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# “I hope whiteness means nothing”: A Narrative Exploration of Whiteness as Identity in South Africa

Mackenzie Berry  
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“I hope whiteness means nothing”:  
A Narrative Exploration of Whiteness as Identity in South Africa

Mackenzie Berry

School for International Training

Community Health & Social Policy Fall 2018

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## Part I: Preparations and Project Background

### **Abstract**

In post-apartheid South Africa, whiteness and the legacy of its codification shape the social, political, and economic landscape of the country. Though white studies in South Africa emerged as an investigation of how whiteness operates as a social identity post-apartheid, the field is still developing. This narrative project examines how whiteness has been constructed in

South Africa as identity and property, referencing South African history for context. The project explores “whiteness as identity” as opposed to “white identity” in recognition that whiteness manifests in many forms, including as an identity but also within institutions and in economic, social, political, and personal spheres as a “property,” which is further explained in the “Background and Significance” and “Literature Review.” The project includes socio-political and historical analysis of whiteness in South Africa as a foundation for exploring six narratives of white South Africans in which participants describe their relationship to their white identity and what has shaped it. Data includes the use of books, articles, journals, first-person interviews, original poem excerpts, and other media. This project offers a qualitative approach in pursuit of increased understanding of a topic which requires complexity and nuance, and which has vast social implications. It explores the research question, “How is whiteness constructed as identity and property in South Africa?” Although it primarily focuses on whiteness as identity, it also explores whiteness as property, a concept which is further explained in the “Literature Review.”

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### **Methodology**

This project takes the form of a qualitative, non-traditional narrative approach which also includes a more traditional analysis of the socio-political and historical context necessary to engage with the subject of whiteness and the narratives to follow. The socio-political and historical analysis, which is primarily in the “Literature Review” but which is also dispersed throughout narratives, serves to introduce and analyze the concepts of whiteness and its characteristics, whiteness as identity, whiteness as property, and whiteness as an institution. The narrative presentation includes how individual white South Africans’ whiteness has informed their lives. I also include my own personal narrative on grappling with whiteness as a white

American and use poem excerpts to offer insight into my processing on whiteness as a personal identity I hold in analyzing whiteness in South Africa. As a whole, this research design is intended to represent both the personal and the institutional through both content and form—while traditional academic writing is more suitable to represent the aspects of whiteness that have been codified and institutionalized as “property,” a non-traditional narrative approach is more suitable to represent the personal aspects of whiteness as an identity. It is necessary for my study to take the form of narrative particularly because narrative “[embodies] multiple ways of knowing” (Hendry, 2010, p.72), which is critical for any exploration of identity and especially critical in this context because whiteness extends beyond identity and includes social, political, and economic implications.

### **Sampling**

The characteristics of the population from which the sample was selected are white South Africans over the age of eighteen. Thus, this study excludes non-white people, people of any nationality other than South African, and children. No additional exclusions were made on the basis of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, ability, education level, or any other identity, although other identities are noted in the study if relevant in order to convey differences or similarities in responses according to intersecting identities. The purpose of excluding non-white people from this study is to focus on the construction of whiteness and whiteness as a lived experience, in addition to its implications beyond the personal. This is opposed to exploring perceptions of whiteness and the impact of whiteness, about which non-white people may be able to speak. Only South Africans will be interviewed because this study investigates the construction of whiteness in South Africa in particular, and white people who are not South Africans will not be able to offer lived experiences about being white in South Africa, although there are parallels to whiteness in other contexts. I am excluding children for ethical and logical reasons in that children alone are not able to grant informed consent and may not have the language to articulate their experiences with respect to whiteness.

Because this project is qualitative as opposed to quantitative, the sample as a whole certainly does not represent the whole of white South Africans or whiteness in South Africa—the aim is not to represent the whole of white South Africans but rather to gain insight into the stories of white South Africans with respect to their whiteness and how it manifests in South

Africa. I interviewed six white South Africans, one of whom, Kira Erwin, has studied race in an academic and professional setting. Participants were recruited through my advisor Dr. Rama Naidu, through reaching out to those who have lectured with the School for International Training, and through reaching out to white South Africans my peers met while in South Africa. It is important to note that five of the six participants have at least one master's degree and all have or are seeking university degrees—thus, this sample of participants is of people who are highly educated. I conducted all interviews.

### **Interviewing**

The interviews took place either in participants' offices or over the phone and were recorded (with informed consent) for future reference. Please see **Appendix 4** for the interview guide of the questions I asked in each interview, which had minor shifts in use of language depending on the nature of the interview. In some cases, questions were omitted depending on whether or not interviewees answered a question in a previous response or further questions were asked if I wanted further detail about a particular response. Note that the language of the interview questions is intended to be in plain speak. These interviews serve as data primarily for analysis of how whiteness has been constructed as a personal identity in South Africa, as well as for the construction of whiteness beyond the personal. The characteristics of participants are as follows: Kira Erwin, woman, 43, who works in academia; Amy Jordaan, woman, 19, who is a student; Janine Hicks, woman, 49, who works in academia; Marc Larkin, man, 36, who works in law; Andy Gray, man, 59, who is a pharmacist; and Rachel Gray, woman, 25, who is a student. In addition to using interviews as data, I include excerpts of my original poems on the subject of whiteness and in response to the findings of this project. The purpose of this is to relate my experience of whiteness as a personal identity, recognizing that while I am outside of the project because I am not South African, I relate to certain global characteristics of whiteness, as particular characteristics of whiteness are certainly not exclusive to South Africa. Because the nature of an entire identity and the phenomenon of "whiteness as property" is difficult to generalize, a creative approach to this portion of the ISP is necessary in order to convey the nuance and complexity necessary to be truthful.

Creative writing allows pauses or tension to be captured throughout the narratives. Following the interviews, I arranged narratives into themes based on their content and subject

matter—themes which I found to be a common thread and/or particularly poignant. After this, I weaved in my original writing and other necessary quotes as is fitting. This process of analysis addresses my research question because it facilitates consideration of whiteness as both property (socio-political and historical analysis) and identity (interviews), as well as how the two interact. The narrative approach creates the space for consideration of both, and provides a point of entry to engage in such a complex topic which can be emotional for some.

### **Research Ethics**

In recognizing the inherent hierarchy that typically exists in the interviewer-participant interaction in “research” settings, I made intentional choices to quell this as much as possible. I intentionally chose an Independent Study Project in which I would be “level” with participants in terms of our shared racial identity and first language in order to make the interviewer-participant power dynamic as equal as possible. I intentionally structured interviews to be laid back and conversational to make participants feel as comfortable as possible. I met with three participants in their offices and conducted interviews with three others over the phone in order to center participants’ comfort, convenience, and availability. In addition, most of the participants for this project are older than me, which counteracted any remaining hierarchies. As I am a student, I knew this project would likely be more comfortable for participants than if I were an expert researcher conducting a study that may come to be well-known. Nonetheless, I recognize my privilege as a “researcher,” although I consider that title—“researcher”—to mean “a student of others” in the case of conducting qualitative research based on the narratives of others.

It is quite unlikely that this project will have a positive impact on the lives of participants—thus, I took measures to recognize that it is the participants who made this project possible and it is them and their narratives which I owe accurate representation and care. Prior to each interview, I obtained informed consent from each participant. The informed consent form I used was reviewed by the Local Review Board, which approved it and the proposal for this project. A copy of this consent form can be found in **Appendix 2**. I verbalized to all participants their right to stop the interview at any point, to decline to answer any question(s), and to withdraw any part of their responses from being used in this project up until the day before I turned in this report. I then asked if they consented to the interview being recorded, with the knowledge that the recording would be deleted by submission date of this report. I signed the

consent forms as well to demonstrate that I would uphold its contents. For the participants I interviewed over the phone, I read the informed consent form to them and asked them to verbally indicate if they agreed, recording their responses. To address privacy with participants, I explained that they should only share what they felt comfortable disclosing. Then, I asked if participants had any further questions before beginning the interview.

At the end of the interview, I asked participants if they would like to remain anonymous in this report or if they would like for me to use their real names. Four participants stated that they would like their real names to be used and two participants stated that they were indifferent and would like me to discern whether or not to use their real names. For consistency, all participants are listed using their real names, although I communicated to them their option to remain anonymous. I assured participants that they would have access to this report upon its completion. All recordings of interviews have been deleted, as I stated to participants, except for the recordings of participants giving informed consent for interviews that occurred over the phone.

