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"Prescribed to Fuck Off": Examining the Role of Heterosexual White Men in South Africa from the Perspective of Seven Students at the University of Cape Town

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**“Prescribed to Fuck Off”:
Examining the Role of Heterosexual White Men
in South Africa from the Perspective
of Seven Students at the University of Cape Town**

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Abstract

Movements towards racial and gender equality in South Africa are experiencing growth because of the increasingly urgent need to rectify the inequalities of apartheid. These movements have destabilized notions of white hegemonic masculinity by creating a dissonance between the socially-constructed privileges that white men are entitled to and their perceived limited access to advancement. The primary responses to this “crisis” have materialized in the construction of male organizations aimed at either redeveloping masculinity or defending male privilege, as well as a desire to distance oneself from the stereotypical male identity. All reactions bear significant weight on the future of South Africa; the privileges that white men hold give them the power to advance or hamper movements towards equality.

My research examines the construction and development of masculinity and its relationship to these movements, as experienced by seven heterosexual white men at the University of Cape Town. I recruited participants via Tinder and collected data via semi-structured interviews. I provided my participants with an optional body map to assist their conceptualizations of both whiteness and masculinity.

All of my participants used personal narratives to distance themselves from the dominant discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Despite their recognition of privilege, my participants echoed the discourse of white male victimization, concentrating on institutionalized reverse discrimination and an exclusion from social justice movements. This exclusion demonstrates the discomfort that my participants have with their privileged positionality. Therefore, I conclude that the role of heterosexual white men lies in redefining white hegemonic masculinity.

KEYWORDS: hegemonic masculinity, whiteness, male victimization, racial equality, gender equality

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Introduction

A couple of months before arriving in South Africa, I read Jessa Crispin's *Why I Am Not a Feminist: A Feminist Manifesto* (2017). She emphasizes the need for feminism to explore its impact on all genders in order to ensure gender equality has a productive place in the future. She critiques a narrow approach to gender equality because it focuses on a few narratives surrounding gender equality instead of cultivating a holistic discourse. She believes that these "unaddressed causes will find new ways of manifesting themselves as problems. Pull up the dandelions all you want, but unless you dig up that whole goddam root, it's just going to keep showing back up" (Crispin, 2017, as cited in "Why I Am Not," 2018). The inclusion of men in a more holistic discourse surrounding gender equality, to me, had the potential to counteract the patriarchy from the inside, thereby making gender equality a realistic part of the near future.

However, with the start of my studies in South Africa, I realized that masculinity itself is more complex than my critiques gave it credit for. There were hierarchies within masculinity, which drew my attention to the insidious supremacy of whiteness. I began to understand how closely connected both race and gender were; white masculinity existed as normative, while my whiteness enables me to have a large voice within feminist discourse. Recognizing the privilege that white men hold by nature of their race and gender, I focused this project on the relationship between heterosexual white male students at the University of Cape Town and their engagement in movements towards racial and gender equality. The objectives of this paper are to develop an understanding of my participants' socialization towards hegemonic masculinity, how they have been impacted by increasingly urgent movements towards racial and gender

equality, and what they perceive their role should be in the creation of a more equitable South Africa.

The rest of this paper is broken up into sections. The first is a literature review where I discuss the supremacy of whiteness and its relationship to gender, the construction of hegemonic masculinity, the self-declared “crisis” of white masculinity in South Africa and some of its responses, and the benefits and harms of including white men in movements towards equality. The subsequent section is a Methodology section, which explains how I conducted my research and the potential impact of my own positionality on the findings and analysis. The third section is a report of the findings and my analysis of them. The following section is a conclusion and then a Bibliography that lists the sources I used in my research. The final section is an Appendix which contains the consent form provided to each of my participants and the interview questions I used.

A practical limitation to this study was time; I only had a month to conduct my research and compile it into this project. Because of this, I was only able to interview seven participants from the University of Cape Town. In addition, I conducted my interviews during finals week at the University of Cape Town, which limited the time my participants were willing and able to share with me. However, because I used Tinder as a means of recruiting participants, I was able to find my participants quickly and have flexibility in scheduling them. My participants and I had great conversations despite this limited time. The rest of the limitations of this study will be discussed in the Methodology section.

Literature Review

Whiteness in South Africa

The legacy of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid in South Africa is omnipresent in the socioeconomic and political structures of the country which were, and continue to be, embedded with white supremacy. Present-day South Africa continues to value the racial identities of individuals, particularly as a result continued legacy of the apartheid system (Verwey and Quayle, 2012; Steyn 2001; Leonardo, 2013). White South Africans constructed this system which allowed them to hold on to “assumptions of racial and cultural superiority, of entitlement of political control and land ownership, and of the right to benefit from their access to the world capitalist system at the expense of an exploited, subjugated non-white majority” (Steyn, 2001, p. xxiii). While these formal structures of segregation and supremacy were symbolically cast away with the end of apartheid in 1994, their histories continue, particularly because the creation of a new democracy was constructed on an incredibly unequal ground (Verwey and Quayle, 2012). Because these structures were not cast aside, but rather were forced to adapt and include people of color, they continue to benefit white people who stand on a long history of economic and political control (Leonardo, 2013). As a result, the political and economic advantages in society are held by white South Africans, both English and Afrikaner (Verwey and Quayle, 2012; Steyn, 2001; Leonardo, 2013). These advantages have socialized white people, specifically white South Africans, into believing that they are entitled to privileges (Leonardo, 2013).

The privileges associated with whiteness were institutionalized so much so that white people were able to ignore their own racial identities and adopt

colorblind ideologies (Steyn, 2001 and Leonardo, 2013). Increasing studies of whiteness, particularly in the wake of apartheid, attempt to “expose the constructions emanating from positions of domination, constructions which by their nature attempt to elude detection” (Steyn, 2001, p. xxviii). In effect, studies of whiteness have attempted to draw attention to the ways in which white privileges are granted. The increasing recognition of not just racial subordination and discrimination but racial privilege is forcing South Africa to currently engage “in one of the most profound collective psychological adjustments happening in the contemporary world” (Steyn, 2001, p. xxi). This is noted in the way in which whiteness is studied; it has become the “work of a critical scholar to make sense of it [whiteness]” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 139). Because the conception of whiteness is so incredibly new to white South Africans, the focus of whiteness studies is merely on bringing whiteness to light. This recognition of whiteness, particularly of its extensive power and privilege, has made it clear that moving forward in South Africa is not possible unless the power relations rooted in race are addressed (Steyn, 2001).

Whiteness as it Relates to Gender

However, conversations regarding whiteness in South Africa must also include the constructs of gender and sexuality. Because the history of apartheid placed so much value on visible markers of identity, the “separation of the racialized self from the gendered and sexualized self would be impossible” (Epstein, 1998, p. 52). Specifically, in regard to South African masculinities, the legacy of racial identifications and inequalities are embedded in the development of masculinities and impact the subsequent allocation of masculine privileges (Epstein, 1998 and Morrell, 2002). For example, there is “considerable evidence

that white pain is viscerally linked to white male identity as a subjective experience and socially constructed ideology” (Gresson III, 2004, p. 25). This proves that more so than the “possession of the penis,” the construction of the male gender unfolds from a combination of relationships with women, as well as with other men (Ratele, 2013, p. 145). These relationships, and their associated practices, construct masculinities and dictate how men navigate and identify (Ratele, 2013). Masculinities, since they are reliant on practices and relationships, are fluid, unique, and pluralistic (Walker, Reid, Cornell, 2004; Ratele, 2013; De Abreu, 2016; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Essentially, masculinities are performances that are closely related to other social constructions, such as race, and their development (Epstein, 1998).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Therefore, the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid in South Africa are reflected in a hierarchical understanding of masculinities. This developed through the simultaneous destruction of black masculinity and values and an assertion of Western, white masculinity which occurred because of colonialism (Lynch, 2010). This white masculinity was established as hegemonic because it was imposed as normal; it “embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it,” because it demanded cultural dominance (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). This masculinity was associated with “assertive heterosexuality, control of economic decisions within (and outside) the home, political authority, cultural ascendancy, and support for male promiscuity,” as well as cultural traditions from boyhood to manhood (Lynch, 2010, p. 16 and Walker, et al., 2004). It was emphasized both through men’s relations to women, and therefore

heteronormative standards, as well as white men's relations to other men of color (Lynch, 2010 and Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). It is important to note that hegemonic masculinity is established as an imagined desire and goal, though many men do not have access to the political and socioeconomic means needed to achieve the standards set by hegemonic masculinity (De Abreu, 2016). Despite the racial and gender equality that was promoted with the end of apartheid and the development of a new constitution, "the new policies and laws have not overthrown patriarchy or removed men from their domination of public life, politics, and earnings" (Morrell, 2002, p. 2).

