripe environment for exploring their responses to transformation.

Methodology

Qualitative data for the study was gathered through individual interviews, small focus groups, and participant observation of a bowling club outside of Durban. This particular methodology was chosen based on successful prior studies that address the intersection of race and masculinities (Bhana & Buccus, 2016; Chen, 2016) and the condensed four-week timeframe of the project. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who identified as white males and who had lived through the country's social, political, and economic transformation in 1994. Seven of the eight participants were born in South Africa and have spent the great majority of their lives in the country, and one participant was born in the United Kingdom but has lived and worked in South Africa since before the country's democratic transition. A member of the SIT faculty referred the researcher to a primary contact who granted access to the majority of the participants in the study. The primary contact was eighty-one years of age, which was conducive to contacting men from an age group that had both lived and worked in the apartheid and post-apartheid era. One younger participant who was formerly known to the researcher was also interviewed to provide a point of comparison and offer insight into possible changes in outlook over time. The overall age range of participants was between the ages of 27-81, with seven of the eight participants falling in between the ages of 53-81 (see Appendix D for full participant biographies).

Of the eight total participants, six were contacted through the primary contact (not including the primary contact himself). Five of these participants were interviewed at a bowling club outside of Durban. Two of these participants were interviewed individually, while three were interviewed as a small focus group. Another small focus group was conducted with two participants, including the primary contact, over breakfast at a restaurant in Durban. The eighth

participant was previously known to the researcher and was therefore contacted directly. This individual interview took place at a coffee shop in Durban. All of the participants in the focus group settings were known to each other prior to the study and therefore were comfortable discussing the topics of race and transformation candidly in each other's presence.

The space in which the interviews were conducted was especially important in the case of the bowling club, as this exclusive, majority-white space seemed to create a safe environment for certain types of rhetoric and ideologies. These interviews and focus group were informal, as the primary contact recruited men to participate from the club's bar and the men clearly felt at ease in the environment, poking fun at each other and answering questions without hesitation. The other two environments in which interviews were conducted, a restaurant and a coffee shop, were chosen by the participants and therefore offered a certain level of comfort, however they did not offer the same sense of privacy and exclusivity as the bowling club. Overall, the majority of participants did not express any suspicion or even interest in the researcher's intentions, and quickly delved into topics of race and apartheid. The researcher's identity as a white female most likely played a role in this response, as participants seemed to feel a certain level of comfort in discussing race and whiteness specifically, and some even seemed to assume that the researcher agreed with their sentiments. This led to a challenge on behalf of the researcher as to how to respond to potentially problematic statements made by participants without compromising the validity of the data. The researcher did this by refraining from disagreeing or showing surprise in response to potentially problematic statements, and maintaining an overall upbeat attitude throughout the interviews and focus groups.

The same general interview questions were used to guide all interviews and focus groups (see Appendix B for sample interview questions), however the researcher allowed the

conversation to flow naturally and therefore tailored follow-up questions to the conversation at hand. In some cases, the researcher used prior conversations and knowledge about certain participants to add questions about activities that the person was involved in or topics that they had previously mentioned. Due to some participants' tendencies to talk more than others, not all participants were asked the same number of questions. Despite the differing number of questions asked, the researcher still aimed to cover economic, political, and social aspects of transformation in each interview or focus group.

Due to hesitation amongst participants specifically around the term "masculinity," questions were more directly aimed at white male perspectives on transformation, with an eye to indirectly touching on this concept. Due to this, the data speaks more directly to changing white identities than to changing masculine identities, however these constructs are fundamentally intertwined and the topics that the participants chose to focus on lend insight into their values as men.

Limitations of the study

The five-week timeframe of the project was a primary limitation, as only a limited number of interviews and focus groups were feasible in the allotted time. While the information obtained was valuable, the conclusions of this study cannot be generalized to all white men in South Africa, or even all white men at a specific bowling club. The participant selection process was another limitation, as the participants were restricted to those familiar with one primary contact and the researcher. While this process was conducive to obtaining participants in a short period of time, it may not have led to the most representative data.

As mentioned in the Methodology section, hesitation on the part of participants to directly discuss “masculinity” led to an inability to ask direct questions regarding the participants’ perceptions of masculinities. The rephrasing of masculinity as “white male perspectives” may have in some ways misled participants and was not entirely transparent.

The researcher’s identity as a white American woman undoubtedly had the potential to impact the study, despite all attempts to maintain objectivity throughout the project. While the researcher has lived in South Africa for three months, she cannot fully understand the complexity of race relations in the country and therefore may have applied American notions of whiteness and masculinities to a degree. The researcher’s own sociopolitical beliefs regarding equality and transformation may have also manifested in the analysis of the data, however all attempts were made to remain objective.

Lastly, the researcher’s previous inexperience with whiteness studies and critical mens’ studies was a limitation to the scope of the study. While extensive background research has been conducted since arriving in South Africa, an entirely comprehensive study of the history of these fields in both a global and local context was not possible in the allotted time.

Findings and Analysis

Whiteness under threat: Disempowerment narratives

Economic disempowerment

Narratives surrounding the economic disempowerment of white men in South Africa focused primarily on economic policies such as affirmative action and broad-based black economic empowerment (BEE). Multiple participants presented these policies as primarily disadvantaging white men and leading to an overall decline in the ability of businesses to function efficiently. Participants Henry and Samuel attributed this loss of efficiency to the fact that the policies “fast track people into jobs who can’t do their jobs,” and that “they’re bringing these people in without any experience and you can’t buy experience.” This narrative was expounded upon repeatedly by participants, with black men’s lack of experience portrayed as the primary barrier to the effectiveness of the policies. Henry described being retrenched from his job to “make way for black middle management,” and Oliver emphasized the way in which the policies “affected my ability to do what I was supposed to do as well as I should’ve.” These participants felt that the policies had made them like “schoolteachers” for the inexperienced black employees entering their businesses, therefore detracting from their own agency as producers. The historical reasoning for these policies was notably absent from these conversations, and the overall conclusion by Colin was that “it’s not gonna work.”