### **Narrative Ethics**

As an American undergraduate student, I am often frustrated at academia and traditional research, particularly that done about marginalized groups. Of the many studies conducted about impoverishment, for example, who among those impoverished has the time, resources, and education to see and engage with the academic language in the work created about them? Would they themselves find it useful, or would they think it something they could have told us if we had just asked? Why do we as students write essays about impoverishment, homelessness, institutional racism, climate change, and violence as people continue to die as a result of these very things, while we write about them from our well-resourced institutions? Who reads our essays other than our professors—is anyone moved by them or are we writing for ourselves or practicing for the day others may engage? If they are not for others, are we ourselves moved? I do not mean to say that this written work is not useful, as research has and continues to provide the evidence and basis for policy change and increased understanding of various topics for those who have access to it. However, I mean to say that I often grow restless at the time delay of research—at the planning, executing, evaluating, and explaining to others what is happening and what should be done, at the symposiums, conferences, and debates that follow, and the fear that by the time we take action at the necessary scale, there will be no one left to

reach. As a result, I often seek to do research in nontraditional forms, which are often more effective at reaching beyond the walls of academia. I choose to engage with narratives in this project for the same reason—narratives are present in everyone’s life in varying forms, and thus are a universal language.

As the participants in this project have granted me access to pieces of themselves in the form of their stories, it is my responsibility to share them in a way that is truthful and accurate. I listened to the participants, recorded and transcribed their interviews, and now present them in the forms that I see fit according to the themes and poignant moments that arose. Indubitably, I am now entrenched in these narratives because I have decided how to arrange them and have presented my own experiences alongside them. In seeking to be truthful, I include my own narratives to lend myself visible. I cannot truthfully separate myself from anything that I write. I also do this to lend myself vulnerable, as participants have also done to varying degrees. I do not seek to present this project as a product, but rather as a process, sharing my reasoning for how I have arranged the narratives and their excerpts. By omitting the majority of participants’ interviews, I have practiced a form of erasure in pursuit of including what I deem to be most pertinent to this project and its aims. In any erasure, there is privilege and responsibility. In recognizing this, I have taken great care and consideration with these narratives, as I recognize “that we must use a different sensitivity when working with life texts as compared to working with other forms of research” (Adams, 2008, p. 183).

### **Limitations of This Study**

Although I have stated that this project by no means seeks to represent the whole of white South Africans through its narratives and I do not consider this to be a limitation in itself, it is noteworthy to state again, as this is a limitation in the case that readers are seeking a representative study. As for other limitations, there are few to note. Firstly, I am a white American—thus my socialization as white in an American context shapes how I conducted this project and wrote this report. Secondly, interviewing itself presents limitations, as there are “several potential problems with interviewing, such as stemming the flow of the subject’s talk so that the narrative is fractured, and bias in selection of which parts of the interview are reported” (Bleakly, 2005, p. 537). I asked the questions which I thought would render the most insightful and explanatory responses about being white in South Africa; however, there are questions I may

not have considered that may have been more useful for this project. The limitation of time and availability of participants limited me from conducting several interviews with each participant, which may have established more trust between me and the participants and allowed for more extensive responses. However, in that case I would have had to omit even more material from the interviews, as I must already omit hours of interview material for this project. My selection of which excerpts of interviews to include in this project is biased, and so I have lent excerpts of my own narrative and thoughts so as not to mask myself invisible from this work, which would be dishonest.

The limitation of qualitative inquiry in itself prevents me from being able to draw definitive conclusions or generalizations based on participants' narratives. I do not view this as a general limitation, as the inability to draw definitive conclusions or generalizations demonstrates the necessity to consider the multitudes of truths that exist, particularly in the realm of identity. However, this characteristic is inherent to qualitative inquiry and is noteworthy for the reader. As Gergen notes, "there is no means of privileging any particular account on the grounds of its unique match to the world" (Gergen, 2000, p. 1026). I can only filter narratives through my own perception of the world and relate their content to my understandings of whiteness—I cannot hold any particular narrative above the rest as a definitive account of whiteness. Although I have a desire to present definitive claims, I actively resist this for the sake of accuracy, as there are no guarantees in qualitative inquiry, which is quite reflective of my world outside of this report.

### **Background and Significance**

Since prior to the 15th century, whiteness has exerted practices of colonialism, imperialism, and racism through people of European descent engaging in practices to accrue monetary profits and to settle in locations beyond their homelands, exploiting human labor to do so. In order to develop and maintain whiteness as a dominant social status, whiteness was codified and white people were afforded economic, social, political, and personal benefits at the expense of those classified as non-white. White people created the social construct of race in order to use racial categorization and the myth of white superiority to justify exploitative practices against non-white, particularly Black, people. As a result of long-term practice of the aforementioned, whiteness exists beyond solely a personal identity, as "According whiteness actual legal status converted an aspect of identity into an external object of property, moving

whiteness from privileged identity to a vested interest” (Harris, 1993, p. 1725). This form of white identity still persists despite changes in legal status because whiteness as an identity is inextricably bound to the privileges which shape it. In a South African context, this is especially pertinent because whiteness was only decodified in 1994, presenting a social landscape in which the relationship between whiteness as an identity and whiteness as legal privilege and property is particularly interwoven. This project seeks to better understand whiteness, both as a personal identity and an institution, and its manifestations, which are critical to understand in seeking equitable social practices and outcomes.

In considering whiteness in South Africa in the present day, it is critical to understand the context from which it exists—that of an apartheid state in which whiteness was afforded “a superior status” over the other racial categories of colored, Indian, and Black (in particular).

*Apartheid is an example of a state which took the ideas of white supremacy and legalized them, and structurally built them into the economic and social fabric. So I mean if you were racialized white, you had an enormous, uh, not just a sort of white privilege that people talk about today, but you actually legally held a different status in which you were given priority over other people who lived here who were not racialized in the same way. (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018)*

I came to learn that particular to South Africa, it is critical to understand the history of hostility between Afrikaners, the particular ethnic group descendant of the Dutch that was in power during apartheid, and the English, who won control of South Africa following the Anglo-Boer War but lost control to Afrikaners during the 1948 general elections. Although this tension exists, codified privilege was afforded to their collective whiteness despite their ethnic differences.

My interest in this study stems from my personal inquiry and observations of how race determines and directs social, economic, and political interactions in the United States despite these interactions no longer being explicitly restricted or directed by law, while recognizing that they were intentionally restricted by law and were culturally and socially held beliefs prior to codification. With my personal experience coming from an American lens, I now seek to study race in a South African context, noting the parallels and differences between the two countries in this regard. I seek to understand the construction of whiteness and its nuances in ultimately seeking to help deconstruct the characteristics of whiteness that cause harm. Thus, this study is

quite significant for me and my personal development as a researcher and student. I choose to study whiteness as opposed to any other race because inevitably my positionality as a white person informs how I conduct research and view its implications. My whiteness informed my interaction with white interviewees, granting an equitable power dynamic between us with regard to race.

\* \* \* \* \*

My first understanding of whiteness developed in opposition to Blackness—that maybe white was supposed mean everything that being Black wasn't. As a young child, I observed the ways in which race informed academics and personal interactions in my elementary school and wondered why and how this operated. My elementary school, Coleridge-Taylor Montessori Elementary, was the only montessori school in my highly segregated hometown, Louisville, Kentucky. The school was strategically placed in Louisville's predominantly Black West End in order to be convenient for Black students in the area to attend and to attract presumably wealthier white students from the East End whose parents may choose the school for its montessori style of teaching, which granted students far more independence and individualism than a traditional public education. I say "presumably wealthier" because of how race informs class, but more on that later. The school's placement was a part of the city's dedication to busing students to "home schools" that may be far from them in order to make its public schools more integrated due to stark residential segregation in the city. I was one of those white students from the East End. The school's location in the West End resulted in it being predominantly Black. Despite attempted integration, I observed that the classrooms in themselves remained largely segregated, with white students being placed in "smarter groups" and Black students being placed in "slower learning groups" according to test scores. These groups were not named by teachers, but they were known to all students, although largely unspoken. In addition, all of the main teachers I had were white women and all of the assistant teachers I had were Black women. While the main teachers designed and taught lessons, the assistant teachers graded our work after we completed particular tasks. For this reason, I developed much closer relationships with assistant teachers, as we frequently spoke while they graded my work.

It was in the context of my elementary school that I first remember being cognizant of race and my whiteness based on unspoken, in-class segregation and the position of teachers seemingly being dependent on their race. The first moment I remember these observations being

accompanied by an explanation occurred when I was in third grade. The assistant teacher of the class, Ms. Abernathy, was an “old school” teacher who centered discipline in the classroom, telling us of the days when her teachers would make her dip her fingers in bleach if she was caught biting her nails when she was our age. She was known to throw a shoe or other nearby object at students who spoke when the class was directed to be silent. That year we learned about the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s; however, at that age, the 1960s may very well have been the 1760s for how long ago it seemed to my child self. Around the time we did that unit, I was having one of my assignments graded by Ms. Abernathy, standing nervously at her desk, when somehow the topic of civil rights arose. She recalled to me how when she was in high school right across the street from my elementary school at Louisville’s historically Black Central High School, which is the same high school from which Muhammad Ali graduated, she as a Black student received second hand textbooks “after the white students were through with them, with pages torn out and passages marked through” (Abernathy, 2007). I was astounded to learn this, as Ms. Abernathy was not one to accept any work of low quality from us as students and I was appalled to learn that she was succumbed to lesser treatment and a disadvantageous academic experience (though this was only one of many atrocities Black students faced in many areas of their lives, as I would later come to learn). Ms. Abernathy’s personal experience put into perspective for me as a third grader that the time of de jure racial segregation in the United States was in fact quite recent, and that de facto racial segregation persisted as a result, maintaining unequal distribution of wealth and resources in neighborhoods and schools based on the predominant racial composition of the community.