Self-Declared 'Crisis' of White Masculinity

With the end of apartheid in 1994 came efforts by the South African government to develop methods of redressing the history of discrimination, particularly in terms of employment, education, and economic standing, facilitated by colonialism and apartheid (Horwitz and Jain, 2011). The government, in the wake of apartheid, developed both the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003, both of which attempted to counteract discrimination via "pro-active recruitment selection, training and promotion of the historically disadvantaged individuals," in addition to accommodating different cultures and traditions within the workplace (Horwitz and Jain, 2011, p. 300). The combination of the two acts intended to both fix workplace practices which have historically benefited white men, while boosting the skilled labor of black South Africans (Horwitz and Jain, 2011). These efforts have been slow-moving as they are operating under the hands of institutions.

Many South Africans are becoming increasingly frustrated with the slow-moving institutional efforts towards equality. As equality becomes increasingly urgent, more movements have been sparked across South Africa. Particularly relevant to this project are the movements on campus at the University of Cape Town. In addition to #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, which were aimed at dismantling institutionalized racism and inequality the “Disrupting Whiteness” movement has sponsored “a demographic ‘transformation,’ which is described as ‘necessary as a corrective action in respect of past injustices’” (Goldenberg, 2015). This movement sponsors smaller events aimed at raising consciousness regarding whiteness on campus, in addition to supporting the University’s efforts to improve their student equity profile by considering race as a part of the application process (Goldenberg, 2015).

Because historical oppression and inequality has granted immense power and privilege to white men, especially heterosexual white men, it is very easy for white men to view gender and racial equality as their own personal loss (Dworkin, Colvin, Hatcher, Peacock., 2012). Many of the efforts aimed at facilitating equality- both racial and gender- are working against the dominating status of white men in business, financial earnings, and professional careers (Morrell, 2002). However, for young, white men- particularly those not yet in the workforce- this is perceived by young white men as particularly hard. These movements in higher education, combined with those found in employment, often cause a “white fear of displacement,” especially among young white males who are accustomed to be in positions of power (Horwitz and Jain, 2011, p. 313). Though they recognize the ways in which apartheid has precipitated economic inequality and the need to correct this inequality, they do not place themselves at

fault for this inequality because of their age (Gresson III, 2004). Young white men perceive themselves to be faced with high levels of unemployment and limited access to advancement because of affirmative action (Morrell, 2002). This fear is strengthened because of how unknown it is to white men; without a conception of the end goal of these initiatives, “this affirmative action is ‘confusing’ for white men” (Gresson III, 2004, p. 18). The psychological dissonance of young, white men occurs when those continuously socialized towards entitlement—both by whiteness and by the patriarchy—are continuously met with unemployment and fewer institutionalized privileges (Walker, 2005). This hits particularly hard because ideals set by hegemonic masculinity are heavily reliant on stable economic conditions (De Abreu, 2016).

These increasing challenges to whiteness and its associated masculinity have precipitated a “crisis in/of masculinity” which refers to the “responses of men to rapidly changing work and family arrangements in a ‘modern’ and ‘modernizing’ world” (Dube, 2015, p. 73). Though the term was developed in an American context, it can be applied to South Africa as well due to their similar histories of colonialism and institutionalized white patriarchy. Its origin in South Africa began with the transition to democracy, particularly with “the collapse of traditional men's work...the rise of feminist consciousness amongst women,” (Frosh, et al., 2002, as cited in Walker, 2005, p. 226). Coupled with the collapse of men’s work came a perceived collapse of white male accessibility to higher education and employment, as a result of affirmative action policies, workplace quotas, and support of black South African workplace skill development (Horwitz and Jain, 2011). Essentially, with the era of political freedom came efforts towards sexual liberation and black empowerment (Walker, 2005).

These efforts towards equality often include critiques of hegemonic masculinity for its roots in authoritarianism, aggression, and dominance which are an “anathema to the ‘gender equality’ prescribed by the Constitution and the battery of policies and laws, which have been written in its wake” (Walker, 2005, p. 227). Arguably, because of the Constitution’s promotion of equality regardless of identifying factor, the same efforts towards equality can see whiteness and its supremacy as oppositional to the new democracy of South Africa. However, both hegemonic masculinity and whiteness have not undergone stable, concrete developments into new forms of both masculinity and whiteness (Dworkin, et al., 2012 and Verwey and Quayle, 2012). Therefore, though many modern white men agree in principle with gender equality, the impact of the practical claim to equal rights have left white men feeling confused, uncertain, and even threatened, particularly because the rights seem to be promoted at the expense of white men (Dworkin, et al., 2012; Morrell, 2002; Walker, 2005). The majority of white men are not against women or gender equality, but they are against the change to the status quo which leaves them in an uncertain social standing (Morrell, 2002 and Walker, 2005).

Responses to the Crisis

Responses have varied among the population of white men, but some trends have been noted by the study of white hegemonic masculinity. One of the most organized responses is the development of male organizations which focus on “changing men’s behavior rather than identifying men as ‘the problem’” (Morrell, 2002, p. 26). These movements are important progress as they demonstrate that men are attempting to engage in gender transformation. However, there are often two kinds of groups which emerge: the first attempts to

redevelop masculinity while the second attempts to defend male privilege, often trying to limit female empowerment or claim male victimization (Morrell, 2002). While the former of the groups are comprised of queer men, these latter groups are comprised of “primarily, white, middle class, and heterosexist” (Morrell, 2002, p. 13). The latter builds off of feelings of disempowerment and often results in a new form of “hypermasculinity”, characterized by more violence and more sexual aggression (Dworkin, et al., 2012, p. 100). This connection demonstrates that white males feel threatened and when those fears are not mitigated or assuaged, dangerous reactions are possible (Gresson III, 2004).

Another common response to efforts towards equality, particularly among more progressive white men, is a recognition of privilege, without efforts to sacrifice its benefits. Because white men are often able to ignore their white male privilege because it is normalized and hegemonic, it is considered progressive to simply draw attention to these privileges and break their normative status (Leonardo, 2013). These often occur in progressive men’s movements, which are microcosmic, “consciousness raising sessions” that are “normally tackled in the privacy and safety of suburban houses in the company of like-minded, racially similar men” (Morrell, 2002, p. 17-18). Often, the conversations outwardly reject colonialism, apartheid, and overt racism, but fail to effectively reflect on “apartheid, its effects, or ongoing justice related to the previous centuries of white rule” (Verwey and Quayle, 2012, p. 568). The focus is less on vast social change, but more on “personalistic concerns over how they are perceived as individuals,” through which white men attempt to construct an individualistic narrative that separates them from the discourse surrounding hegemonic masculinity (Leonardo, 2013, p. 140 and Walker, 2005).

In this regard, efforts are made to “create the ‘racist’ as always other, the self being an exception” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 144). Rather than gauging progressivity and liberalism by efforts to create a more equal society, it is gauged by a comparison to “this outdated caricature” (Verwey and Quayle, 2012, p. 561). This sense of removal allows a white man to perceive himself as “‘better than’ the stereotype he is condemning,” though he still benefits from privileges associated with whiteness and male privilege (Verwey and Quayle, 2012, p. 566). Therefore, the effort is less on understanding structures of racism and sexism and more on ensuring one is not perceived as racist or sexist (Leonardo, 2013; Steyn, 2001; Verwey and Quayle, 2012). The phenomenon therefore results in white men creating distance from discourses surrounding hegemonic masculinity, rather than attempting to dismantle the discourse. This complicates the issue further, by making thoughts surrounding white and male privilege “disembodied, omnipresent but belonging to no one” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 143). This demonstrates the conflict between a white man’s desire for justice and equality and his unwillingness to give up the practical benefits reaped by the position of power and privilege (Leonardo, 2013).

Advantages of the Inclusion of White Men

In South Africa, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was the impetus for the inclusion of men in movements towards gender equality, particularly because the spread of the disease via heterosexual made men a contributor to its spread (Morrell, 2002). These movements attempted to explore the political, social, and economic forces that shape the epidemic and contribute to its spread (Mindry, 2010). However, global discourses of feminism, which have been indoctrinated by the history of colonialism, have “focused specifically on black men by distancing

themselves from social problems by situating them within Black communities” (Lynch, 2010, p. 15). This enables critiques of the negative aspects of masculinity to become conflated with “black hegemonic masculinity,” which is characterized by violent and aggressive stereotypes that were historically attributed to black people (Dube, 2015, p. 73). This has the effect of allowing white men, particularly those of the upper or middle class, to exclude themselves from the epidemic and the social problems which contribute to it (Morrell, 2002). This divides men’s approaches to social justice, particularly gender equality, while creating larger racial divisions (Morrell, 2002 and Dworkin, et al., 2012).