Participants expounded upon economic disempowerment when discussing their children and friends who have left the country due to an inability to obtain employment or rise to higher paid positions. Henry describes, “Of all ages, whites males now cannot find employment. And that’s why most of them are leaving,” therefore implicating the loss of economic opportunity as the primary reason for the large number of whites leaving the country. The discussions

surrounding this exodus of white people from the country carried a solemn tone, Thomas calling it “horrible” and Henry declaring, “Most of my friends have left South Africa.” Multiple participants described encouraging their own children to leave the country, Henry describing it as “the main goal” of men in his age group. Samuel expressed frustration when describing the personal story of his grandson being told that he would never receive another promotion at his job no matter how long he stayed in the company. Henry relayed a similar story regarding his son with a university degree in microbiology who cannot get a job in the country. These narratives point to a loss of economic mobility and rationalize the ultimate act of disillusionment with the country—leaving it altogether. Samuel even predicted that the government would put a ceiling on the amount of money that one can take out of the country because “the whites are diminishing fast.” He succinctly summarized this loss of power by repeating this statement: “The white people are now becoming the underprivileged.” His statement arguably makes the claim that the current economic situation of the white population in South Africa is comparable to the ‘underprivileged’ economic status of the black population during apartheid. This rhetoric paints white men as unfair victims of policies that intend to ensure fairness and equality, a phenomenon also recognized by Steyn (2005), who describes certain tropes used to ironically paint white men as victims of a more equal society.

Multiple participants utilized an association between the decline in the value of the rand and a decline in standard of living as another indicator of inhibited economic mobility. When discussing a decline in standard of living, Mark immediately pointed to “the value of the rand as such,” later calling the downgrade of the rand “scary.” Oliver similarly used the declining value of the rand as an indicator of his changing lifestyle when he said, “Now I can’t buy a pound for twenty rand. Know what I’m saying? I mean the rand was so strong, money was... This country,

like I said, this country, you wouldn't understand, but this country was... This was heaven.” Oliver directly relates the previously strong value of the rand with the country being “heaven,” suggesting that the rand's decline represents the disappearance of this heavenly standard of life. Oliver notably does not acknowledge that his “heaven” during apartheid came at the expense of the majority of the country's standard of living, and does not view his wistful pining for a time that legally entrenched white privilege as problematic. The most concrete way in which the value of the rand seemed to disempower the participants was by inhibiting their ability to travel to other countries. Colin describes, “If we go to America, we've got to divide by fourteen. And in Australia you divide by ten. So it's, it's, we're kind of stuck here.” The loss of the value of the rand against other currencies evidently creates a sense of physical immobility and entrapment. Not only do the participants feel that their economic mobility has been threatened, but also that there is no option of escape. This feeling of hopelessness was a common thread throughout the discussions of economic policies, family leaving the country, and the declining value of the rand, reflecting the older participants' discomfort with an economy that no longer privileges them.

Political disempowerment

A common theme of dysfunction characterized discussions of the country's politics. Multiple participants agreed with the sentiment that “nothing works,” and listed off failing government agencies including the airways, the railways, the hospitals, the street sweepers, the rubbish collectors, and the postal service. Crumbling government departments, both literally and figuratively, were described as a means of expounding upon the dysfunctional nature of the government. The older participants also discussed the criminality of Jacob Zuma at length, Rodney stating, “let's get to the nitty gritty, we've got a thief running the country.” Oliver

repeated this sentiment, exclaiming that he cannot believe that Zuma can “do what he’s doing and get away with it,” given that he’s up on “783 charges or something.” This narrative of a criminal running the national government represents these participants’ complete disillusionment and frustration with the country’s current political dispensation. Rodney makes an indicative comparison when he says:

Let’s say this was England now, and one of those MPs had got caught stealing some money to buy some books, they’d get fired... They wouldn’t last. Fired! They inquire nothing, you’re caught you’re done. This man has raped this country, and he continues to do that.

By comparing the current political situation to that of a western, majority-white country such as England, Rodney suggests that these countries are still the models against which the South African government should be measured. The majority of participants were English, and this discourse therefore idealizes their English motherland as a superior influence. His statement also implies that if South Africa were still under western influence, there would not be this level of corruption, suggesting a link between non-western influences and defunct governing. Similar to the narratives of economic disempowerment, these narratives of political disempowerment paint a picture of a country disgraced due in part to a loss of white influence.

By repeatedly referring to the country’s current political dispensation as “tribal,” participants suggested an impossibility of reconciling functioning governance with traditional “African” values. Samuel describes what he calls tribal politics when he says, “... A Pondo will never vote for a Zulu, no matter how badly... And a Zulu will never vote for a Pondo, no matter how badly his man or his leader is treating him or starving him and his family to death, he will never change, he will still always vote for him.” Rodney repeatedly described this phenomenon

as “factionalism,” saying, “There’s X amount of them, X amount of them, X amount of them, X amount of them, and they’re the biggest tribe. It’s the Zulu.” In this statement, Rodney describes the way in which distinct ethnic categories were promoted amongst black Africans during apartheid, which served to eliminate the ability of the black African majority to unite and oppose the government. Rodney went on to tell stories of Zuma going into the rural areas and giving out bags of mealie-meal, t-shirts, and a bottles of oil to the “uneducated” people in order to gain their vote, despite the fact that once they vote he will give them “absolutely nothing”. These narratives of tribalism, factionalism, and bribery suggest an inability of black African voters to think as individuals, therefore stripping them of their agency. Thomas refers to the black African population’s continued support of Zuma as “ignorance,” while Oliver refers to the ANC Youth League as a “bunch of morons” who think that the government is a joke. These tropes suggest an incompatibility between stereotypically African values and effective governance, and at a higher level, the inability of an African government to rule effectively. By equating Africanness with government failure, participants again imply that a loss of western influence in part led to this dysfunction.