After that year, I was promoted to fourth grade in which students were granted even more independence in completing their tasks for the week. As I often finished all of my tasks early, I occupied my time by reading novels from our language arts classroom. The two that were most meaningful for me at that time were *Bud, Not Buddy* and *Maniac Magee*, both of which showed worlds not only influenced by—but directed by—race, and I began to develop language and understanding for the mirrors of those realities that I saw in my own world. As time passed, I read more and continued to observe the ways race shaped spaces in my schools, in seventh grade reading *Live from Death Row* about Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black activist and journalist who was convicted of the murder of a Philadelphia police officer and sentenced to death, and *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf* by Ntozake Shange, which

portrays experiences of Black girlhood and womanhood. My sophomore year of high school, I read *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. These five texts and my personal observations about race in my highly segregated hometown gave me a foundation to urge an inquiry about how to deconstruct the social construct of race and account for the devastating and genocidal effects it has had on our world. I never explicitly discussed whiteness and all it carries in my household growing up, and I wondered how common this was in white households across the world—how this silence contributes to the harmful maintenance of the myth of white supremacy, as if we are not actively naming something harmful and working against it, it can call itself otherwise.

This foundation eventually led me to this point, as I chose to study abroad in South Africa specifically to investigate race and whiteness. I carry questions with me into, and certainly beyond, this project. What does it mean to dedicate a research project to whiteness, which already dominates, saturates, and takes up many spaces? If we as white people created race as a means to gain economic, political, social, and personal advantage, how do we deconstruct it within ourselves and in institutions? Are we aware that by oppressing others we have made ourselves less human and socialized ourselves according to this status—what Paulo Freire names, “the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others” (Freire, 1972, p. 29)? Are we even capable of naming what liberation from this construct would look like, and do we have the authority to do so? How do we negate whiteness as a standard to which all others are compared? This project seeks an entry point into these questions and others in focusing the research question, *How has whiteness been constructed in South Africa as an identity and a property?* It is only by beginning to understand a construction that it can be deconstructed. This project, as an exploration, seeks a process and by no means a final product or answer.

### A Ruminantion on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

If I am unwhole, where have I cast the rest?

With what will I fill it

if I cannot even name what I seek?

- Mackenzie Berry (journal entry, n.d.)

## Literature Review

As a literature, white studies in South Africa focuses primarily on whiteness post-apartheid as an evaluation of its transformation or lack thereof from white dominance during apartheid, as well as on the phenomena that maintain white privilege post-apartheid. A relatively recent field of study, “whiteness studies makes its departure by turning our academic gaze from the traditional (black) object of racism onto the generally overlooked (white) subject of racism” (Wale & Foster, 2007 in Spickernell, 2016, p. 14). The overlooking of whiteness despite its creation and maintenance of racism indicates the characteristic of whiteness to exist as the standard, and for everything else to become an object of study in relation to it. As Harris argues, whiteness is not only a personal identity but a property and an institution, as “Whiteness at various times signifies and is deployed as identity, status, and property, sometimes singularly, sometimes in tandem” (Harris, 1993, p.1725). Although Harris discusses whiteness in an American context, its parallel of codification in a South African context renders this discussion relevant, which indicates particular global characteristics of whiteness. The complexity of how whiteness manifests is indicative of the many forms it takes in order to maintain the privilege which accompanies it.

Cheryl Harris’ “Whiteness as Property,” a landmark work in race studies, served as a critical resource in my interrogation of what it means to be white as a personal identity, as the work claims that even as an identity, whiteness is a property based on exclusion.

*White identity and whiteness were sources of privilege and protection; their absence meant being the object of property. Slavery as a system of property facilitated the merger of white identity and property...Whiteness was the characteristic, the attribute, the property of free human beings...Possession - the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property - was defined to include only the cultural practices of whites. This definition laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness - that which whites alone possess - is valuable and is property (Harris, 1993, p. 1721).*

In the South African context during the apartheid era, “Slavery” in the above context can be translated to “a system of exploitative labor of people of color,” though white South Africans certainly enslaved people of color, beginning in the late 1600s. “Property” is typically used to refer to physical items in someone’s possession—houses, cattle, slaves. How can “property” be attributed to white identity and no other racial identity? “Property” is also used as a synonym for

particular characteristics or attributes of something, and in this case that attribute is exclusion, as “in particular, whiteness and property share a common premise - a conceptual nucleus - of a right to exclude” (Harris, 1993, p. 1714). For me, naming whiteness as a property is quite useful because it ties the characteristic of exclusion in political and social realms to the physical benefits of land and other economic assets, as even if white people did not hold particular economic assets such as land, they were still permitted to hold them and benefited from exclusion nonetheless. The apartheid government could not have sustained as long as it did without the acquiescence or support of the majority of white people, who benefited from apartheid even if they did not overtly support it. “Whiteness as property” in this project is used as a shorthand to denote whiteness as the historic “property of free human beings” that Harris describes.

As there are various ethnicities that fall under the categorization of “white,” it is critical to note that the racial categorization of “white,” as well as other racial categorizations which hold widespread ethnicities, was intentional.

*While not particularly unifying across troublesome ethnic boundaries within Europe, the invention of whiteness provided people from Europe with a supranationalism that enabled them to ensure that the emerging social formation brought about by European expansion were articulated to their greatest self-interest” (Steyn, 2001, p. 5).*

Exacerbating tensions between Black tribes in South Africa, the Afrikaners and the British (separately) used this tactic to overtake South African land tribe by tribe, despite having great strife with each other, as “nearly all of the nineteenth-century white immigrants (most of whom came from Britain) kept aloof from Afrikaners, despised their language and culture, and underestimated their achievements” (Thompson, 2001, p. 112). The vested interest in whiteness and the benefits that accompanied attributing it to dominance and superiority came to supersede nationalism.

The study of whiteness as a personal identity is further nuanced when considering James Baldwin’s depiction of whiteness in which “There is not...a set of cultural features which white people have in common, rather what white people have in common is their common position within the hierarchies set up by European colonialist expansion and conquest” (Matthews, 2015, p. 117). In this context, “position” refers not only to economic position but also social and political position. Many scholars argue that “white” as a category describes a social and political

position rather than a cultural identity, which differs from other racial groups to which particular cultural phenomena can be attributed, such as Hip Hop as a Black cultural practice. Because of this, it would be grossly inaccurate to separate social and political history from the personal identity of whiteness—thus this study, on a small scale, seeks to exist at its intersection.

As a field, whiteness studies “dedicates itself to subverting the power of whiteness, dislodging it from the position of authority which purports to be the measure of all humanity” (Steyn, 2004, p. 144). Contemporary white studies literature in South Africa gauges how white identity and white domination has shifted (or not) post-apartheid, with some studies narrowing to focus on Afrikaner or British identities or white identity across class in South Africa. The literature has noted a shifting of racist ideology from the public to the private sphere among some white South Africans, although the alt-right has gained more momentum and become more overt, claiming for example that a white genocide, particularly farmers, is occurring in the name of land reform. The rise of the alt-right is not particular to South Africa but rather reflects global trends. The literature at large has also noted some white South Africans wanting to depart from their roots in an attempt to depart from the racist regime of apartheid by association. White studies not only gauges, but interrogates whiteness and seeks to subvert and reinvent its manifestations.

Although whether or not methodologies have included interviewing of white South Africans as a part of their data varies, there are examples of their inclusion and the interview questions which were used as a source of reference to develop interview questions for this project. Because most existing studies focus heavily on the social, political, economic, and historical significance and characteristics of whiteness through analysis of various primary source texts and laws, they serve as a great resource for creating context. I seek to expand on the existing white studies literature by including interviews which focus on personal relationship to whiteness and the implications of that relationship beyond the personal. As much literature in white studies is dense, I seek to provide a non-traditional narrative approach to be more accessible for those who do not study the field.



## Part II: Narratives

### **Minority in Power**

Of the characteristics that make being white in South Africa distinct compared to other countries with such a racialized history, being the minority population is one of the most salient. In July of 2018, the white population in South Africa was estimated at 7.8% (Statistics South Africa, 2017, p. 2), and is expected to decline in future years beyond 2021, due in large part to emigration. Since the first white people settled in South Africa, white people have been the minority, taking control of the land over time through violence and force and dedicating a vested interest in the economic potential of diamond and gold discovered during the period of British imperialism, by which point, “white workers were able to realize a common interest with capitalism in entrenching a racial division in the first industrial city in South Africa

[(Kimberley)]” (Thompson, 2001, p. 119). White workers’ common interest with capitalism in entrenching a racial division is also true for the United States, whose capitalist system became lucrative based on the labor of enslaved Black people, and was sustained by the white majority due to the privileges accrued to whiteness. As white people are and always have been the minority in South Africa, white South Africans’ experience has been particular in this regard.