The discourse surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as a microcosm of larger efforts towards gender equality, demonstrates the necessity for a specific focus on hegemonic white masculinity, particularly because it fails to hold white men accountable for their masculinities and their potential expressions via sexism, racism, and homophobia (Dube, 2015 and Epstein, 1998). It precisely because white men “arguably possess the strongest form of investment” that they are needed as a part of the conversation (Leonardo, 2013, p. 143). Arguably, white men have suffered more of a perceived loss in society, on both the racial and gender fronts, yet there are very few studies examining white masculinity (Dube, 2015). When men exist on the sidelines of these conversations, their very large stakes in organizations as a result of their power and privilege fail to get mobilized towards equality (Sherf and Tangirala, 2017). This places a larger burden on women to “even the score or catch up with men,” rather than attempting to “undermine the more oppressive aspects of our gender politics towards transformation” (Oyegun, 1998, p. 21). By developing gender and racial transformation discourses to include the narratives of white men, and thereby

address more gender constructions, it will hopefully foster accountability and equip men “with a healthy sense of responsibility for gender norm transformation” (Dube, 2015, p. 83; Oyegun, 1998; Morrell, 2005). The inclusion of men, specifically white men, can assist in identifying forces that contribute to the construction of hegemonic masculinities in order to counteract the forces. This responsibility is particularly important, especially since “many people of color have shown their inability to perform critical analyses of the causes of their own oppression” (Leonardo, 2013, p. 141). This focuses on transforming all genders and races, rather than focusing on empowering other genders and races to catch up with the progress of cis-gendered, white men. In addition, it attempts to alleviate the responsibility for equality that falls on people of color and women.

Not only would the engagement of white men be beneficial for women and people of color, it would be beneficial for white men’s understanding of their own identity. The reality is that “denial and regression continue to compromise the transformative possibilities of the nation,” particularly because this denial is channeled by those in power (Gresson III, 2004, p. 21). By providing and engaging in spaces where men are grappling with their own gender identities, it facilitates a spark to “begin to dismantle their gendering and to consider different behavior choice,” hopefully contributing to a reconstructed masculinity (Oyegun, 1998, p. 17). This would hopefully facilitate white men seeing beyond their perceived “victimization” and focusing instead on their own positionality in relation to the social needs of their surrounding society (Dube, 2015, p. 85). However, it is dangerous to fight for a larger voice for cisgender white men in conversations surrounding gender and racial equality, especially because spaces have historically been constructed for the comfort of white men.

Methodology

My research explores the relationship between seven heterosexual white male students at the University of Cape Town and their commitment to movements aimed at racial and gender equality. I chose to study this population because their identifying factors align most closely with the stereotypical characteristics enforced by hegemonic masculinity (Lynch, 2010). In addition, they most likely have had exposure to efforts to decolonize the University of Cape Town and promote racial and gender equality in both education and employment (Goldenberg, 2015). This project explores experiences with the socialization towards hegemonic masculinity, how masculinities have been impacted by social movements, and what the role of white men is in the creation of a more just South Africa. I interviewed a total of seven male students at the University of Cape Town in a total of six interviews. In addition, I spoke to one middle-aged white South African man—Participant 8—who provided the title of this research project. Each required one meeting between 45 minutes to two hours. Five of these interviews occurred on campus at the University of Cape Town and two occurred in a local coffee shop.

I chose to use semi-structured interviews in order to conduct this research because it allows me, as the researcher, to focus questions around the themes I wish to explore while allowing for an open ability to change these questions based on the experiences of my participants (Kvale, 1996). Though I formulated some necessary introducing questions, as seen in Appendix B, I also prepared various follow-up, probing, and interpreting questions in order to develop the clearest picture of my participant's experiences (Kvale, 1996). I did much of the research present in my literature review prior to constructing questions in an

attempt to have some context surrounding white masculinity in South Africa (Kvale, 1996). This information guided my interview questions and its direction, as I was attempting to see what was missing in the discussion of white masculinity in South Africa (Glesne, 2006). Because positions of privilege, such as whiteness and masculinity, are often able to be ignored due to their positions as normative, or hegemonic, I wanted to prepare for the potential that my participants would struggle to conceptualize their experiences. Therefore, I provided my participants a small outline of a body and allowed them to draw or write on it however they saw fit (Roberts, 2005). For some of my participants, this helped them conceptualize their bodies and its characteristics, as well as find some grounding for new and complex thoughts (Roberts, 2005). Others had no interest using the body outline because they had spent a lot of time thinking and discussing their position in society.

I set up a Tinder profile in order to find white, heterosexual male students at the University of Cape Town. Though I have not been able to find any research projects that have used Tinder to find participants, the idea had been planted in my head by the large quantity of studies surrounding how Tinder has impacted hookup culture and gender relations. I decided to use Tinder in order to find participants because I did not know any heterosexual white male students at the University of Cape Town. In addition, using my positionality as a heterosexual woman, it was an easy way for me to begin to contact white heterosexual men. I was able to weed through potential participants to swipe on those who met the criteria of my study, especially since my study require homogenous sampling (Glesne, 2006). In addition, it gave my participants the agency to swipe on my profile if they were interested in the research project. Once the profiles were a

match, I explained the parameters of my research project via Tinder message and established contact information and a meeting time with my participants. I made sure my participants understood the nature of the meeting, as well as the fact that it would only require a one-time meeting. This bears the potential to skew my pool of participants, particularly because I was only studying single white men interested in women, as well as those who were eager and willing to engage in a research project about their own masculinities.

A practical limitation of this study was time. I only had 4 weeks to complete this project, beginning with creating my Tinder profile and ending with the production of this paper. As a result, the data compiled represents the experiences of a small number of participants- mainly those that responded to me quickest. These interviews were conducted during finals week at the University of Cape Town, which limited the availability of my participants. In addition, the studies were conducted in a public space near or on the university's campus which may have impacted my participants' willingness to share their personal narratives and experiences. Another practical limitation of the study is my pool of participants; because I was using Tinder as a means to recruit participants, my sample pool was already limited to single individuals looking to socialize with women. In addition, because I was meeting my participants on Tinder, our relationship may be impacted by the implicit expectation associated with meeting someone on a dating app. In order to ensure my safety, as well as the comfort of my participants, I let them pick a public meeting space to conduct the interview. This potentially could limit the parameters of the research because it was limited to how much my participants were willing to share in a public space, but I believe it maintained the formality of the research, as opposed to a Tinder date.

Ethical Reflexivity

I took a number of steps to ensure the privacy, comfort, and safety of my participants. I received both written and verbal consent from each of my participants— six gave consent prior to the interview, though one gave consent after. The written consent form, as seen in Appendix A, informed my participants of the focus of the study, how the data would be used, and the steps that I would take to ensure their privacy. I received consent to audio-record during each of my interviews. These would be kept on my password protected iPhone and deleted after the completion of the Independent Study Project. In addition, I ensured my participants that I would do my best to keep all identifying information, beyond their identity as a heterosexual white male student at the University of Cape Town. However, despite this attempt at anonymity, I established that some parts of the interview could be very personal based on their experiences. I did my best to ensure that my participants understood that they have the agency to decide as much or as little as they feel comfortable with, especially because it is hard to maintain anonymity of experiences (Kvale, 1996). The consent form included my information and I encouraged my participants to reach out if they had additional information or if they wanted to withdraw without penalty at any time. I also offered each of my participants a coffee/tea if we met in a location with that as an option in order to express my gratitude.

In addition, there is the possibility that my positionality as a white heterosexual American woman impacts the findings and analysis of my study. My motivation for conducting this research stems from my interest in feminism and my desire to understand how whiteness and masculinity play a role in equality. I want to understand intersectional approaches to movements towards

gender and racial equality, particularly how to operate within these movements without perpetrating the very power dynamics they seek to eliminate. This is guided by an interest in structures of power and those who operate within them. I understand that this preconception assumes that my participants have benefited from this power and privilege, without allowing much room for their individual experiences. Due to the difference in gender between my participants and myself, I cannot understand or relate to my participants' thoughts regarding masculinity. While this is positive because I can enter the research with the intention to learn, rather than to compare, it can allow my preconceptions to dominate the direction of the study. While I come into these interviews with a limited, and purely academic, understanding of masculinity, I also have experiences being white. Though my gender identity makes me hyperaware of gender dynamics, my racial identity has been constructed as hegemonic and has allowed me to reap many of the privileges discussed in this paper. Though I am attempting to be conscious of whiteness as well, there is a potential for the analysis of this paper to be hypercritical of sexism, while missing some implicit racism.