In terms of their own role in the country’s politics, the participants felt an overall lack of agency, partially because of the current government’s alleged accusations of opposition as “racist.” When asked whether he thinks there is a solution to what he called the country’s “mess,” Henry responded:

No, the ANC’s in the majority, they’re not gonna go away. Whites will never get back into... I’m not saying they need to get back into power but need to be more representative... or not necessarily whites. I would suggest the opposition party, which happens to be largely white and Coloured or... Indian, they’re getting a little bit of power

now but there's not enough to make any change. You need a bigger opposition basically and it's just not big enough.

In addition to projecting a sense of powerlessness over changing the political situation, Henry implies that the opposition party, which happens to be largely every race except African, would be the only viable option. While he quickly corrects himself, his initial utterance that “whites will never get back into...” suggests that one of his first thoughts in terms of an ideal solution would be the power of the country being turned back over to whites. The opposition party that he speaks of is most likely the Democratic Alliance (DA), which was mentioned by other participants as well, many specifically addressing the DA march that had taken place the week before the interviews were conducted. Samuel suggests that the recent shift towards the DA is due to “African Africans” becoming educated, again enforcing a link between lack of education and the current political dispensation, or the current “tribal” politics. Oliver speaks of a further loss of agency even with the rising popularity of the DA, as he describes the African National Congress (ANC) accusing marches such as those held during the past week of being “racist.” Oliver says this with incredulity and frustration, as though even political protest has been taken away as a viable option for empowerment. These narratives demonstrate a sense of political disenfranchisement on the part of the white population and a loss of hope that the government will function properly, unless whites can be returned to some degree of power as implied by Henry.

Social disempowerment

Multiple participants discussed more limited social movement since the democratic transition, largely crediting a loss of safety and government encroachment on majority-white

spaces. The loss of social clubs, and specifically sports clubs, due to the fact that “they were largely white clubs” on council grounds came up in multiple instances. Whilst being interviewed at the bowling club, Henry even suggested that their club might be the next to go, as it was on council grounds and lacked a BEE policy. Oliver emphasized the importance of these clubs as social spaces for white men when he said, “If you don’t belong to a club like this, you’re dead and buried. Because you come here, and you, you, you’re socializing with your own people.” Oliver suggests that these clubs are some of the few social spaces left where white men can socialize with their “own people,” and therefore maintain a social environment in which whiteness is the norm. He takes the threat on this environment very seriously and suggests that without it, “you’re dead and buried.” This private, exclusive space has evidently become a crucial piece of his social life that he continues to cling to. Thomas expands the definition of these private spaces when he describes, “it’s more home parties and home braais, and that type of social things.” Home parties or home braais offer another exclusive social space in the sense that the hosts can choose who to invite, and an all-white environment can be maintained if the host chooses to do so.

Discussions of loss of safety served as further explanation for the participants’ need for these exclusive spaces, as participants described the perceived dangerousness of previously white public spaces. Thomas describes the apartheid days, saying, “I was free to walk from here, hitchhike, go to the beach, no problem. There is *no* way today you can do that. Not at all, no.” When asked why this was the case, Rodney responded that it was “Absolutely, terribly unsafe out there.” When discussing the safety that they used to feel in these spaces, the participants described the curfews that used to exist for black South Africans, implying that this was what primarily maintained their safety. Rodney describes, “They weren’t allowed. Because when the

hooter went off, there was a hooter that went off, at night, it was a hooter... That's right, and when the hooter went off, they were not allowed on the streets. You didn't see them." This reasoning implies that the ability of black South Africans to move freely in public spaces has led to this loss of safety. Thomas went on to say that not only were these spaces now unsafe, but they were also "just filthy" due to their integrated nature. He describes that "you don't go anywhere near" these spaces anymore, again emphasizing the encroachment of the 'other' on spaces that used to be white-dominated. In another conversation, Colin expanded upon the impact of safety on the ability of the white community to socialize when he says, "Yeah, you don't want to drive at night. Um, when we go out for supper we normally start at six, that's why we're leaving at half past seven." He describes how this threat of danger has had a concrete impact on his social functioning, as his social agency has been decreased by his fear of driving in the dark. The participants presented both physical danger and encroachment by the government as legitimate threats to their ability to socialize, given that they prefer to socialize in exclusively white social environments. By associating the introduction of people of color into public spaces with danger, the participants revealed their fear of black bodies as vehicles of violence.

On the defensive: Maintaining privilege through discourse

Glorifying and normalizing whiteness

Woven throughout the older participants' narratives of disempowerment were discourses that continued to privilege whiteness as the norm, and even as the superior race. These discourses also served to glorify apartheid South Africa with little to no acknowledgement of the majority of the country whom it affected negatively. While participants occasionally acknowledged the problematic nature of their statements, they attributed it to the fact that *they*

(black South Africans) made them respond that way with their behavior. Some of these privileging discourses were more overt than others, most notably those of Oliver, who was interviewed at the bowling club. Oliver repeatedly praised apartheid South Africa, making statements such as, “This the first time you’ve been here?... Ah, great pity, because you missed a brilliant country, trust me.” He went on to describe the “magnificent” South Africa of the past, explaining, “We lived in heaven here. This was the greatest country in the world. Without a doubt.” He extended his claim to say that even rural black South Africans had a better lifestyle in apartheid South Africa than they do today. He describes,

Yes, of course they used to get bashed a bit by the cops or whatever, but generally, those rural guys... I used to work with these black oaks, and when, after '94, and then three, four years after that the oaks would come and say to me, ey bossy, put the Nats back in power. Serious. I'm sorry bhuti (chuckles), you know?

Oliver not only minimizes the mistreatment of black South Africans under apartheid to getting “bashed a bit by the cops or whatever,” but also suggests that apartheid South Africa was so magnificent that even blacks today would prefer to have the National Party (“Nats”) in government. His use of the word “bossy” is significant, as this word represents the boss-worker dialectic that defined relationships between white employers and black employees during apartheid. In recalling this story, Oliver returns himself to a position of power, or a “bossy,” who knows best. In this way, his rhetoric imbues him with a sense of authority in the face of the disempowerment discussed above.