When asking participants about their perceived differences being white in South Africa compared to other countries, being a minority was commonly named as a difference.

*There has to be some recognition that here—people classified as white are not the majority and they no longer hold political power. But, you could say that they certainly do hold economic power, although they’re not the only people who hold economic power in this country, but they still certainly hold a large portion of it, disproportionate to the population. And of course there’s also the social privileges that come with being perceived as white, so you definitely move through the world far more easily here in some cases. That’s slowly changing (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018).*

As I considered how this compared to my own experience coming from the United States, in which white people constitute the majority of the overall population, I contemplated on the starkness of such a minority of the population controlling and/or possessing the majority of the resources of the country. I wondered if, like the United States, some white people would even be able to maintain staying completely within white communities considering that the vast majority of South Africans are people of color. This consideration was addressed in one of my last interviews, with graduate student Rachel Gray, when I asked this question.

*Yeah, I think just being so in a minority. It’s difficult because in some cases we’re not like—for example in Westville, it’s still a predominantly white suburb, so you can maneuver around in South Africa and be surrounded by white people. But then, when you are out of your little bubble, you’re very much, um—sometimes it’s like there’s a lack of connection and a lack of understanding between me and the majority of South Africans and they have a different culture. It’s a unique experience from a South African perspective I think because we have so many races, languages, and histories, that we are different (Rachel Gray, pers. comm., November 9, 2018).*

This aligned with my brief experience of South Africa, as there are designated spaces such as restaurants, bars, and neighborhoods dominated by specific races and moving through them can

feel like moving between worlds. It seems that this contributes to social cohesion among races and simultaneously contributes to social division between them.

What interests me in particular about how recent it was that whiteness was codified into law to hold substantial privilege. By historical standards, it was a blink away.

*South Africa has a very particular history, and what was done here was institutionalized far longer, but go back 50 years and it was prevalent everywhere and might even have been in law in many parts of the world (Andy Gray, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

However, by historical standards, the codification of white privilege into law was only a couple blinks away in many other parts of the world, including the United States. At this point in the interview, Andy's statement brought me back to considering global characteristics or realities of whiteness, as while South Africa is particular it also demonstrates a certain extreme or margin that indicates a lot about the center or the core—that the codification of the myth of white superiority was so mainstream as to make its extreme manifestations possible.

I also considered videos I had watched of Black South Africans speaking about living during apartheid and stating that at the time they did not know what apartheid was because the only people they saw were Black people, and so the intentional separation from people of other races did not feel separate or strange, merely typical and normal. Within particular enclaves or communities, what can you feel separate from if your community is your whole?

*I think there's a huge difference being white in South Africa...I was just overhearing a young colleague, an African-American guy, saying he's used to conversations in the States, people saying "People must..." and he's always having to raise, "What about Black people?" and then realizing in conversations here in South Africa that when we're saying "people" we mean "Black people" (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

This statement made me rise a little in my chair during the interview, considering the subtext that is implied when people make general statements. In general, "people" in America translates to "white people," but in South Africa it translates to "Black people." How does this shape what it means to be white in South Africa, to be the few in number? I think the processing of this question in regard to being the minority exists in the particular. The "people" of your community are the "people" of your world—how our personal enclaves are constructed may be our first foundation for generalization on what is both included and excluded. To step out of them, we

must confront a new reality from which we likely feel disconnected. It seems that moving between realities is common practice for many of the participants in this project.

### **Language & Whiteness in South Africa**

*The 'backstage' talk that is usually reserved for fellow whites or Afrikaners illustrates a clear difference between public and private constructions of Afrikaner identity*

*(Verwey & Quayle, 2012, p. 1).*

Another particular characteristic of being white in South Africa is that white South Africans largely do not speak the languages of Black South Africans. During apartheid, South Africans were educated in English and Afrikaans, although South Africans of color had different first languages. In the contemporary period, this results in white South Africans and South Africans of color not being able to communicate with each other with the same intimacy or closeness of communication of those who both speak the same first language. The apartheid government tied language into racialization in an attempt to exert further control over South Africans of color and create more division among races, which persists to the present. Language was another element that consistently arose among participants when they related their experiences of being white in South Africa.

*[My father] challenged and campaigned in my high school when I was at school for us to be taught Zulu. He felt we shouldn't be taught Afrikaans, we should be taught Zulu if we were going to be able to navigate and have a future together, we should be able to*

*communicate. So he was that kind of thinking person, and you know, used to get into arguments with my head mistress about teaching us Zulu (Janine Hicks).*

Zulu is the primary language spoken among Black South Africans in KwaZulu-Natal, where I conducted these interviews in Durban, South Africa. Janine's response surprised me, as she spoke about her childhood during the apartheid era, in which her father imagined that white South Africans and Black South Africans should have a future together. In the present, Janine speaks about the considerations being made on how to decolonize not only academia, but also South African society at large.

*I had an amazing conversation with my son's buddies, a colored boy, and you know they're 16. He says we've been enslaved by English and looking at the power and use of—I mean that's what the colonialists did, the Dutch colonialists. I come from French Huguenot stock and the very first way the Dutch colonialists controlled French colonialists settling in the Cape was to insist their children be educated in schools in English, and in their churches they were not allowed to be preached to or ministered to in French. So, using language and religion and education, and language was central to that, it's very clever, that's how you subjugate and control people. So, very mindful of the power of language. We're grappling with this, um, in our—we're talking about decolonization of education and how we can decolonize our curriculum and the materials that we use (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

Rachel Gray also named this as a barrier to her educating the students she works with, stating “even with lecturing, with tutoring, most of my students are not first English speakers, and I wish that I could actually connect with them on that level, but I can't” (Rachel Gray, pers. comm., November 9, 2018).

Language as a means of subjugation and control is an historical practice, and its effects can also mean increased social cohesion among those who speak a particular language that has been discouraged from practice and excluded from practice in formal settings. In the intimate communal spaces, such as family shops, disconnection based on language difference can be apparent.

*I think language is so important in South Africa as barrier between us. Um, and I'm sure you've noticed it. You go into a shop and the shop assistants are speaking to one another while serving you and you're not part of that conversation. Having 11 languages of*

*course doesn't help, but if you look at many African people in this country, they'll speak four or five, quite happily. Um, white South Africans were very isolated and we were hammered with only 2 languages and we speak the 2 languages of the white community [(Afrikaans and English)] (Andy Gray, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

When I consider the many different worlds that seem to exist in South Africa, it seems that language is critical in both binding worlds together and separating them from others.

Another characteristic that emerged in the narratives, which is not particular to South Africa, is the diction within language that some white South Africans use among each other when they feel free to do so as opposed to the diction they use when they may not feel free to express themselves.

*It's this testing thing among white people generally. Racism is now officially not a good thing, so people have to test and check if you're a part of the game. When you meet a new white person and they're always testing you like, "So, oh my God you know the other day..." and they're waiting for you to go back like "What did that motherfucker do?" Then suddenly they're in there with the racist comments and they know it's safe. But if you go, "Your gardener? What did your gardener do?" then they know that there's a line (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

The "testing" Marc refers to seems to portray racism as a means of social cohesion among certain white South Africans, who feel validated of their own views and practices if they engage with other white people who agree. I have often considered how language affects the maintenance of racism, as the language one uses to think can shape one's views and subsequently one's practices, even if this shaping is covert and subconscious. I question how language translates into action (or does not), and how both can cause harm, although action more so. Although Janine spoke of her father advocating for white South Africans to be taught Zulu, she also spoke of her father as a man conservative in his rhetoric and voiced opinions, which did not align with his actions, as she stated, "I'm angered by the entrenched values and views in people like my father, but somehow I'm excusing him because he lives a different life than his rhetoric" (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). I wonder at this—how rhetoric can be socialized but seemingly independent of actions and how rhetoric can seemingly shape actions.

### **Whiteness & Class (& Other Convergences)**

*We were brought up in such a strange manner [during apartheid] that the only Black people we encountered were the domestic workers*

*(Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

One of the primary aims of the apartheid state was to racialize class, among other things, which is done most effectively through a capitalist economic system. Class was a subject which continuously arose in the narratives of participants, as did ethnicity, and so in this section I process and present the narratives of the convergence of whiteness and class and whiteness and ethnicity, with greater focus on the former because the latter has been addressed in the “Literature Review” and other sections. Of those who grew up during apartheid, they noted that largely the only Black people with whom they interacted were domestic workers in their homes and schools, which indicates that one’s class is usually dependent on one’s race. Although there were poor white South Africans during apartheid, poor white South Africans were far wealthier than poor Black South Africans. In the above quote, Janine Hicks notes that class was racialized to such a degree that to white people, the concept of Blackness was synonymous with domesticity and manual labor. In the present, participants spoke about how they have perceived the relationship between race and class to have shifted.

When I mentioned to Kira Erwin that I was not sure if white people were capable of creating a world without racism, both institutionalized and interpersonal, she responded with the following.