Because my interviews span a number of participants with different experiences, ideologies, and political beliefs, there is a potential for me to hear statements that I would consider to be problematic. This may materialize in my analysis of my participants' responses, which is why it is so important to understand that my position as a white American woman impacts my perception of the data. I incorporated the use of semi-structured interviews in order to allow these statements to spark conversation by allowing me to probe and attempt to consider where these statements are coming from, rather than immediately demonizing them.

I hope that because of these questions and conversations, my participants will think about their own identities and how they choose to acknowledge them. A potential risk of this study involves the understanding that an individual's masculinity can be closely tied to personal and intimate information. I intend to minimize this burden on my participants by stressing that they can share as much or as little about their personal life as they would like. Though I am asking for my participants' time and energy, I hope that this research will benefit my participants by allowing them a platform to acknowledge the complexities of white masculinity in South Africa. In addition, I will offer them a coffee/tea if that is feasible at our meeting place and work with their schedule to minimize my intrusion.

For these reasons, I found semi-structured interviews, with the option of drawing on a body map, to be the best methodology for my research because it allows my participants to conceptualize and consider their own masculinities. In addition, it allows my participants to guide the conversation, contributing to a more authentic conversation that is not rooted in my perspective. In addition, I am conscious that this project provides a limited understanding of the role of heterosexual white men in South Africa from the perspective of seven students, and is therefore not representative of the whole population.

Findings & Analysis

I interviewed seven white heterosexual male students at the University of Cape Town over the course of one week. I found these participants via Tinder and met with them either on campus or at a local coffee shop, depending on their availability and residence. All seven participants are undergraduate students at the University of Cape Town, though they have various ages, focuses of study, and places of birth. All seven are South African but have lived in Cape Town for various lengths of time. Participants 3, 4, and 7 self-identify as progressive, while the other four did not explicitly share their political ideologies.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Participants 3, 4, and 7 were familiar with the concept of hegemonic masculinity and established it as the normative, often desired, standard of being a man using descriptive words such as, “provider, masculine, and able to support, stand up, doesn’t cry” (Participant 3, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participants 1, 2, 5, and 6 were not familiar with the concept of hegemonic masculinity but agreed with the definition found in academic literature, which is characterized by political control, good economic standing, heterosexuality, an active sex life, and a lack of emotions. This characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are entrenched in traditional structures and institutions that expect if “you’re white, you’re middle class—you will do x, you will do y, you will do z” (Participant 5, personal communication, November 7, 2018). Participant 6 specified this to the “expectation that you’re straight, that you’re going to be on the grindstone, you’re going to try to make money, you’re going to try to get girls” (personal communication, November 14, 2018). Because of this, according to Participants 3, 5, and 7, hegemonic masculinity is associated with heterosexual

relationships. Participants 5, 6, and 7 explain that masculine status is tied to girls because “a man gets a girl, so you must be a brilliant man if you can get a brilliant girl” (Participant 5, personal communication, November 7, 2018).

All seven participants acknowledge that because the accomplishment of these expectations is tied to status, hegemonic masculinity is characterized by competition, success, self-sufficiency, and independence. According to Participant 7, much of masculinity is tied how men are regarded by others, essentially a “whose dick is bigger conversation,” which values competition, strength, and invincibility (personal communication, November 14, 2018). Participants 4, 5, and 6 felt as if status in high school, particularly in all male high schools, was closely tied to physical ability, height, and athleticism. All seven participants translated this into a pressure to play sports, particularly rugby; Participants 4, 5, 6, and 7 were required to play sports in high school. Participant 7 stressed that though extracurricular activities— rather than sports— were required by the school, boys almost exclusively chose to play sports, even when given options otherwise. They explained that those playing on the highest tiers, especially with rugby, were the popular guys because their size demanded respect. In university, my participants encounter these characteristics in car races, excessive drinking, and the pressure to become independent. Participant 1 established that his first perception being a man was when he proved “I could take care of myself. I didn’t have to rely on others for my own life” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participants 6 and 7 found these expectations translating into a high percentage of men in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Participant 7’s experience is underpinned by the notion that he is “doing this degree so I can make money so I

can one day provide for my family” (personal communication, November 14, 2018).

My participants demonstrate how the roles of the breadwinner, the head of the household, and a leader in the community, established as hegemonic by Western colonialism, continue to materialize in characteristics such as self-reliance, economic independence, and decisiveness (Jeftha, 2006). This demonstrates how the social status of hegemonic masculinity requires economic status and independence as well. Among younger men, these characteristics are concentrated in sexual promiscuity, car races, sports, and drinking competitions, as noted by my participants. Sports, in particular, are a way through which hegemonic masculinity contributes to identity formation and is subsequently performed through “connotations of strength, power, muscularity, and fearlessness,” as well as force and competition (De Abreu, 2016, p. 23; Burnett, 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is therefore associated with a fit body, physical aggression, tolerance for pain, risky behaviors, sexual activity, and independence (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005 and Burnett, 2001).

Personal Narratives in Relation to the Dominant Discourse

Participants 3, 4, and 7, when I asked about their first experiences as men, told me that they could not conceptualize these moments because they do not identify with hegemonic masculinity and its characteristics. Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5 could not think of any circumstances in which their masculinities may have been problematic for those around them. Participants 3, 4, and 5, when asked, claimed that their masculinities were not problematic for others because they did not feel as if they forced themselves on others. My participants stressed that this

kind of masculinity is typically found amongst “fuckboys,” jocks, all-boys schools, and older generations (Participant 4, personal communication, November 7, 2018). They provided examples of more highly problematic ways to wield masculinity: Participant 3 critiqued conservative students at Stellenbosch University, Participant 4 gave examples of violent catcalling, and Participant 5 explained that “if you are a lesbian female, you are raped by a man in the black townships” (personal communication, November 7, 2018). Participant 7 claimed that “in order for it [masculinity] to be problematic to others, I would have needed to demonstrate it or use it in a way that I don’t believe,” providing examples such as mansplaining (personal communication, November 14, 2018).

Participants 5 and 6 distanced themselves from the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity by focusing on an identifying factor that diverges from the stereotype. Participant 5 explained that his disability separates him from the stereotypical “evil white man,” while Participant 6 believed his comfort with demonstrating his emotions mitigated the toxic characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (personal communication, November 7, 2018). Participants 3 and 4, who described themselves as progressive, often referred to heterosexual white men as “they,” despite their shared identity. Participant 4 commented that “**they** [heterosexual white men] are reluctant to let go of a position of power and privilege” (personal communication, November 7, 2018). He goes so far as to check off “other” when asked his gender because he does not want to align himself with the stereotypical masculinity.

Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 noted that they felt separated from social issues central to movements towards gender equality, namely the HIV/AIDS

epidemic. They comment that they are taught about the infection with the discourse that “you get it from drugs, you get it from sex, and you get it from prostitution” (Participant 3, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participant 5 commented that the only white person he knows with HIV/AIDS as someone who “screws whores,” and often went into townships to do so (personal communication, November 7, 2018). All seven participants echo that the discourse of gender equality surrounding the epidemic attempts to counteract sexual promiscuity, sexual aggression, and a lack of sexual education, particularly condom usage. Therefore, though all seven participants agree that realistically, they can acquire the infection, they feel a sense of separation from it because they are not included in its discourse. Participant 3 explained that “it’s not something I completely ignore but I’m very aware of it, you know, like I don’t want it,” which was a sentiment shared by the other six participants (personal communication, November 6, 2018). However, none of my participants could explain where the sexual education resources were located on campus.

The assertion of personal narratives, particularly when a dominant discourse like hegemonic masculinity is being critiqued, has been a large trend noted by social justice movements over social media. In the wake of movements such as #MenAreTrash and #BlackLivesMatter, which aim to create a discourse surrounding the patriarchy and white supremacy, there have been many responses such as #NotAllMenAreTrash and #AllLivesMatter (Matebese, 2017 and Victor, 2016). Many respondents, typically white men, argue that not all men are rapists, nor are all white people explicitly racist. The focus on the extreme overpowers the original purpose behind the movements which intended to point out the extent to which both women and black people have been forced to feel unsafe and

unwelcome by institutionalized discrimination and personal aggressions (Victor, 2016). It ignores the dimension of men who are “complicit when it comes to the injustices women experience in the workplace, men who listen to stories of woe about the female lived experience but still do nothing about it” (Matebese, 2017). It fails to acknowledge that racialized and gendered aggressions are situated on a spectrum “which stretches from ‘minor social misery to violent silencing and death’” (Solnit, 2014, as cited in Cederstrom, 2018).