Other participants’ discourses were less overt, such as those that indirectly associated whiteness with being ‘normal’ and ‘behaving.’ African men’s alleged inability to achieve these

standards of normalcy and codes of conduct was given as the justification for some participants' overtly racist responses. When describing his neighbors, Oliver said:

I don't, I don't care who lives next door to me, they can be green, just act human, keep quiet, and carry on with your life. And I'll do exactly the same and everybody will be happy. I'll greet you, hello, how are you, blah, blah, blah, and that's me. They, they don't want that style. They don't want that lifestyle. They just don't want it. It's too white.

By demanding that his neighbors simply "act human," he equates human worth with the values that he later equates with a white lifestyle. Not wanting this white lifestyle therefore makes his neighbors less human. In this way, the statement privileges whiteness in the most basic sense, as a mark of humanness. He expands upon this sentiment when he calls people in the DA "normal human beings," equating his peers with normalcy, in this case in a political sense. This association between whiteness and normalcy also manifested in an emphasis on "behaving." When discussing non-white members of the bowling club, Oliver said, "When you come here, you abide by the rules, you act normally, and everybody accepts everybody else. Hundred percent." His notion of everyone accepting everyone else is contingent upon non-white people abiding by the rules, which require acting "normally." Despite his intention of implying that the club would welcome non-white members, he makes it clear that these members would only be allowed if they did not detract from the normalcy that defines the all-white space. This exact sentiment was repeated by participants in the focus group conducted at the bowling club, as they repeated that non-white membership at the club does not worry them, followed by "they just must behave." Thomas once again emphasized the rules of the club, rules that indirectly ensure that only "normal" non-white people who "behave" will be welcomed into the club. These discourses both privilege whiteness as normal and give power back to white men in determining

who can and cannot fit this mold. The existence of the bowling club itself is essential in imbuing them with this power, as its exclusivity is what lends these men agency in selecting its members.

Privileging whiteness also took the form of directly associating the decline of South Africa with other African countries, emphasizing the fact that apartheid South Africa was an anomaly in its allegedly proper functioning. Oliver once again said this the most overtly of all participants, saying, “I’m saying history will tell you there’s not a black country in Africa that runs efficiently. Not one. You cannot name one, I promise you now. Which ones did? Rhodesia, Ian Smith, South Africa.” Without mincing words, Oliver declares that the only functioning countries on the African continent were those run by white people. He therefore prizes colonization, and directly associates decline with the loss of white governance in these countries. This trope was repeated in the second focus group with Samuel stating, “it’s sad, but it’s a fact of life and we can only end up the same as Rhodesia eventually,” and Colin chiming in that South Africa will become “Zim’ by the sea.” The thought of being reduced to just another African country is “sad,” demonstrating the fact that these participants viewed apartheid South Africa as distinct from the rest of the African continent. By comparing the decline of Rhodesia with South Africa in terms of a similar loss of white control, these participants credit colonialism as a necessity for the efficient functioning of Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa.

The colonial narrative was further legitimated by Mark as he compared the colonization of the African continent with the colonization of European countries. When discussing the debate surrounding the merits and demerits of colonization, he said, “But then, UK was colonized! There was tribal warfare, Germany, Hungary, France, you know, it’s been there thousands of years, colonization. It’s always been there.” By comparing the colonization and “tribal warfare” of South Africa to the colonization of European countries, Mark suggests that these western

countries continue to be the standard against which South Africa should be measured. He normalizes colonization as he states, “it’s always been there,” simultaneously legitimating his own presence in South Africa as a white man. He goes on to describe the fact that the San and the Khoikhoi people are the only “true people” in the country, and puts the Africans who came to South Africa from Zambia on the same plane as the “witous” in terms of being non-original members of South African society. This discourse cements the idea that white men have as much of a place in South Africa as the African people who came from elsewhere on the continent, and downplays the destructive effects of the colonial project. While this discourse does not go as far as Oliver’s in terms of overtly declaring white men as superior in South African society, it still normalizes whiteness in an African context and legitimates the crushing effects of colonialism.

Emphasizing racial differences: Maintaining the ‘other’

In the process of normalizing and prizing whiteness, many participants went to great lengths to maintain a clear distinction between white and African people, some relying on more overt racism than others. Participants used a distinct ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy when describing the alleged fundamental differences between these race groups. Whilst describing the tendency for Africans to drop their trash on the ground rather than in dustbins on the beach, Thomas said, “They were brought up in the bush, they were brought up wild.” In reference to the beachfront, he goes on to say, “they go there in their taxis, they party, they’re filthy, they’re dirty... They urinate in the road...” In these alarmingly problematic statements, Thomas groups all non-white people into a collective “they,” and goes on to describe them as uncivilized and filthy. He leaves no room for exceptions, stating unequivocally that “they were brought up in the

bush,” an overtly dehumanizing racist trope. His statements imply that whites on the other hand are civilized and clean, recreating a racial hierarchy that places white men at the top. Rodney echoed his belief in this stereotype of African people being uncivilized and “savage” when he described watching two African women fight in the street as a child. He goes on to say, “They don’t, the rational person here would think about it. They don’t do that. They kill.” By describing what he calls savage or uncivilized behavior and placing it in direct opposition with “rational” people, Rodney reinforces a dichotomy between black and white, savage and civilized, and rational and irrational. The openness with which the participants declared these racist tropes may point to the exclusive space of the bowling club as a space in which certain discourses are privileged and de-problematized. Not surprisingly, Oliver also expressed his racism in an overt manner, saying, “As I said, there are good ones. There are (chuckles). You know, but they, you can count them on your hands,” and that he just “can’t tolerate them.” He once again lumps an entire race together as “them,” and goes as far as to say you can count the “good ones” on your hands. This overtly racist discourse again entirely dehumanizes African people, and suggests that they are intolerable to those who are white and therefore civilized. The participants evidently found power in these racist discourses, as they subjugated the entire African race as uncivilized, irrational, and intolerable, and distinguished the white race in the process. The prevalence and extremity of these racist tropes twenty-three years since the country’s transition demonstrate these participants’ continued need to dehumanize others in order to maintain a sort of ideological power. By dehumanizing people of color, the participants’ clung to the ideological superiority of the white race, arguably one of the last things they have left in the face of their sense of economic, political, and social disempowerment.