*But one thing I think we could be pretty certain of is that [racism] could never get as entrenched as structurally, the violence that they enact just couldn’t be as normalized, just couldn’t be as acceptable, when basic material equality is present...The inequality on*

*so many different levels is so problematic, is so sort of really is a type of violence on people who really don't hold any form of financial capital. Because it maps onto race so easily, you can see how problematic this is in the sense of normalizing poverty as Black instead of seeing poverty as an act of violence as a sort of capitalist grouping on others...The discourse on defending privilege which we would have been very used to hearing coming from children racialized as white, primarily because their parents socialized them into it, it sounds identical to the forms, the defense of class privilege that is coming out of students that would be racialized white, Indian, colored, Black, it doesn't matter. And that's why I say like, they're not identical forms of oppression, but these systems they work so well together, they reinforce each other so well (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018).*

As I transcribed this section of the recording, one excerpt in particular stilled me—“normalizing poverty as Black instead of seeing poverty as an act of violence as a sort of capitalist grouping on others.” If impoverishment is viewed as a state that Black people choose for themselves, then its economic underpinnings and the ways it facilitates stark income inequality can never be addressed.

In referencing the economic issues and issues of corruption that persist with a Black political party, the African National Congress (ANC), in power, Andy and Marc voiced their perceptions of race and class in a South African context.

*My concerns are mainly economic. And the issue of corruption. I'm very aware that corruption is not something new and not something that's racially-defined. The previous regime pre-94 was profoundly corrupt and, um, privileged not only a race group but a language group over all others. Um, and, the sort of diversion of state funds for nefarious purposes happened as much then as now (Andy Gray, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

*There is this huge population which no one seems to give a shit about, politicians, take care of themselves, people with money take care of themselves, it doesn't matter what race they are. Or their sex or their gender or anything. People take care of...I think you can see, initially it was Black and white or Indian and mixed race, what we call “colored,” but now you see a lot more it's an economic thing than a race thing, the race thing is still there, don't get me wrong. But seem politicians milk the race thing, they*

*push the race thing, but it's an economic class thing. They're pushing race and they're just as rich as everybody else (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

In these conversations, I always think about how although a political party such as the ANC is primarily run by Black people, it still operates within a “white” model of government rather than a Black African model of governance pre-colonization, which featured decentralization and smaller communities tending to themselves. Thus, the party is still operating within whiteness. When socialized under an era of apartheid, it is logical that if seeking wealth, Black South Africans (and anyone) would seek to gain an administrative position in government to attain wealth, based on the model with which they grew up. As one of our SIT lecturers stated, “in America, if a young person wants to be rich, they go to Wall Street. In South Africa, if they want to be rich, they go into government” (Buccus 2018). These realities make me consider how much responsibility is on people themselves and how much is on a need to restructure the economic system into one in which basic material equality can be achieved and the governmental system into one which prioritizes those who seek to serve the public rather than those who seek to serve their own interests.

As aforementioned, another significant convergence in the South African context is that of whiteness and ethnicity, as Afrikaners and Brits have historically been hostile toward each other, and that hostility affects some relations today. As Steyn notes, “while both English and Afrikaans white South Africans share many common identifications and assumptions of privilege, there are also significant differences in how their whiteness is being reframed in post-apartheid South Africa.” (Steyn, 2004, p. 144). Marc Larkin recounted that his father not only overtly despised people socialized in other races and genders, but also Afrikaners.

*My dad didn't like Afrikaans people. So, in this country English-Afrikaans is quite a strong tension because at one point in this country it was the Boers, which is what is Afrikaans came out of, and the English, were fighting in this country with the indigenous African tribes. So, my dad grew up, and my mom grew up, in a very Afrikaans part of the country, which is where I was born, and my dad hated Afrikaans people (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

Features such as differences in accents, first language, and what part of South Africa someone is from can distinguish those of Afrikaner descent from those of British descent. As Afrikaners constituted the party in power during the apartheid era, it is Afrikaners who bear the most visible

and overt responsibility for the violence and oppression of the era, and thus may experience a different grappling with their white identity than other South Africans who identify as white.

### **Characteristics of Whiteness**

*The aim of white consciousness is to help whites to find a solution to their own white problem, primarily by recognising that they themselves are the problem, and that they themselves are to be changed*

*(Nettleton, 1972, p. 9).*

This is the section I am the most cautious to write in seeking to stray from generalizations; however, I consider it necessary to develop a foundation for understanding how whiteness moves and manifests in various realms and spaces. As Kira Erwin posited, “I certainly can’t speak for white people, you know I’m racialized here and I hold all the privilege that is accrued to that sort of whiteness as a social identity that I hold whether I like it or not. But what it means to be white, is really dependent on so many different things...” (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018). I think being able to name characteristics of whiteness is critical for “white consciousness” in seeking to develop and enact practices that dismantle the harmful aspects of whiteness, which was primarily created as a racial group in order to justify a division of labor and an economic system in which people of color were exploited. Janine Hicks names characteristics of whiteness as “power and privilege, assumptions, arrogance, dominating, monopolizing, insensitive” (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). As Marc Larkin named it, “very misplaced power. Completely got the wrong thing. Without a doubt, white people still got the power, and if they’re not aware of it they’re fucking dumb. Whiteness in this country I still think is very much a thing” (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).

I noticed that in characterizing whiteness, no one named any shared cultural practices among white people when I asked how participants would characterize whiteness, which aligns with James Baldwin’s statement quoted in the “Literature Review” that white people share a social, economic, and political position as commonalities rather than cultural practices, which other racial groups do share to varying degrees due to socialization as a race. In articulating this shared position, Andy Gray stated, “the concept of white privilege, in the same way as male privilege, is very very important and still changes the way I can engage with authority, any sort of challenge. You know, I’m a 6 foot 2, gray-haired, bearded white male. You can tick any number of those boxes and say I’m going to have a presence, I’m going to have the ability to

command a space” (Andy Gray, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). This also speaks to Andy’s whiteness converging with his gender, age, and physical appearance to inform how he moves through the world and in South Africa specifically. The “ability to command a space” has been a key feature I have observed that white people hold in various interpersonal and educational interactions I have had and witnessed. Marc Larkin also spoke about convergences, noting, “I’m very aware of people’s perception of me. Especially as a middle aged white guy. Um. From the way people are quite suspicious of me. People of color are quite suspicious of me. Um. Not always. But I’m aware that the default position for people is either to completely back away from me or pure aggression” (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). When transcribing this portion of the interview, it brought me back to a statement Kira Erwin made.

*So in South Africa, whiteness doesn’t always shine with a moral good. It’s increasingly tainted with a moral bad, so I think that it is an interesting place to make sense of how ideas of race shift and change and how these social identities um, sort of, yeah, recombobulate into something different, but of course it always has similar narratives to, you know, history (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018).*

This also falls within the realm of the particularities of being white in South Africa, as this depends on whose perspective we are gauging. I assume that here, this refers to whiteness not shining with a moral good largely in the eyes of South Africans of color considering the white South African population is relatively small and it was a small percentage of the population which maintained the apartheid state. When under suspicion, what does it mean to subvert the meaning of whiteness?

Janine Hicks spoke about subverting whiteness, stating how she uses her identity in seeking to shift and transform.

*I think [whiteness] gives me space to be subversive, and I think I use it more deliberately than I realize. Um, there are certain assumptions made and certain privileges and certain spaces that I’m granted purely by being white and I will occupy that space and then bring in my people, my ideas, the programs that we’re currently working on that seek to change systems and policies and people (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

I think about subverting whiteness a lot, as even if we as white people bring “others” into a particular space, we are still bringing them into a namely “white” space or position. At what point is a space no longer dominated by whiteness? Is it if few white people are present, or none?

But because whiteness exists beyond white people, whiteness can dominate a space even if no white people are present if the space is structured on whiteness, such as if a space operates as an extension of capitalism. How can harmful characteristics of whiteness be subverted if whiteness is present in people, systems, and institutions? Am I capable of imagining a world that is not dominated by whiteness if I have largely been socialized within it?

It is these questions that lead me to consider the age-old debate of “seeing color.” Within the interviews, there appeared two particularly varying accounts. Janine asserted, “I see race, all the time. I’m mindful of it. I’m mindful of not being a stupid white asshole everywhere I go.” (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). This arose in the context of Janine stating the importance for her to acknowledge her whiteness and subvert it—to see the ways race has been constructed to inform South African society at large so as to actively work against inequity based on race. To the contrary, Rachel Gray recounted the ways of her household, which rejected race as a construct.

*[My mother] didn’t like that there had to be racial groups and that we had to categorize things, so initially when we were growing up we weren’t taught the words “Black,” “white,” “colored”—you know we have that classification in this country—we weren’t told that there were racial groups. My mom just said, “the way you describe a person is the color of the crayon that you would use to draw them.” So I thought I was a peach person, and other people were light brown or dark brown—I didn’t have an idea that race was a thing (Rachel Gray, pers. comm., November 9, 2018).*

I imagine this world as an ideal, in which race “isn’t a thing.” I think of the common advice that if you want to change the world, you must first change yourself and your sphere of influence, which would align with this practice, changing the world within your household so that race does not hold meaning. For me, I find race to be an exception to this because of how much meaning it holds in larger society and how it influences so many other areas of life upon interacting with the world beyond this sphere. I wonder if there will be a time in which this can spill out of the household.