This is noted in the discourse surrounding the HIV/AIDS epidemic as well; my participants explained that HIV/AIDS is associated with more extreme actions, such as prostitution and drug use (Morrell, 2002). The combination of global colonialist discourses and apartheid allowed white men to separate themselves from the epidemic by placing these extremes “specifically on black men by distancing themselves from social problems by situating them within Black communities” (Lynch, 2010, p. 15). The original intention of this research project was to study the relationship between white heterosexual masculinity and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. However, the trend of focusing on extreme cases involving prostitution, combined with a colonialist, hierarchal understanding of masculinities, allows white men to separate their sexual habits from issues of public health (Morrell, 2002). The focus of study in this research project changed because my participants felt so removed from the epidemic that there was an incredibly limited amount of data.

This disassociation attempts to defend the way an individual white man is perceived. In addition, separating oneself from an identity is particularly noted by some of my participants using “they” instead of us to describe white men. This fails to assume responsibility for the inherent power and privilege associated with

that identity. Therefore, rather than “involving themselves in an all-out attempt to stamp out racism from their white society” these respondents, and my participants as well, “waste lots of time trying to prove to as many blacks as they can find that they are liberal” (Biko, 2002, p. 23). Progressivity is gauged not by true equality, but by a comparison to “this outdated caricature” (Verwey and Quayle, 2012, p. 561). This enables white people to “recognize Whiteness as something that is significant and that operates in society, but to not see how it relates to one’s own life,” and similar trends could be noted for masculinity (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59). This attempts to create microcosmic unified fronts among genders and races in the hopes of cultivating a “let’s-all-join-hands sentiment to which no one could object” (Victor, 2016 and Matebese, 2017). This idealized form of universalism “assumes that whites and people of color have the same realities, the same experiences in the same contexts (i.e. I feel comfortable in this majority white classroom, so you must too)” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59). This excuses and ignores implicit behaviors that continue to entrench whiteness and heterosexual masculinity as dominant while invalidating racial and gender inequality. In my opinion, this puts a larger burden on women and people of color to justify aggressions they experience because of whiteness and masculinity.

White Male Victimization

Exclusion

Participants 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 agreed that they have experienced “a lot more stigma surrounding a white male than there was 20 years ago,” as a result of their association with stereotypical, hegemonic masculinity (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participant 1 claimed that though many white men support movements such as #MenAreTrash and #BlackLivesMatter,

as well as on campus movements such as #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and “Disrupting Whiteness, it is assumed that “because we’re male . . . that we’re theoretically against it” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participants 1, 2, and 6 were all met with what they perceived as backlash from the movements; one was told, “you’re a white male, you can’t talk about this sort of thing—you have privilege” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). This narrative has become so pervasive that it bled into the perceptions of the movements of Participants 1 and 2, who asked me to imagine a white male speaking at a feminist rally and then guess “How long would it take for him to be booed off the stage?” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participant 4 agreed with this sentiment; his experiences often involve people of color and women assuming white men are not educated enough about the movements. However, though he acknowledges that people are “sick and tired of having to explain yourself,” white men are often not motivated to educate themselves (Participant 4, personal communication, November 7, 2018).

Participant 3 was told not to come to the rallies and he comments, “at first I was really fucking disgusted, like I was really offended” (Participant 3, personal communication, November 6, 2018). He explains that though he understands this, it is really difficult for him to engage in the movement in a supportive and beneficial way because he is unwelcome. Participant 6 decided to attend meetings for the movements in order to learn more about it. However, he found that people often expected him to be a more active member, but he did not know enough about the protest to become involved in it. He felt uncomfortable and ultimately stopped attending activist movements as a result. Both Participants 3 and 6

emphasized that because of this backlash, they did not know how to proactively engage in these movements.

In my opinion, these responses indicate a major discomfort that occurs when white men are told they are not welcome in the fight for social justice, most notably before they conceptualize the problems with their positionality within the movement (Participant 8, personal communication, November 17, 2018). My interpretation of their narratives points to the dissonance between their desire to disassociate from hegemonic white masculinity, but their lack of direction regarding where to channel this energy, particularly because women and people of color do not want or need white men to speak for them. My participants had encountered this primarily with whiteness; it demonstrates that they had never had to experience racial discomfort, or even conceptualize their race. As a result, when they are forced to, as opposed to recognizing it on their own, they “respond as if something is ‘wrong,’ and blame the person or event that triggered the discomfort (usually a person of color)” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 60). A similar trend is noted with male feminists who are met with backlash for misogynistic comments, poor ally-ship, and claims of “Not all men” (Kitagawa, 2017). The responses to these comments are often defensive and are effective in “making it about me and not the community,” effectively derailing the intention of the movement (Kitagawa, 2017).

Reverse Discrimination

This perceived exclusion from social movements, coupled with their institutionalized support, has enabled some participants to feel as if “a lot harder for us [white men] to do things,” particularly because society is “in a lot of ways changing in the opposite way” (Participant 1, personal communication,

November 6, 2018). This sentiment is noted by Participants 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, two of whom self-identify as progressive, who explained that as a result of the government's broad based economic empowerment initiatives, the new South Africa has developed a hierarchy in which "the bottom is a white man" (Participant 5, personal communication, November 7, 2018). Participant 5 claimed "it's actually less free now than it was," and Participant 1 agreed, calling the current situation in South Africa "apartheid in reverse" (personal communication, November 7, 2018 and November 6, 2018).

Participants 1 and 2 claimed that because of this hierarchy "white men don't exactly have the biggest voice that's heard all the time...the feminist movement has a very loud voice and its heard quite a lot" (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). A similar sentiment was associated with regard to political parties aimed at racial equality, who Participant 5 believe "make it worse because they feed off the racism and they exacerbate it" (Participant 5, personal communication, November 7, 2018). Participants 1, 2, and 5 spent a lot of time explaining the difference between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity. In their opinions, the latter requires equality from the very beginning of life and entrance into society, but this has not yet been facilitated by the government. As a result, efforts have been on attempting to level towards equality later in life. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 articulated that that as a white man, you can:

try your hardest to get the right degree to get the job you want, and then someone else with less qualifications takes it from you because of being female or being a person of color. It can definitely have a blow to your confidence, your ego, your masculinity (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018).

In addition, Participants 1, 2, and 5 were adamant that they support gender and racial equality, however, they drew the line between “feminists that are fighting for equality and then you get the ones that want to be above men” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Even Participant 3, arguably the most progressive, recognized that “all you’re doing by taking away from men is just pissing them off” (personal communication, November 6, 2018). Though he was “very aware that I am speaking out of my ass right now,” by dominating social justice movements with the feelings of white men, this is a sentiment that he has experienced among white circles of men (personal communication, November 6, 2018).

The white male victimization discourse which comes across in responses and critiques of affirmative action can be traced back to colonialism. Ronald Hall, a professor at Michigan State University, draws these connections in the context of the United States (2004). This can arguably be compared to South Africa because of the countries’ similar histories of colonialism, slavery, and experiences of segregation, though in different extents. The impetus to claim victimization and reverse discrimination may be linked to “an unwritten hierarchy whereby White males feel entitled to desired quality of life as postcolonial birthright” (Hall, 2004, p. 565). The history of colonialism, white supremacy, and patriarchal dominance has led white males into a complex dichotomy between “what they are legitimately entitled to as members of humanity and what they must surrender to society at large” (Hall, 2004, p. 570). I find this implicitly located in some of my participants’ responses; they feel disempowered because they are given less than they are socialized to believe they are worthy of. This is particularly noted in the quote by Participant 1, who

comments that a job was taken from him, implying that he was entitled to it in the first place. However, their experience of “reverse discrimination” often still privileges white men more so than people of color and women because of the historic power associated with their identities. It is important to note how widespread this entitlement can be; half of my participants who commented that they felt disadvantaged because of affirmative action policies also described themselves as progressive allies.