In addition to maintaining a distinction between races by using discourses of dehumanization, participants maintained that separation between races was natural. Colin described, “I think people just gravitate to their own kind, you know? You, you go into any group, and you’ll see all the blacks go together,” later adding that “I don’t think it’s got anything to do with apartheid or anything, it’s just natural, that you, you... Yeah, culture.” By deeming it “natural” for people to gravitate towards those of their own race, Colin normalizes separation between races as something inevitable. By stating that, “it’s got nothing to do with apartheid,” he implies that this separation would happen even without South Africa’s history of entrenched racial segregation. This shifts blame away from apartheid and towards human nature, rationalizing the fact that white people tend to remain distant from people of color. Samuel echoed this exact sentiment when he said, “Groups stick together, even though there’s no apartheid as such. Groups, ethnic groups still stick together.” Once again, apartheid is discredited as a cause of racial separation. In his interview, Oliver echoed these feelings in even more direct terms, saying, “I can tell you, I honestly believe, and I’m gonna say this, I don’t care, I don’t believe that black and white people are meant to live together. Serious to God.” His feelings that blacks and whites are fundamentally not meant to live together carry the same sentiment as Colin and Samuel’s statements, portraying racial separation in a positive light. By beginning his statement with “I’m gonna say this, I don’t care,” Oliver interestingly reveals his awareness that his belief may be problematic. However this does not stop him from espousing it, suggesting that despite his potential awareness of alternative discourses, his own personal beliefs have not changed since the apartheid era where living separately was law. These statements illustrate a belief that blacks and whites are too fundamentally different to live together or socialize together, and given the previous association between whiteness and humanness, suggest that

blacks and whites are meant to operate on two different planes of humanity. These discourses privileging separation rationalize the continued inhabitation of all-white spaces such as the bowling club and suggest that apartheid may have been acting upon preexisting differences.

This normalization of the separation between races extended to discussions regarding interracial couples. In reference to interracial couples, Samuel declared that “amongst themselves,” non-white people say that “ninety-nine, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, in long term, it doesn’t work.” By stating that interracial couples don’t work almost one hundred percent of the time, Samuel suggests that there is a fundamental incompatibility between people of different races. He takes this sentiment to the next level when he quotes an Indian man he knows saying, “A horse doesn’t mate with a cow. You know? And a zebra doesn’t mate with a lion.” Suggesting that two people of different races are akin to a horse and a cow or a zebra and a lion is not only biologically false, but also enforces the idea that these differences are inherent and insurmountable. Although interracial coupling and marriages are no longer illegal in South Africa, Samuel’s statements continue to suggest that there is something fundamentally wrong or unnatural about this intimate interaction between races. Discourses such as these serve to maintain an apartheid era understanding of race by suggesting that blacks and whites are biologically distinct, and their mixing is unnatural and impractical. By continuing to legitimize and privilege segregation, these participants continued to uphold the apartheid mindset that gave them complete power. These narratives of racial difference in tandem with discourses that privilege whiteness work together to maintain whites as a separate, superior population.

Privileging capitalistic masculinities

The majority of older participants utilized western capitalistic notions of production and worth to privilege forms of masculinities that were historically available only to white men. This theme emerged most often in reference to economic policies, which as discussed earlier, left participants feeling economically disempowered due to devaluing experience. Lack of production in the workplace was a primary concern amongst multiple participants, including Henry, Oliver, Samuel, and Colin, as the increase in black employment was associated with the decline of the economy as a whole. The frustration that the participants felt with this decrease in production illustrates the instrumentality of the ability to produce in their construction of their identities as men. By having to use their time in the workplace to teach new employees, the men felt stripped of their roles as facilitators of mass production.

Participants emphasized hard work and experience as key aspects of being successful producers and men, employing the narrative that one must work their way up the ladder to succeed. Colin describes this when he says, "If you look at all the successful companies there, they've got guys with gray hair like us, with forty to fifty years of experience. You can't just go to varisty and come in and think you can do that." Colin identifies a direct relationship between experience and success, scolding those who think they can take on high-level business roles directly out of university. An acknowledgement of the privilege that allowed him to have forty to fifty years of experience under his belt is noticeably absent. The ability to have this many years of experience is undeniably tied to whiteness, as apartheid policies restricted people of color to unskilled labor jobs, reserving skilled labor and management positions exclusively for whites. Samuel expands upon the importance of experience when he says, "You, you, you can't buy experience. Experience is by, by going up the ladder, one rung at a time, and as a position

becomes available above you, so you're structured into that position, until eventually you work your way to the top." This description once again does not reference the historical context that kept people of color from moving up the ladder for much of modern South African history. Due to this history, privileging experience continues to indirectly privilege white men and fails to take into account the complexity of the South African context. The participants' tendency to privilege discourses of business, experience, and hard work lend themselves to certain capitalistic forms of masculinities that privilege those who have experience, which in the South African context, often means those who are white. Joe, the study's one younger participant, reinforced the idealization of these masculinities in his father's generation when he says, "... My parents' generation's very like hard work and stuff. So, maybe it's shifted a bit from, you know, the hardworking, like, manly man, maybe that would be the ideal man back then." Joe reinforces the notion that the ideal man of his father's generation (which would be approximately the age of the older participants) values "hard work," and ties this into being defined as a "manly man." The maintenance of this form of masculinities as hegemonic in the post-apartheid era continues to privilege white men as those who were historically able to produce.

This emphasis on hard work also manifested in frustration with the current political dispensation. Rodney describes:

You see the biggest mistake they've made here, is when we got the new dispensation, they were promised everything for *free*. That was the promise of the ANC. Everything you're gonna have for free, so that, that's how they perceive all their lives now, it's for free. This is for free, that is for free, thing's don't come free. You must understand that. You've got to work for a living.