In thinking of how white South Africans have been socialized, particularly during apartheid, into whiteness, Marc Larkin and Andy Gray’s narratives in particular recalled this socialization.

*My dad's not a particularly nice chap. Deeply bigoted. And he had fought, there was that fight there. Men at my dad's age at that time were drafted into the military and, uh, forced to fight against what they were told was communism but was the fight against independence really. So my dad joined the air force and my dad hated, and still does, people of other races. He doesn't think women are any good at anything. People who don't speak anything other than English, he doesn't think are good at anything. So, um, we were raised under that sort of mindset. I thought I hated gay people, I thought I hated—I thought women were stupid, I thought Black people were thick, Indian people are going to steal from me, all the stereotypes that you get taught. And I was walking somewhere and I don't know if she was an Indian woman or a, a, I don't know but she wasn't a white woman. She passed me, and I was 18 at the time, and I thought, "Wow, she is incredibly pretty." And then I instantly felt this guilt and I was like, "That's disgusting, how can you think that?" And then it just, in my head, I was like, "She's still really pretty though," and in my head it started this whole thing and within two days, I just threw the whole racist thing, it just didn't make sense, it took that quick to undo (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

I found Marc's mention of militarization particularly illuminating, as if one values and practices militarism, it follows that violence becomes normalized. Immediately following Marc's interview, Andy spoke of the same.

*The way in which [white South Africans] were militarized, the way in which we were socialized as adolescents, the intent of the military when they were conscripted to shape us in a particular way was brutalizing. Um, and in the same way as a German concentration camp guard would say, "But this is where I was posted to, those were the rules I inherited," we were encouraged not to question. And to accept, to salute the flag and to recite. You can see it in the shift of our philosophy. We went from "unity is strength" to "unity and diversity." And the "unity is strength" is exclusionary, it's "us" versus "them" as opposed to "us including all of them" (Andy Gray, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

In this regard, I consider the seemingly contradictory ways in which I have understood whiteness to value individualism (particularly in tandem with capitalism) and the ways it values those who conform and do not challenge a normalized brutalization. I think throughout this

project I have been seeking the concrete and the tangible, so as to be able to grasp this thing “whiteness” that seems so large and illusory that one could run to the end of the sky and not have seen the whole of it. Descriptions of whiteness as “dominating,” “monopolizing,” “privilege,” and “misplaced power” are abstract, although descriptive, and I think their abstractness is one of the reasons some white people do not, or choose not to, see themselves in these descriptions and in institutions that reinforce whiteness. I continue to sit with the conflict of how white people and our personhood and personal identities relate to whiteness—is there any way for us to reject whiteness? What action do we take to change ourselves if we do not see harmful characteristics of whiteness within ourselves? How do we subvert whiteness and relinquish its power within interpersonal interactions? I think of how as I continue with this project, I develop more questions, which I take as a positive sign of processing, although I still resist the urge to land on answers.

#### A Rumination on Whiteness

If I am of the veins that have drained the blood of this world,  
how then can we both live?

If we cannot, I must release mine and spill.

- Mackenzie Berry (*journal entry, n.d.*)

#### **The Relationship Between Whiteness & “Culture”**

*[D]espite the way in which white people experience their social space as culturally neutral and individually determined, whiteness has definite cultural content, characterized by assumptions, belief systems, value structures and institutional and discursive options that frame white people's self-understanding*

*(Steyn, 2004, p. 144).*

This is also a section which I felt hesitation to include because of the ambiguity of “culture,” particularly when considered in tandem with race, which encompasses a huge spectrum of variant groups within its construction. “Culture” is used so much and in so many

contexts that it has seemingly lost significant, or particular, meaning. As Rothstein notes, “Apparently culture now provides the foundation of all meanings. Culture has become the prime mover, the first cause...because no other authority is recognized, culture is given absolute authority over its adherents; it is thought to mold their every act and thought.” Despite this tension, I am including this discourse because it was a point of discussion in the narratives and because I think it is necessary to include when processing how whiteness has been socially constructed in considering whiteness as personal identity. One of the attempts of constructing race was to simplify attributing meaning to people based on their racial group, or perceived racial group. For me, “culture” is attached to whiteness as personal identity as opposed to whiteness as property, as “property” primarily refers to the attempted superiority of economic, political, and social implications of whiteness, which is exclusive to whiteness as opposed to other races. As aforementioned, James Baldwin and other race scholars argue that there can be no “culture” or cultural characteristics attributed to white people because white people’s commonalities lie in “whiteness as property,” or their shared economic, political, and social position (to different degrees depending on their convergences with other identities). Baldwin and other scholars note that this is particular to whiteness, and as “cultural attributes,” or a lack thereof, would shape or influence white identity, this relationship is necessary to explore in this project.

When I asked Kira Erwin if there could be any cultural characteristics attributed to whiteness, there was an awkward pause which made me think it a bad question. She asked me what I meant by that, and I explained that I asked the question because some scholars note that there are no cultural characteristics of whiteness, although they suggest that there are cultural characteristics of those socialized in non-white races according to their race.

*Yeah, so here’s the other thing that South Africa’s pretty good at. It uses race and culture as proxies for each other. I think that that is sort of a falsehood, quite frankly...you can see the way in which culture and race can be mushed up together, is also what props up or maintains that there are essential characteristics that belong to certain races. That just quite simply isn’t true. There are social practices that have become thought of as a sort of racial practice and those can primarily be, particularly in forms of resistance against power, against white supremacy, for example. But, in our country segregation and apartheid really created, um, a sort of lived fantasy of segregation (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018).*

In following this comment, she revisited the spectrum of whiteness in South Africa, explaining, “Here’s what, in this country, you want to read the history of people who consider themselves white but see themselves as English and Afrikaans? My God! If you say that they’re the same culture, you know, I’m going to punch you in the face, actually” (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018).

After the interview with Kira, because I felt I did not have an adequate explanation for the question, I decided to omit it and instead ask about general characteristics of whiteness. In retrospect, I should have reframed the question to be more specific and to ask if participants consider there to be particular social practices among those who identify as white. I think that if “social practices” were used in place of “culture,” “cultural content,” or “cultural features” in Steyn’s quote at the beginning of this section, in James Baldwin’s quote in the “Literature Review,” and in similar quotes of race scholars, the added specificity may clarify the claim if scholars in fact mean “social practices.” Although Steyn’s quote and James Baldwin’s quote appear contradictory, as Steyn claims that white people do have shared “cultural content” and James Baldwin claims that we do not but rather have a shared position, I interpret that the two operate with different meanings of “culture” and that they are actually similar. While Steyn elaborates on “cultural content” as including particular “assumptions, belief systems, value structures and institutional and discursive options” that exist among white people, Baldwin may not consider these features to be “cultural features” but rather features attributed to, or features that developed as a result of, white people’s “common position within the hierarchies set up by European colonialist expansion and conquest” (Matthews, 2015, p. 117). This realization, catalyzed by Kira’s comment, was a small breakthrough for me, as I had been wrestling with whether or not white people have a “white culture” when really I should have clarified what that means. Although I could not have named what I thought of as “culture” in that context, Kira’s naming of “social practices” as opposed to saying “culture” seemed to accurately represent what I was actually asking and actually wanting to explore. How could I as an interviewer ask a participant to name “cultural characteristics” of anything without defining what that means in context? This experience of asking a question I felt was “bad”—“bad” in the sense that I was unsure of what I really meant by it—not only resulted in clarification of what I was asking within Kira’s response, but connected me to a larger debate in the contemporary period of what “culture” really means. Its inclusion in statements by various race scholars, and scholars of

various other disciplines, without a definition or characterization of “culture” demonstrates the wide and often ambiguous umbrella that “culture” casts over academia, which I initially fell into myself.

The question, then, becomes whether or not there are shared social practices among white people as a result of socialization based on race, which is still a broad question. One moment in which a comment pertaining to social practices arose during participants’ interviews without me directly asking the question, although the response does not explicitly name social practices, was in Janine Hicks’ interview. She considered, “My experience as a white person is completely different from my father’s experience and my son’s experience, as children growing up, kind of third generation, then, from my father, you know equally and completely, and I don’t think my son has a white friend” (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). Janine defines experiences in her family of being white across three generations as different primarily based on interactions with those who are non-white. While throughout her childhood she only personally knew Black people as domestic workers, largely all of her son’s friends are non-white. When reflecting on this statement, I returned to the notion of races being defined in opposition to each other—to be white only means something relative to those who are non-white. Or does it? Without people of color, what would whiteness mean? Without whiteness, what would it mean to be Black, or “colored,” or Indian? If race were successfully deconstructed, whiteness would not carry any particular position, but are there social practices those who are non-white would want to maintain in honor of resistance against oppression? These answers have yet to be characterized, though of course because no race is monolithic, an array of responses and practices have emerged in terms of how we reimagine and realize in practice a world in which race holds no value for indicating one’s position. As for “culture,” as Kira stated, it holds little meaning in racial discourse without specific characterization of what “culture” signifies in that context.