I find that my participants feel disempowered because they have less power than they did before, which overshadows the privilege that they do have. As a result, they- and a larger community of white people- are able to “avoid responsibility for the racial power and privilege they wield. By positioning themselves as victims of anti-racism efforts, they cannot be the beneficiaries of white privilege. (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 64). From the responses of my participants, particularly Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5, white male victimization is another part of a “blame and finger-pointing season” (Grootes, 2018). This emphasis on blame is rising in South Africa and often materializes around specific instances of oppression. It attempts to figure out who is at fault for “corruption, for crime, for the last 10 years, for the last 24 years, for the 342 years before that” in order to determine who is responsible for fixing the issue and often plays into political agendas (Grootes, 2018). This interpretation of efforts towards equality as “a zero-sum game” often pits groups of people against each other; this is often with the realization that someone is going to have to sacrifice, yet no one wants to (Participant 4, personal communication, November 7, 2018).

Recognition of Positionality as a Heterosexual White Male

Participants 4, 5, and 6 commented on the homogeneity of their social

circles, despite the widespread belief that “racism doesn’t stand after integration” (Participant 6, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Participant 4 spent a lot of time analyzing the phenomenon of “why we feel more comfortable going to a fellow white peer” and attributed it to familiarity, such as language, geographic location, and history (personal communication, November 7, 2018). He explained that he does not socialize with many people who are not white or male because these are the circles he grew up in and has long standing relationships with. Participant 6 agreed and claimed he does not identify his social circles by race or gender, but by his “experiences with them” (personal communication, November 14, 2018). He commented that he feels more comfortable engaging in banter in these circles. Participant 5 found the same trends, particularly in terms of sexual activity. He thinks it is a fair assumption to assume that white girls would only sleep with white men because “birds of a feather flock together” (personal communication, November 7, 2018). This segregation, to Participant 6, made it seem like all you need is “a slightly more macro change or heart, change of perspective,” rather than a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to gender or racial separation (personal communication, November 14, 2018).

These experiences of social segregation among my participants demonstrate that “pulling down the barriers set up by apartheid in South Africa or Jim Crow in the United States and enforcing the desegregation of educational and other public institutions has not resulted in meaningful integration” (Tredoux, Dixon, Durrheim, Zuma, 2017, p. 397). This study conducted by Tredoux, et al, discovered that racially homogenous groups cultivated comfortability, a sense of belonging, and safety (2017). Participants in this study found that habitual

behavior and past experience, rather than a conscientious decision, implicitly motivated them to engage in homogenous spaces (Tredoux, et al., 2017). This was reflected by Participants 4 and 6, who attributed their white social circles to their previous experiences in their home neighborhoods and previous schools. The failure to acknowledge how one's experience of race and gender contribute to this homogeneity ignores the real, lived inequalities as a result of race and gender (Greenberg, 2015). One of these lived inequalities is the persistent socioeconomic divide; because slavery, colonialism, and apartheid constructed society to maintain and enhance the power of white men at the expense of people of color, white people continue to dominate the middle and upper classes while people of color remain in the lower class (Tredoux, et al., 2017). It is this inequality that can contribute to my participants' primarily white hometowns and former schools and therefore, their comfort with homogeneity.

The failure to acknowledge race or gender contributes to a colorblind mentality which enhances the stigma surrounding a discussion of race and racism among white people (Greenberg, 2015). It continues to "take race off the table," and further isolates people of color and invalidates their experiences with racism (Greenberg, 2015). The cultivation, by white people, of ignorance surrounding the inescapability of race often contributes to a situation in which "the people who know full well that race really fucking matters—people of all colors—do not trust you" (Greenberg, 2015). In addition, though my participants may not be the perpetrators of explicitly problematic statements or situations, they may be unprepared and unable to be a support system due to their lack of experience with racism (Tatum, 1997). The same could be said for gender and sexism as well. Here, there is a gap between my participants' desire to be proactive members of

movements towards social justice and their incomplete recognition of the extensiveness of racism.

Learning About Positionality

My participants' experiences growing up surrounding by racial and gender homogeneity delayed their recognition of positionality. Now, all seven of my participants recognized the power and privilege associated with being a heterosexual white man, though it took them various lengths of time to do so. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 find themselves currently on a higher level than women and people of color because institutions were created for their own benefit. In addition, they share an awareness regarding the reality that "every space is our [white males'] space" (Participant 3, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Because of this, straight white men tend to "have the bigger voice" (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). As a result, Participants 1, 2, and 3 understand that people listen when they speak because of their racial and gender identities. Participant 3 has been advised that he's a "white boy in South Africa—don't you dare give that up" (personal communication, November 6, 2018).

Participants 3, 4, 6, and 7, who self-identified as progressive, spent the most time describing the factors that enabled them to become more aware of their positionality and therefore, more liberal. Participants 3 and 7 explained that they were first exposed to privilege at home; their parents taught them to be more aware of inequalities in society and cultivated their understandings of masculinity that were separate from the entrenched hegemonic form. On the other hand, the rest of my participants did not become aware of their positionalities until university. University, through the combination of taking humanities classes and

hearing active social movements on campus, began to raise their consciousness regarding the “natural little stereotypes in your head that build over time” (Participant 6, personal communication, November 14, 2018). They commented that first encountering these conversations at university was hard because it is so difficult to “change something which is so entrenched” (Participant 7, personal communication, November 14, 2018).

Because of these entrenched socializations, all four of these participants commented that they had been called out for racist or sexist comments. Participants 3, 4, 6, and 7 were at first offended because “they feel like they’re getting critiqued for who they are” (Participant 4, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Participant 7 explained that as a result of being called out, he is able to spot many problematic qualities of masculinity in others. When I asked if he would ever feel comfortable calling out these habits as they materialize in other men and he said no because “these ideas took, I know for me, a really long time to make sense” (Participant 7, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Participant 6 provided an example of his most recent call out; he used the word “bitch” when aggressively encouraged by a friend. Though he thinks “85% of people I know would have been fine with that,” he was with a girl who found a lot of issues in that statement and called him out (personal communication, November 14, 2018). He explained that if he was in the same group without her, the comment would have slid and it would not have been a problem. He laughed a lot while sharing this story and explained that he only reacted this way because he was fed up by the pressure to drink to the standards of his male friends.

Most of my participants did not acknowledge their positionalities until university because grew up in a primarily homogenous neighborhood and continued to perpetrate the trend of social segregation noted above. They grew up with the understanding that the normative standard is an “able, white, heterosexual, cis-gender male, from which any deviation is unwittingly viewed as defect” (Penwell, 2018). Because my participants were taught that whiteness and masculinity were normative, it became very difficult for them to recognize that race and gender could be factors that continue to contribute to inequality, oppression, and discrimination. The majority of my participants are still grappling with an understanding of their privileges, much less trying to mitigate its effects. Therefore, most of my participants were forced to recognize their positionality through the diversity they encountered at university via student protests such as #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and the “Disrupting Whiteness” movements (Goldenberg, 2015).

In this regard, the burden falls on people of color and women to educate white people and men about their privileges and their aggressions which perpetrate existing power dynamics. On a smaller scale, Participant 6 acknowledges that the problem with his exclamation of the word “bitch” was less the statement itself, but more the audience that he said it in front of. He explains that he would not have been called out if his female friend was not there, which I understand to demonstrate that the burden of calling out falls on the oppressed group who would take offense to the statement. This points to a larger phenomenon in which “it is our [women’s] responsibility to fix the system that victimizes us” (West, 2018). Participants 3, 4, and 7 explained that these situations are very complex for them; because they are not members of the

oppressed group and have been so socialized towards whiteness and the patriarchy, it is hard to understand what statements are and are not harmful. In addition, they actively seek to avoid speaking on behalf of the oppressed group and assuming offense in certain interactions. This points to a larger trend of self-interest in social justice movements, namely that “people who lack a stake in a cause will feel uncomfortable taking action on its behalf” (Miller, 1999, p. 3). However, since “sexism is a male invention. White supremacy is a white invention,” the burden in fact falls on the population of white men to begin to take action and learn from the many call outs that have already been made (West, 2018).

This method of recognizing positionality, in addition to placing a burden on women and people of color, is inaccessible to a large number of white South African men. Participant 4 explained that many students from his high school did not attend university and those who did, studied business or science. As a result, those students did not receive much of opportunity to learn how to think, particularly about their positionalities or the motivation for student protests, in the same way students in humanities classes do. It also becomes inaccessible to a larger community of white South African men, particularly older men who grew up in apartheid and were heavily socialized by it. In addition, because the University of Cape Town is still dominated by both whiteness and the patriarchy, it is very possible that the ways in which race and gender are both conceptualized and studied are highly impacted by that structure.