Rodney's evident frustration with the notion of being given things "for free" reinforces the importance he places on hard work as a means of being a successful man. His declaration that "things don't come free" echoes Samuel's emphasis on the importance of climbing the ladder to the top. His statement inherently privileges a type of masculinity built on hard work and devalues those who receive government assistance or enter high-level positions due to economic policies that encourage black empowerment. Once again, this perspective fails to take into account the historical economic disenfranchisement of black people that arguably creates a need to accelerate people of color into these positions. These policies' tendency to threaten the capitalistic values of working one's way up the ladder and rewarding production in turn threatens the way these white men construct their masculinities.

Subordinating alternative "black" masculinities

Along with espousing a view of capitalistic masculinities as hegemonic, many participants actively degraded masculinities of African men as lazy, unintelligent, and dangerous. These masculinities were posed as the antithesis of western capitalistic masculinities, further emphasizing the racial division between the black and white races. Oliver attributed quotas in sport to the fact that "they're not capable of doing it on their own," which he called "pathetic." He went on to say, in his usual overt fashion, "they're generally a lazy race... and... they just don't wanna work." The disparaging tone used while making this sweeping statement that defined the entire African race as "lazy" was indicative of his disdain for those who do not subscribe to the capitalistic masculinity described above. Tropes of this nature were some of the most common themes throughout the conversations with the older participants. Samuel expressed the same sentiment in different terms when saying that when black men work, "there's

no sense of urgency to the importance of their job.” This lack of urgency once again contradicts western capitalistic notions of efficiency, and is referred to critically. Rodney echoes this sentiment when discussing his profession as a carpenter, saying, “I will never use them on my site. Period. Because they’re just not quick enough, they don’t grasp it quick enough, and they can’t do what I can do quick enough, so that is a major problem.” The repeated nature of this trope of the African man lacking urgency demonstrated the level of frustration that it incited in the participants. Rodney calls it a “major problem,” and his declaration that he will never use them on his site demonstrates his concern with his own ability to produce.

Samuel also accuses African men of being unable to see long term, saying:

They don’t, they don’t, it’s in their culture or in their mind, and again, it’s difficult to talk without sounding racist, but they don’t wait for that cup to get half full and say look, it’s nearly finished. They wait for it to be completely empty and they say ok, well now it’s gone, now we better do something about it.

He follows this statement with a story of his “garden boy” waiting for the refuse bags to run out before asking him for more. By attributing this tendency to “their culture” or “their mind,” he suggests that this lack of foresight is inherent and generalizable to all African peoples. His acknowledgment that “it’s difficult to talk without sounding racist” implies his awareness of the fact that he is making unfair generalizations, however it does not stop him from stating it as an undeniable fact. This alleged lack of foresight once again does not fit into a business-oriented conceptualization of masculinity, marking it as inferior in the eyes of many of the participants.

Another theme that emerged in relation to constructions of black masculinities was the portrayal of black men as dangerous and inherently violent. Colin and Samuel traded stories of witnessing robberies and muggings, Samuel relaying a story saying, “At ten o’clock the other

morning, out at the Westville shopping mall, five of them walked in with guns and just took out a jewelry shop. Ten o'clock in the morning! In a shopping mall! They've done it here before, they, they do it all over. They have, they are so brazen, they don't care." Rather than speaking only about the five men who he witnessed conducting the robbery, Samuel generalizes the black 'they' as a whole, saying, "they do it all over" and "they are so brazen." His statement carries undertones of a lack of civility that reflects the racist tropes described earlier in the study. He later draws a connection between tribal warfare of the past and the alleged violent nature of black men today when he says:

But there used to be what we called faction fighting, between two tribes, like the Zulu versus the Pondo. Now the Pondo are down coastway, and they used to down there with their pangas and their shields and their spears, and they used to fight and kill each other left, right, and center. But it was called a faction fight. Over the years it's become more sophisticated, now they've got AK-47s (laughs).

By equating faction fighting of the past with gun warfare in the present, Samuel suggests that there is an underlying inherent violent nature in the African people that has adapted over time with the evolution of new technology. By attributing this violent nature to their African culture, Samuel once again creates a distinction between the civilized western influence and the violent or uncivilized African influence. All of these criticisms not only subjugate African men's expressions of masculinities, but also aim to lend legitimacy to the white capitalistic expressions of masculinities discussed earlier. This phenomenon reflects Epstein's (1998) point that dominant and subordinate discourses regarding masculinities are interdependent and critical in efforts to maintain power.

Contradictions

Close to home: Mixed race families

The participants' narratives included fascinating contradictions that illuminated the impending illegitimacy of many of their discourses in contemporary South Africa. This became most apparent when multiple participants mentioned non-white members of their own families. Mark discussed his adopted coloured daughter and grandson, Thomas mentioned his Indian daughter-in-law, Samuel brought up his adopted African grandchildren, and one participant's young coloured grandson was actually present at the table during the focus group conducted at the bowling club. The contrast between the dehumanizing rhetoric used by multiple participants and their simultaneous affection for the non-white members of their immediate families was jarring. There was an apparent disconnect between their generalizations about the black population as a whole and the way in which the men discussed their own family members. Some participants such as Mark seemed to distance their loved one's from their race as a whole, as he praised his grandson for not falling victim to the influences of his peers who committed "rapes" and other "things that go on in toilets." For Thomas, he declared that his son married an Indian woman "purely because at school, I would say eighty percent of his class were Muslims, they were Indians," indicating that his son's choice of wife was due "purely" to external factors, not necessarily due to his own agency. In both of these cases, Mark and Thomas continued to privilege their own loved ones above those of the same race or those who have made the same choices. In spite of this, these emerging narratives appeared to be challenging the participants' ability to insulate themselves in an all-white world, denting their claims of whiteness as the ultimate mark of normalcy and humanness.

Samuel attributes this newfound need to grapple with integration in an intimate way to the tolerance of youth today, who are more likely to marry non-white individuals and adopt non-white children. He describes, “And I think this is what, well you know is happening, is that there’s becoming more integration because of the, the children intermarrying, having interrelationships, so then the parents obviously get together more.” Samuel suggests that due to their children intermarrying, white parents are encouraged to face those of another race not just as people, but as family. The contradictory nature of the statements discussed in this section suggest that these members of the older generation are still working on their navigation of these situations as they come face to face with those whom they may overtly or covertly dehumanize in their everyday discourse. While many of these discourses prevailed in spite of the participants’ mixed race families, the indication that these men are being forced to grapple with the disconnect between their beliefs and their lived reality may be a step in the right direction.