### **Reparations & White Fear**

*[T]he final death throes of apartheid caused a range of moral panics in the white community...the changes afoot were perceived as not only threatening white power and control of the state, but the foundations of white civility, or "whiteness" itself*  
(Pilossof, 2017, p. 93).

One of the most pertinent characteristics of whiteness that I have observed is the fear that manifests from some white people when we feel that the privileges accrued to whiteness are threatened by challenges to racism and other forms of white supremacy. Fear can wear the mask of anger and hatred, and can manifest as violence, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, and whether covert or overt. When the codification of whiteness as a superior status ends, there is a push from those who value that status to reinforce the myth of white superiority in other ways, such as by committing hate crimes against people of color, committing violence through state institutions such as the police force, denying people of color access to equal employment (despite law), denying people of color access to education (despite law), and making professional and social environments hostile for people of color. Even for those who do not consciously commit violence in this way, they may prioritize security and “order” over justice for marginalized groups because the former protects interests such as private property and wealth

while the latter would require white people to release access to resources and wealth that were acquired at some point through oppressing people of color.

In response to a white supremacist state, many people of color, and Black people specifically, call for reparations from white people in order to attain equity and seek to “redress” injustice by attaining basic material equality, among other things. This is particularly relevant for South Africa currently because the issue of land reform is being debated as the government seeks to clarify what is written in the South African constitution, as it states “A person or community whose tenure of land is legally insecure as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to tenure which is legally secure or to comparable redress” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 10). As the issue of land reform in South Africa is an example of a debate about potential reparations, although as of now the government only seeks to clarify what is written, I asked each participant about their views on the land reform debate to gauge their responses to potential reparations being made for Black South Africans and other South Africans of color.

Offering her perspective as a young white South African born after the end of apartheid, or “born free” as it is termed in South Africa, Amy Jordaan expressed concern about the issue.

*I feel as though a lot of the youth are trying to claim things that they are not entitled to and I think that they are not thinking for the future but rather for the moment. So, they're not thinking about farming, and they're not thinking about taking away working farms and giving it to people who are not able to farm or don't know how to. Um, so it's a little bit scary because I think people get very worked up and very emotional over these situations, and not for the right reasons. I think if it was being done for the right reasons, they were taking away land that wasn't being used and giving it to people who have the potential to use it, and help economically, it would be different, but I feel like it's done more out of vengeance, which is not going to benefit anyone (Amy Jordaan, pers. comm., November 5, 2018).*

In contrast, Rachel Gray offered a different perspective when I asked her opinion on the issue of land reform.

*Um, I think there's a lot of misunderstanding relating to the land reform debate and especially in terms of land appropriation, compensation, and people are like “Oh, they're taking farms away, I'm not going to have any food,” but the reality is they're not*

*doing any of that. What they wanted to do was just clarify what was already written into law. So that reform has already been put into law, and they just wanted to clarify some of the processes involved in that so that they could expedite some of the land reform because the reality is that it hasn't actually happened yet. They've tried to make sure that they give land to people who it was taken from, but there are so many bureaucratic processes in place that are making it almost impossible to actually do them. So they're just trying to streamline that process. Most of the land they're looking at giving back to Black people in rural areas is state-owned land that is lying unused or other land that is being unused. It's not getting land from farmers, especially not successful farmers...Because even know, white people who are less than 10% of the population still own most of the agricultural land, most of the urban property, so there still needs to be some change. And I think people, white people are getting scared when they see things coming from the government and that comes from not understanding the processes and not really understanding what it is that is being done (Rachel Gray, pers. comm., November 9, 2018).*

Although Rachel's view differs from Amy's, Rachel recounted her high school atmosphere in which white students did not agree with policies aimed to empower Black South Africans because they perceived it as costing them as white students.

*And in high school it became even worse because we had the introduction of this program called "Black Economic Empowerment," which was sort of about uplifting previous disadvantages for people of color. And I remember they would get university places, jobs and so forth. But then the high school became, "I might not get my place at university because it will go to a Black person even if I get better marks" or "I won't get the job because it will go to a Black person even if I'm better qualified" and it became quite a toxic conversation, I think, where people felt like they were being discriminated against in the reverse sense (Rachel Gray, pers. comm., November 9, 2018).*

As the government has not yet proposed a specific plan for land reform, there can only be debate and speculation about what reform should look like. Nonetheless, fear emerged from some white South Africans about what this means for white South Africans' future, as Rachel Gray described.

*Currently there is a concerning growth of far-right propaganda in terms of racial, um, tensions. I think the country has come a long way since democracy in terms of combatting that sort of, the racial dichotomies of our society. But, recently we've seen a sort of reversal in that, and it's a lot on social media. And we have these far-right groups, white supremacists groups who are getting quite a lot of attention through Facebook, Twitter, and those sorts of social media platforms. So, promoting this idea that there is a white genocide currently in South Africa and that white farmers are being specifically targeted and murdered and brutally assaulted. And so, spreading this message. And they've managed to get as far as the Australian parliament, um, Trump has tweeted about it. It's gotten quite far. And the reality is it's never happened. And that if you dig a little deeper and you look at the pictures, most of them are fake. And yes, there have been some farm murders, but I think there have been 64 white people murdered in the last year, and in South Africa as a whole there's nearly 20,000 murders a year. So, those small farm murders—yes they're terrible but they're not a genocide. And it's this sort of rhetoric going around that there's this government-funded and endorsed white genocide happening in the country and that's very much not the case. But a lot of people are falling for that propaganda—a lot of white people are forcing renewed racial tensions, causing more hate (Rachel Gray, pers. comm., November 9, 2018).*

In a digital world, it is easier for white fear to build, be reinforced, and gain a platform, particularly because it is possible to silo oneself from any information that may challenge the manifestation of fear into this kind of advocacy for a falsehood. As Marc Larkin noted, “you pick this up as a white person I think, about how white women fear that Black men just want to rape them” (Marc Larking, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). What is it that mobilizes white fear into creating propaganda in seeking a collective backlash and perpetuating violence? Based on my observation, it is white entitlement—a belief or practice, more importantly, that white people “deserve” economic assets, social privileges, or other access more than people of other races. When they do not receive what they believe they should, this economic populism is mobilized, which is a global trend (Buccus, 2018).

Other participants expressed logistical concerns with the issue of land reform. As Andy Gray noted, “I also worry about the, um, the romanticism of ownership of agricultural land... What's more important is, have we got equitable access to the places where we live?” (Andy

Gray, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). As Marc Larkin noted, “It’s not as simple as just distributing land to people, because what are they going to do with it? If I was qualified, if I qualified for this specific piece of land from my ancestors and it’s in the middle of nowhere, that’s pretty bleak...I worry about tribalism. I worry about it becoming English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Xhosa-speakers” (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018). Romanticism of ownership of agricultural land is particularly interesting for me to consider because in many ways, owning land for those who have been dispossessed of land would be a metaphor or dream made physical, but it’s practical use may be unclear, as people may not be able to live on the land.

That land reform is even a debate is surprising and exciting for me to witness, coming from the United States in which native tribes were dispossessed of their land and Black enslaved people who worked the land were not allocated land following emancipation, and governmental land reform has never even been presented as a viable option, nor can the word “reparations” be uttered without white backlash. This, too, shows the difference in Black South Africans encompassing the majority of South Africa as a whole and in having a Black political party in power. When asking participants if they view white South Africans as having any disadvantages in the present, all but one participant said they did not. Amy Jordaan voiced the following.

*I think being white in South Africa today leaves you at a certain disadvantage because there’s a stigma that everyone’s grandparents were a part of the apartheid government and every white family is racist and, um, believes in what the apartheid government stood for. And I think it’s, it’s a disadvantage in that things that are being put in place today, such as the quota system and the free education movement are all based on Black empowerment, which leaves white youth who had nothing to do with apartheid at a disadvantage. Um. But, I wouldn’t say it affects me to a point where I feel like my life is, is incredibly disadvantaged (Amy Jordaan, pers. comm., November 5, 2018).*

This view is one with which I am familiar among white people who view themselves politically as centrist or conservative-leaning in which they do not support reparations to redress vast historic inequity because they do not feel personally responsible or connected to those who enacted or created this kind of violent system, and therefore should not have to lose something for it.

To me, white fear seems to confirm that white people are, to some degree, aware of the privileges that accompany whiteness, because they fear losing these privileges, although some would not name them “privileges.” That some would not name them “privileges” confirms that they are such a foundation of how white identity was constructed—thus dismantling white privilege means dismantling whiteness at its core. Where, then, would that leave white people? Would we prioritize a different identity, or would whiteness be masked in a new way?