The Role of White Heterosexual Men in the Future of South Africa

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 noted that they are still attempting to figure out their roles in a changing South Africa because they only recently began to

acknowledge their privilege. My participants assert that the future of South Africa begins with a change of the socialization of white heterosexual men, particularly from a young age, in order to carve out a less entitled and more stable social standing. Participants 4, 6, and 7 believe education needs to incorporate reflexivity, particularly around racial and gender identities. While they believe this access exists in university, the benefit of approaching it from a young age is that “your brains are like sponge and you formulate your own norms and habits and your identity” (Participant 4, personal communication, November 7, 2018). This would enable the focus, from a young age, to be on finding ways to mitigate privilege, rather than spending years ignoring its existence. In addition, according to Participant 4, it makes lessons of reflexivity more accessible because not everyone goes to university and studies in the humanities.

Efforts to Mitigate Privilege

Participants 3, 4, and 7 had spent time in university attempting to understand how to mitigate their dominance in spaces aimed at achieving equality. Participants 3, 4, and 7 articulated the history of dominance that white men have had in terms of dictating the course of society and subsequently “don’t want to say that I have the answers to change” (Participant 4, personal communication, November 7, 2018). Participant 3 stressed that “I don’t understand the ins and outs and I will never understand what it’s like to be a person of color in this country” (Participant 3, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participant 7 reiterated the same sentiment regarding gender equality as well. This narrative was articulated by my participants who are self-identifying liberal white men; they stress that their role in these movements is to listen, rather than to assert their opinions. Participant 3 spent a lot of time

commenting on the complexity of this issue, particularly because as a white man, he feels unwelcome and does not want to dominate the space. However, as a college student, all he can give is his time, his presence, and his focus.

Though the recognition of positionality within multiracial and multi-gendered spaces and movements were held by less than half of my participants and were fairly new realizations to all three, they are an important step towards mitigating privilege. Socialization by a society reliant on racial and gender hierarchies contributes to a psychological reality of racial and gender inequality (Jotanovic, 2017). This allows diverse spaces to “perpetuate the already-in-place power relations” (Jotanovic, 2017). This is true across a spectrum of races and genders, making it very easy for movements towards social justice to facilitate “whites doing all the talking and blacks the listening” (Biko, 2002, p. 20). Recognizing this reality, Participants 3, 4, and 7 noted that their responsibility is in “relinquishing power and passing over the microphone,” because “it’s not our fight to lead” (Jotanovic, 2017 and Kitagawa, 2017). However, my participants explained that they did not acknowledge this reality until they were told by either women or people of color during movements on campus. This is significant because in their experiences, the burden is still on members of historically oppressed groups to point out whiteness and male supremacy to those who claim to be allies. Participants 3 and 4 in particular had very hard times hearing this critique because of how badly they wanted to assert themselves as allies.

Efforts to Hold White Male Privilege

When asked how white men can best be utilized in efforts towards racial and gender equality, Participant 6 expressed a lot of discomfort and asserted that the solution is “less utilization and more understanding” (personal

communication, November 14, 2018). All seven participants agree that social change has to come from “raise them [women and people of color] up, rather than lowering us” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018).

Participant 3 explained that this is because “taking away from men is just pissing them off” (personal communication, November 6, 2018). Because my participants focus on the danger of taking privileges away from white men, they find alternate ways of promoting action such as volunteering, providing “general support,” and treating people with humanity (Participant 6, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Participant 3 explained, “I do my best to help, I work in charities and do everything that I can to help,” and Participant 1 echoes that he tries to be “a nice person, a nice guy who is, yeah trying to help people and stuff like that” (personal communications, November 6, 2018 and November 6, 2018). Participant 7 explained that white men should operate with the power that they hold to work with people who are available and those “best people available to do the job” (personal communication, November 14, 2018). Participant 4 reiterated the same claim, outlining that white men do not necessarily have to sacrifice their whiteness or their masculinity because of how inherent these aspects are to their identity, but they do need to begin to use these in more humane and philanthropic ways. When I countered this point by explaining how difficult it must be for grassroots empowerment to catch up to centuries of patriarchal and white dominance, all seven are quick to groan and agree.

All seven participants believe that change has to be slow and steady to avoid white men thinking that they are being “prescribed to fuck off,” especially since they are still grappling with their privilege and power (Participant 8,

personal communication, November 17, 2018).. In addition, Participants 5 and 6 noted that a lot of the changes need to be done on an institutional, particularly governmental, level. As a result, they are unsure what to do until these changes happen. Despite all of the changes that need to occur, Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 agree that “it really hasn’t been that long and a lot has happened” (Participant 6, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Progress, not only individually, but institutionally, is marked by the bare minimum because of the historically low standards that race and gender have had in South Africa. Progress is celebrated today because “the starting level has leveled out a lot more,” in comparison to the end of apartheid, which was around when my participants began attending school (Participant 1, personal communication, November 6, 2018). Participant 6 spoke highly of the diversity of the University of Cape Town, as opposed to his primarily white high school. He felt as if university is about 95% nonwhite, and was shocked to hear that it is only 67.4% nonwhite (Goldenberg, 2015). After processing this statistic, he commented on his specific college within the university because “it’s not that bad; it’s inclusive” (Participant 6, personal communication, November 14, 2018).

The comfort with slow change, as noted by my participants, demonstrates that white South African men are “grappling with massive shifts in their position and identity in South Africa (Verwey and Quayle, 2012, p. 556). This psychological adjustment may enable white men to perceive minimal change as much more significant than women or people of color would. What is marginal to people of color and women may be a massive shift in the identity of white men, particularly because they were able to ignore the racial and gender inequalities in society for so long. However, forcing social justice movements to slow down for

the comfort of white men continues to structure society around whiteness and the patriarchy at the expense of women and people of color.

White South African men tend to grapple with this psychological adjustment in one of two ways: either men ask women questions and attempt to understand their experiences or men isolate themselves and discuss masculinity with other men (Cederstrom, 2018). While, like call-out culture, this places an unfair burden on people of color and women to fix their own oppression, it also demonstrates a lack of knowledge and direction surrounding ally-ship for white men in South Africa. They have constructed their role as allies around minimizing their voice in movements and trying to volunteer where they are able. As a result, white men often end up doing the most work ensuring that they are removed from the movements, leading them to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, and unconfident.

Conclusion

Before conducting my research, I often found myself demonizing heterosexual white men for the power and privilege that they benefit from. After engaging with some academic literature surrounding hegemonic masculinity and the way in which it is engaging in a self-declared “crisis,” I found myself sympathizing more with white heterosexual men, particularly the tension between wanting to disassociate from the stifling stereotype of hegemonic masculinity and still benefiting from institutionalized white supremacy and patriarchal dominance. However, after conducting research, I realized that though these feelings are valid, they are not being developed into a reconstructed form of white masculinity aimed at dismantling its own toxicity.

All seven of my participants recognize the oppressive hegemony of white masculinity through their socialization in schools and at home. My participants had all experienced competition in schools, sports, and social settings in order to be regarded as the most “macho” and most successful man (Jeftha, 2006, p. 38). However, they located this hegemonic masculinity in “fuckboys,” athletes, older generations of men, and conservatives (Participant 4, personal communication, November 7, 2018). This value on competition, particularly in terms of achieving the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, also seemed to cultivate a sense of entitlement and pride in my participants; though they often tried to distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity, they shared feelings of victimization when denied opportunities or spaces. In addition, their eagerness to separate themselves from the stereotype of hegemonic masculinity demonstrates that they care about how they are perceived as individuals.

However, this negative perception frustrated my participants and led them to emphasize narratives of victimization. Though many of my participants want to envision a more equitable South Africa, they are often told that they are not welcome in social justice movements because their presence is domineering. These same narratives are present in their educational and employment settings in affirmative action and black empowerment policies. These experiences of social, economic, or political standing that differs from the position my participants' are socialized to believe that they are entitled to have encouraged their narratives of victimization.

My participants grew up in primarily homogenous neighborhoods, schools, and social circles, which enabled them to believe in the hegemonic normativity of whiteness and masculinity. Therefore, while movements, particularly of those aimed at "Disrupting Whiteness," present at the University of Cape Town, have encouraged narratives of victimization, they have also forced my participants to acknowledge their positionalities more than they have before (Goldenberg, 2015). However, this normally does not occur until multiple call-outs from people of color and women and many defensive responses. My more progressive participants have taken the critiques by women and people of color to heart; they attempt to minimize their voices within movements for social justice, particularly those occurring on campus. Despite these efforts, all seven of my participants established that they are not willing to sacrifice much more than their places within these movements.