Pride: “We’re Africans”

Despite their frustration and disillusionment with the economic, political, and social state of the country, many participants expressed a certain pride in being South African and celebrated the beauty of the country. Whilst participants such as Oliver only referred to the beauty or brilliance of South Africa in the context of the apartheid era, other participants such as Colin and Rodney celebrated the country in the present, calling it “beautiful” and “gorgeous.” Rodney continued to say “There’s, there’s no continent on this planet that’s got what we’ve got. I can assure you. Believe me. And we, and we, and call them whatever we like, we’re Africans. Born and bred here. Simple as that.” In contrast to his earlier statements expressing frustration with the country’s governance and transformation, he does not just declare that South Africa is a country

unlike any other, but celebrates the African *continent* as a whole, saying “there’s not continent on this planet that’s got what we’ve got.” This contradicts the participants’ earlier association of Africanness with the country’s decline that implied a desire to dissociate from Africa as a whole. He continues this contradiction when he says, “we’re Africans. Born and bred here. Simple as that.” His statement suggests that while he might feel frustration with many aspects of the country, the country and the continent are *theirs* as white men just as much as anyone else’s. This could be interpreted as carrying a defensive tone, once again serving to cement the rightful place of white men in African society. It could also be interpreted as an expression of determination in the face of his disempowerment, suggesting that he’s not ready to give up on South Africa just yet. This statement demonstrates a fascinating contradiction between claiming African identity whilst disparaging ‘traditional’ notions of Africanness. For Rodney, these discourses can exist simultaneously and demonstrate the complex nature of his navigation of his disempowerment.

The Future: A new generation, a new agency

By interviewing a member of the younger male generation, stark differences emerged between his worldview and those of the seven older participants who have been discussed thus far, most notably in his outlook on the future. Interviews with the seven older participants carried a tone of frustration and hopelessness, saliently demonstrated by Samuel’s declaration: “I’m glad I’m the age I am, because it’s not gonna get better.” He later says that he “used to be very optimistic,” but has now given up hope for the future of the country since “you’re not gonna fix it, I’m not gonna fix it, nobody’s gonna fix it.” Other participants expressed similar sentiments, many suggesting that they could see no solution in their lifetime and expressing complete

uncertainty regarding the future of the country. This rhetoric suggests a loss of agency amongst the older participants, as their narratives of disempowerment led them to see no option for influencing the country's transformation, and Samuel suggests that he will find solace only in death. Whilst their disempowerment has evidently led many participants to cling to discourses that prize whiteness and operating in majority-white spaces, their hopelessness suggests that these efforts are futile.

On the other hand, Joe, a self-employed isiZulu teacher, expressed an entirely different outlook on the apartheid era, the current government, and his agency as a young white male in South Africa. While noting that the legacy of apartheid continues to affect his life "in every way, really," most notably manifesting in his two distinct black and white friend groups, he expresses a desire to move forward, saying:

So I said, my generation, we're sort of in the mindset of just let's get over ourselves and just, um, sort of like not caring anymore about, um, racial issues and stuff. Like still able to talk about stuff and like bring it up without fighting, but just being like ok now, next step is now we're all in this life together, let's just, you know, run like... Get it to work and just be chilled about it.

His statement that "we're all in this life together" directly contradicts the discourses used by older participants to maintain racial distinctions in an attempt to elevate whiteness. While not caring about racial issues in any capacity could lead to a problematic colorblind mentality, his acknowledgement that youth should "still be able to talk about it" reflects a willingness to continue to grapple with the past to a certain degree.

When discussing the shifting image of the "ideal man" in South Africa, Joe suggests that men in his generation are "much more chilled and much more just, um, you know, focused on

living life well,” in contrast to his father’s generation who prized the “the hardworking, like, manly man.” His emphasis on the “chilled”-ness of men in his generation represents a shift away from the western capitalistic forms of masculinities discussed earlier. He suggests that living life well has become an indicator of men’s success, rather than one’s ability to produce. On a deeper level, this shift represents a relinquishment of western values as the standard against which men must be measured, and therefore the relinquishment of whiteness as superior.

When discussing politics, Joe emphasized the importance of strikes as a means of political empowerment for all citizens, both black and white. He expressed the belief that:

So I mean we really know that, you know, if something is not right we can fix it, so South Africans have a deep sense of power, you know, like coming through apartheid, we managed to change this government without a massive war, and so like, I really feel like we, we, as South Africans, we have a lot of power and say in what ultimately happens.

This statement represents the complete opposite sentiment of that expressed by the older men, suggesting that South Africans as a unified population ultimately have the power to control and fix what is not right in the country. This “deep sense of power” is a complete departure from the hopelessness expressed by the older participants, and suggests a new sense of agency amongst South African youth. Joe sums this up poignantly when he declares that as South African citizens, “we have all the power, really, it’s our freakin’ country, you know.” This renewed sense of agency goes hand in hand with his identification first and foremost as a South African, without distinguishing himself because of his race. While Joe only represents one voice in an entire generation, the stark difference between his interview and those of the other seven participants suggest that these discourses are undeniably shifting. His empowerment comes not from distinguishing himself as superior or more human, but rather from embracing the new

South Africa as a space in which all citizens have power. While this may be a rosy view, and the desire to erase race entirely from any society can be highly problematic, this new discourse certainly reflects some form of progress towards forms of whiteness and masculinities that are no longer defined by their separatism.