All seven agree that empowering women and people of color will create more productive change than taking away from white men, primarily because it will minimize the narratives of victimization often verbalized by white men. The

combination of perceived exclusion and a desire to make their white, male privilege accessible to all without sacrificing any of their own has created a confusing social status for white men. My participants were quick to celebrate small changes, which I connect to the massive psychological adjustment that my participants are experiencing. Small efforts towards equality, which may seem negligible to women or people of color, require massive shifts in an understanding of white hegemonic masculinity. However, my participants are experiencing increasing pressure to reconstruct hegemonic masculinity, particularly because of the more imminent fear that they will be “prescribed to fuck off,” and subsequently lose any sense of belonging in the new South Africa (Participant 8, personal communication, November 17, 2018).

The most note-worthy conclusions of this project are the dangers of homogenous, white male spaces and the undefined status of white male ally-ship. My participants demonstrate how socioeconomic homogeneity in neighborhoods and pre-university schools combined with socialization by whitewashed, patriarchal institutions implicitly encourage white men towards socially segregated circles. As a result of this exposure to white hegemonic masculinity and very little diversity, an understanding of inequality beyond one’s own identity remains distant and impersonal. My participants’ exposure to primarily white male circles allows their narratives to focus similar experiences—such as the perceived loss of privilege and exclusion from social movements—while they perpetrate racist or sexist aggressions without being called out. This standard is based on my participants’ experiences of either not being called out by or not calling out other white men. The burden of calling out falls on people of color and women, who are not frequently in my participants’ social circles.

This leads to the latter trend; ally-ship has not been channeled in meaningful and productive ways by white men. Privilege is a new recognition to many of my participants and to many white men in South Africa; because of this, it is difficult to conceptualize the pervasiveness of hegemonic whiteness and masculinity and the inequalities it perpetrates (Steyn, 2001 and Leonardo, 2013). This occurs because white men are often able to separate race from daily interactions because “a privilege of being white is the freedom to not deal with racism all the time” (Kivel, 2006, p. 2). Similarly, men are able to excuse themselves from movements towards gender equality because their patriarchal benefits ensure that they do not experience the daily effects of sexism (Johnson and Smith, 2018).

Because both whiteness and masculinity have been so deeply entrenched as normative, the mere recognition of both as privileged can be perceived as a progressive effort towards social justice. My participants, and other white men, looking to mitigate their privilege end up modelling their version of ally-ship after that of women and people of color via an engagement with movements on campus or individual interactions. My participants had not conceptualized that there is a larger “fight for justice is within their white society” (Biko, 2002, p. 25). A newfound focus within white society to counteract the entitlement of white masculinity and recognize the real, lived inequalities that continue to persist in South Africa can enable white men to assume accountability over the daily impact whiteness, male privilege, and their own defensiveness, without colonizing the space of women or people of color.

Recommendations for Further Study

The research conducted in this project has highlighted major themes surrounding whiteness, masculinity, and hegemonic discourses on which further research would be beneficial. Further studies should attempt to counteract the practical limitations of this study by ensuring more time to conduct interviews. In addition, it may be beneficial to interview participants during a less academically intensive time period; finals week limited the time my participants were able and willing to share with me. Recruiting participants by a means other than Tinder, if accessible, could create a larger pool of participants by including heterosexual men in relationships. In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of white masculinity, it would be beneficial to study a wider range of white South African men. Examples include: students at other universities, men of varying ages to explore different experiences of apartheid, and white men from countries such as the United States to investigate the range of the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. In addition, it could be beneficial to interview either people of color or women in order to hear their experiences with hegemonic masculinity and what their understanding of their role in South Africa is.

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Appendix/Appendices

Appendix A- Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Examining the Discourse Surrounding the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in South Africa from the Perspective of Heterosexual White Male Students at the University of Cape Town

Researcher Name: Meagan Murray

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting as a part of the SIT study abroad program focusing on Multiculturalism and Human Rights in South Africa. This consent form outlines the purpose of this study and the requirements if you agree to participate. Please ask questions if you do not understand anything or would like to clarify information before agreeing to participate. Your participation is voluntary but will require you to sign this form. You will receive a copy of it as well. If you choose to participate you will be compensated with a coffee/tea during the course of the interview.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the discourse surrounding the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic from the perspective of white heterosexual men at the University of Cape Town. The study intends to explore the intersectionality between white heterosexual masculinity and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, specifically how they are both formally and informally socialized and perceived.

Participant Guidelines

This study will require an interview that uses a body mapping template and will last about an hour. You are participating in this study voluntarily and are aware that your identity will be protected and as anonymous as possible. Information gathered will be used only for the production of this ISP and efforts will be made to ensure confidentiality. Your name will be changed and no factors such as place of birth, age, or focus of study will be shared in the project. All data will be stored under a pseudonym and will be stored on a password protected iPhone. The only people with access to this data will be me- the researcher- my advisor, and you- the participant. In addition, notes will be taken on paper but will not include any identifying data due to the lack of protection. All data will be deleted at the end of the study.

You as the participant have every right to decline to participate in this study without facing any negative consequences. This study may ask you questions that feel personal regarding your masculinity. Therefore, if you choose to participate you have every right to decline to answer certain questions. In addition, at any point in the study you may withdraw your consent without penalty.

The Results

The findings of this study will be produced in a research paper which will be shared with other students on this study abroad program, my advisor, my academic directors, and can potentially be published on the SIT website. The results will not be published as representative of the entire population.

Participation Consent:

I have read this form and received a copy of it. The researcher has answered all of my questions regarding the research project. I understand the purpose and I am voluntarily participating.

Initials: _____

I give permission for the researcher to audio record this interview and share the data with her advisor and myself. I understand that the data will be deleted at the end of November, with the completion of this ISP.

Initials: _____

I understand that I can contact my researcher regarding any questions about the study or the data collected, especially if I have further information or concerns regarding the research project. She has given me her numbers +27 (0)71-465-4251 and her email meagan.murray98@gmail.com.

Initials: _____

I consent/do not consent (circle one) to my researcher contacting me in the future for further research. I understand that my answer does not impact my participation in this study or the privacy of current data collected about me.

Initials: _____

I give permission for the researcher to use the data gathered from this body mapping/interviewing in her publication regarding the relationship between white heterosexual masculinity and the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa.

Initials: _____

I give permission for the researcher to quote me directly in the production of this research project. I understand that there will be no penalties if I decline this.

Initials: _____

I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate. I am 18 years of age or older.

Participant's Name and Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name and Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Rights of Research Participant- IRB Contact Information

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by an SIT Study Abroad Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

School for International Training

Institutional Review Board

1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676

Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA

irb@sit.edu

802-258-3132

Appendix B- Interview Questions

Introduce yourself, what is your:

- Name
- Age
- Place of Birth
- Major/ at the University of Cape Town?

Have you heard of the term hegemonic masculinity?

If so, what does it mean to you?

If not, my understanding of it because of how it's presented in academia and in activist circles is a man presenting himself socially as being middle class, heterosexual, and sexually active, in control economically, holding political authority, and being unemotional. Does this sound like the norm that is expected of you as a man?

Before starting, I just want to explain that this is the template for a body map. Its intention is to get you thinking about your perception of your masculinity in relation to the social norm, especially if you need help conceptualizing your experiences. If you find it helpful, please use it, but know that only what you say will be shared with anyone else besides the two of us.

Experiences of Masculinity (Body Map Usage Optional):

Mark or explain your experience of the first moment you felt like you became a man.

Mark what you consider to be the part of your own masculinity that is most closely related to the stereotype expected of you.

Mark what part of you enabled this to happen.

Mark what you consider your personal point of variance from the idea of toxic/hegemonic masculinity and the stereotypes of being a white straight man in South Africa.

Mark a time, if it has ever happened, that your masculinity felt threatened.

Mark a time that your masculinity held you back

Mark a time, if you have ever experienced one, where you felt that your masculinity was problematic for others.

What part of your identity, if altered, would make you feel like less of a man?

Mark what part of you makes you seem like the idea of a man that people expect.

Mark what part of yourself holds power, in a way that people might listen to you or take your ideas seriously.

Sub-Questions:

FIRST go through the questions.

Did your current physical health or ability impact your perception of masculinity/your answers?

How do you imagine a chronic illness like HIV/AIDS impacting how someone views their own masculinity? How they are viewed by others?

Can you explain the feminist movement in South Africa and what that means for you as a man?

Can you explain the movement for racial equality in South Africa and what that means for you as a white man?

What is the general idea of HIV/AIDS that is held by most South Africans?

Is it present on campus at all?

Is there a hookup culture on campus? (Talk about condom usage and casual sex)

Do you see a link between this and the narrative surrounding HIV/AIDS?

Do you feel as if you are at risk for HIV/AIDS?

Who most typically is?

Is South Africa changing? How can you best be used in this change?