Conclusions

The participants' narratives demonstrated an overall loss of power as producers, political subjects, and social beings with agency. These narratives took multiple forms, with narratives of economic disempowerment centering primarily on economic policies and devaluation of experience, political disempowerment emphasizing dysfunction and "tribal" politics, and social disempowerment proclaiming a loss of safety and exclusively white spaces. Participants responded to this disempowerment with discourses that normalized whiteness and reinforced racial distinctions, associating the loss of white power in South Africa with decline. This subjugation of the African population also took the form of criticizing African masculinities that did not fit the western, capitalistic mold that the participants prized. The contradictions that emerged in these discourses suggested that participants are beginning to navigate personal situations that challenge their separatist worldview and create exceptions to their racial stereotypes. Joe's interview depicted a new generation of white men who no longer compare themselves to a western standard, and who possess a deep sense of political agency. These last two sections saliently illustrate the fluidity of the constructs of race and masculinities, providing hope for the construction of more inclusive masculinities such as Joe's.

This study succeeded in following the lead of other whiteness studies in rendering whiteness visible and critically interrogating its privilege. The study successfully interrogated how transformation has affected this privilege and the power dynamics at play in the construction of certain ideals of manliness and humanness. Some might say that the participants' sense of disempowerment is actually an indication of successful transformation, as their institutionalized privilege has in fact been taken from them, suggesting that their sense of hopelessness is simply the price that must be paid. These men's unwillingness to cooperate and

participate in the new integrated South Africa illustrates their belief that this transformation has excluded them completely. The question of what role white men should play in transformation (if any) is still a topic of great debate worldwide that lacks a definite answer. The seven older men interviewed in this study occupy a fascinating and unique position in the country's transformation, as their position as men who lived and worked in both an apartheid and post-apartheid era will only become more rare as time goes on and the born-free population grows. Whether these voices will be left in the past as nothing more than the grievances of bitter white men, or whether they will be viewed as lending insight into the responses of white men to racial justice initiatives will be up to South African researchers and society as a whole.

Recommendations for further study

This study only scratches the surface of the complex intersections of whiteness, masculinities, class, and space in the South Africa. While this study had the benefit of access to a bowling club, other majority-white spaces could be interrogated, as well as spaces in which integration has been normalized. Additionally, the stark contrast found by interviewing just one participant from a younger generation suggests that there is incredible potential for further comparative studies between these populations. While this study was only able to analyze the experiences of a small group of men due to time constraints, these conclusions and themes could be expanded upon greatly with more ample time and participants.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample informed consent form

SIT Study Abroad

a program of World Learning



CONSENT FORM

1. Brief description of the purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of white male South Africans since the country's social, political, and economic transformation in 1994.

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.
- 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.

Participant's name printed

Participant's signature and date

Interviewer's name printed

Interviewer's signature and date

Date

Student Signature

Appendix B: Sample interview questions

Introductory questions:

- What is your age?
- Where do you live?

Employment:

- Are you currently employed? If so, where do you work? What position do you hold?
- Were you employed prior to 1994? If so, where did you work? What position did you hold then?
- If your employment position has changed post-1994, please explain.
- Has your lifestyle improved, declined, or remained the same since 1994? Explain.
- Have the Affirmative Action and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) policies affected your employment opportunities in any way?

Transformation:

- Did the country's transition to democracy in 1994 affect any part of your life? Explain.
- Did the country's transition to democracy in 1994 affect your social life in any way? Explain.
- Tell me about your social life. Do you spend time in the same social spaces that you did prior to 1994?
- Have the responsibilities of men have changed since the transition to democracy? If yes, how so?
- Has the overall state of the country improved, declined, or remained the same since 1994?
- Are you satisfied with the present government? Explain.

Education:

- Did you attend high school? If so, where did you attend?
- Did you attend university? If so, where did you attend?
- What types of boys were considered masculine or powerful at your high school/university? Were you one of those boys?

Manhood

- Do born-free men differ from men who have lived during the apartheid era? If yes, how so?
- Has the advent of democracy affected your ability to be an "ideal" father, husband, and/or son?
- In your opinion, who represents a quintessential man? (Could be a film star, an athlete, etc.)
- Is it hard being a white man in South Africa today?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about being a white man in South Africa today?

Appendix C: Sample focus group transcript

(Excerpt from Focus Group A: April 11, 2017)

(I): Yeah so, do you find yourself in integrated spaces more often? Or pretty much in the same, in the same amount that you did before 1994?

(Thomas): It's very much integrated now.

(Rodney): Yeah!

(Thomas): Oh yeah, yeah, no when we used to go out in those days, it was just white.

(Rodney): There was no black people.

(Thomas): But they weren't allowed.

(I): Right.

(Rodney): They weren't allowed. Because when the hooter went off, there was a hooter that went off, at night, it was a hooter...

(Thomas): Right, right, that's what I said when they came with the (inaudible).

(Rodney): ... That's right, and when the hooter went off, they were not allowed on the streets.

(Thomas): They had to have a reason.

(Rodney): You didn't see them.

(Thomas): Yeah, but now, in those days we used to go to discos or socials and that was all white, white, white.

(Rodney): It was awesome!

(Thomas): You can't go anywhere today, really, to something like that, no, it will be totally integrated.

(Rodney): Yeah, oh yeah...

(Mark): And there's restaurants...

(Rodney): Everything!

(Mark): I don't think it worries any of us...

(Rodney): No, it doesn't worry us.

(Mark): They just must behave.

(Rodney): Exactly.

(Thomas): They, they, they like to dominate and, you know, the ones, and they're unruly, and it's, uh, yeah. So... it has changed in that respect, yeah.

(I): So do you find yourself gravitating towards spaces that aren't integrated?

(Thomas): It's more, it's more home parties and home braais, and that type of social things.

(Mark): Yeah.

(Thomas): That, so, you know, it's more things like...

(Mark): Or things like this.

(Rodney): That's right.

(Mark): Or clubs like this.

Appendix D: Participant biographies

Henry, 53, is a property developer for an oil company.

Oliver, 68, is retired, formerly owned an independent business, and formerly worked in a corporate company for over forty years.

Thomas, 65, is an area sales manager in the golf industry and formerly a road salesman.

Rodney, 63, is a self-employed carpenter.

Mark, 70, is a retired educator and vice principal.

Samuel, 81, is retired and formerly worked at his local council.

Colin, 66, is running a small software company and is in the semi-retirement stage.

Joe, 27, is a self-employed isiZulu language teacher.