**“I hope whiteness means nothing”: The Future of Whiteness**

*The idea of changing society without changing the self is a myth indulged in by many whites*  
(Nettleton, 1972, p. 19).

*If the white man wants to help, he can go home and free his own people*

*(Stokely Carmichael in Nettleton, 1972, p. 1).*

When I asked participants what they hope it means to be white in South Africa in 50 or 75 years, most participants said they hope it means “fucking nothing” (Marc Larkin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018)—“that we will all be brown \*laughs\*” (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018). It is this—the future of whiteness—that I think about most and which seemed to draw an initial pause out of each participant when I asked this question. It was in this pause that I decided this excerpt, “I hope whiteness means nothing” (Janine Hicks, pers. comm., November 8, 2018), should be the title for this project, as it is the future of whiteness which we can help shape.

It is in the future of whiteness that I have the most questions. How can whiteness be dismantled as a “property”? How can the harmful characteristics of whiteness as personal identity be dismantled? Even if we are able to unravel whiteness, will there be much left of the world or will climate change have brought it to its knees by then? As Kira Erwin noted, “What’s important to me? Um, trying to make this place a better world even if it means it’s only gonna happen for four generations’ time. I still think it’s a worthy cause. And with increasingly destroying the environment, even if we get ourselves right socially, you wonder what will be left” (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 7, 2018). Upon entering this project, I imagined the ideal future of whiteness to mean us as white people freeing ourselves not in social, economic, or political terms, but in terms of freeing ourselves of how we have dehumanized ourselves by dehumanizing others, as Paulo Freire discussed—how we can regain our humanity and empathy to its full capacity. In a South African context, this pursuit can be more concentrated because the

population percentage of white South Africans is far smaller than that of countries such as the United States.

Of all the questions I asked participants, the question of what they hope whiteness will mean in the future seemed to generate the most similar responses.

*I would hope that people no longer feel that by reading someone's body they know a lot about that person, or they think they know a lot about that person. How that person thinks, what their families are...what kind of wealth they hold, what their political views are, which is what is happening here all the time and people do it to each other all the time. You read someone as Black, you make immediate, often racist assumptions. If you're read as white, you can have one of two things happen to you. You can have all the social privilege offered to you because you're read as white and you can also have unpleasant sort of racial prejudice read unto your body, so that may not be racism, because white people still hold too much power, but you can have racial prejudice against you because you're read as white. So while I would hope is that those sort of essentialist thinking have broken down enough that you might have some vague idea about someone's ancestry and their relation to history here, but hopefully because material inequality has lessened to such an extent, it doesn't offer you much more information, you'd actually have to get to know someone (Kira Erwin, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

Although most participants hoped that to be white would carry nothing, Andy Gray ideally hoped that people could express pride and celebration of their ancestry.

*I'd really love, in 50 years, to be known as a South African first, and white second. I, you know—it sounds trite and it sounds sort of romantic, but the idea that you have entrenched in your own society that if you're an Irish American than you're an American first, and the fact that you celebrate your Irishness doesn't make you any less of an American. Now, that's very hard to say, "I'm a Mexican-American," right now. I would love to be in the position in this country where I could celebrate where I come from (Andy Gray, pers. comm., November 8, 2018).*

Andy's response aligns with what I imagine those socialized as other races would desire—that the future would constitute a continued recognition and celebration of their history and those who fought for survival amidst an oppressive regime. I consider, if we as white people render

whiteness to carry nothing and mean nothing, what will we make of our history? Will we disconnect from it? Would this be erasing our responsibility toward it? All of these questions I consider as I strategize how to first change myself and then support “go[ing] home and free[ing] [my] people,” not that changing myself will ever cease.

#### A Ruminantion on the Future of Whiteness

“My” people, we must reimagine.

If “my” is ever to break itself open—

If “other” is ever to dissipate.

- *Mackenzie Berry (journal entry, n.d.)*

## Conclusion

Based on the sources I have studied and the narratives of six white South Africans, I could name whiteness as property as holding the characteristics of exclusion, power, privilege, exploitation, and control of others; I could name whiteness as personal identity in South Africa as holding the characteristics of subversion, uncertainty, fear, and/or reticence. However, as this project is not one which can be representative, I cannot claim for certain that these characteristics hold true. What I can claim for certain is the truth of my learning process in grappling with my whiteness, which for me needs to take the form of changing myself through writing. I must question and name the ways that whiteness affects or determines what spaces I have access to, how I move in those spaces, how others may perceive me, and what my privileges are. I must work with other white people to discuss how we can successfully subvert whiteness and improve our capacity to practice empathy. I must hold space for fear and uncertainty in other white people and explore how this can be transformed into a commitment to seek equity.

Whiteness has been constructed by a history of hierarchy and exploitation which depends upon the persistence of racial categorization and the socialization that accompanies it in order to maintain itself. This construction results in white people who process their whiteness in a broad range of ways. Specific to South Africa, the reality of being a minority population which was in power in an apartheid state and having specific languages attributed to the white community creates further distance and division from those of other racial groups. I can only say that all of us, myself especially, have work to do on ourselves to discover what lies in our core and be able to name it, as only then could we even come to the table to build with those who have been socialized as “other.” Of course, I have not arrived at *an answer*, but I have developed more content and tools to process as I seek to understand my own white identity and how to navigate within it in a world that still operates within the construct of race.

## Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the limitations of this project, I recommend the following:

1. A larger, mixed-methodology study which includes both quantitative and qualitative research, which could be representative of white South Africans as a whole. Although this study must recognize and acknowledge the nuance and complexity that exists within white identity in South Africa despite it being large enough to be representative, it would be useful in offering an image of whiteness in South Africa in the present day. It would be important in this study to note the ethnicity, class, gender, age, religion, geographic location, first language, and occupancy of participants, as all of these factors would inform participants' experience of whiteness, and it would be important to ensure that there is a range of participants according to each of these factors.
2. For researchers to consider holding multiple interviews with participants. Multiple interviews may allow participants to develop more trust with researchers and may allow for an even greater depth of content from participants. This could be particularly useful for participants who may have never been asked to articulate their experience of whiteness in South Africa and may allow for participants to share anything that may arise after the initial interview.
3. For researchers to consider holding focus groups with participants. One of the important characteristics of whiteness, as I have observed, may be to see how white people engage in space with each other; thus, a focus group may provide an opportunity to note how a group setting impacts participants' behaviors and engagements in conversing about how they understand their whiteness.

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## Appendix 1: Local Review Board Approval



### Human Subjects Review LRB/IRB ACTION FORM

Name of Student: <i>Mackenzie Berry</i>  ISP/Internship Title: <i>A Narrative Investigation of Whiteness As Identity &amp; Property and</i> Date Submitted: 12 October 2018  Program: SFH Durban Community Health  Type of review:  Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full <input type="checkbox"/>	Institution: World Learning Inc. IRB organization number: IORG0004408 IRB registration number: IRB00005219 Expires: 5 January 2021  LRB members (print names): John McGladdery Clive Bruzas Robin Joubert  <hr/> <b>LRB REVIEW BOARD ACTION:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved as submitted <input type="checkbox"/> Approved pending changes <input type="checkbox"/> Requires full IRB review in Vermont <input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved  LRB Chair Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>  Date: 22 October 2018
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**Form below for IRB Vermont use only:**

**Research requiring full IRB review. ACTION TAKEN:**

\_\_\_ approved as submitted \_\_\_ approved pending submission or revisions \_\_\_ disapproved

IRB Chairperson's Signature

Date

**Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form**



## CONSENT FORM

### 1. Brief description of the purpose of this project

The purpose of this project is to study the construction of whiteness in South Africa through studying social and political history in South Africa and conducting interviews with five to eight white South Africans. I will write the Independent Study Project (ISP) report primarily as a narrative, as I seek to demonstrate the various facets of whiteness in South Africa. During the interview, I will ask questions about your upbringing, places you have worked, your concerns and hopes for South Africa, what you think of your identity and whiteness, and your responses to certain current debates.

### 2. Rights Notice

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

- a. Privacy - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
- b. Anonymity - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless you choose otherwise.
- c. Confidentiality - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to you.

I understand that I will receive **no gift** or direct benefit for participating in the study.

I confirm that the learner has given me the address of the nearest School for International Training Study Abroad Office should I wish to go there for information. (404 Cowey Park, Cowey Rd, Durban).

I know that if I have any questions or complaints about this study that I can contact anonymously, if I wish, the Director/s of the SIT South Africa Community Health Program (Zed McGladdery 0846834982).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's name printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your signature and date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's name printed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's signature and date

I can read English. If the participant cannot read, the onus is on the project author to ensure that the quality of consent is nonetheless without reproach.

I agree to have this interview recorded with the understanding that the recording will be deleted upon completion of the ISP report.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature and Date

### Appendix 3: Instructions to Participants

The following instructions will be relayed to participants prior to interviews with them.

As aforementioned, this interview will be used exclusively for the purpose of my ISP report. I may also use the information you share with me today in the oral presentation of my study on November 28, 2018 or November 29, 2018. The ISP report will be published online. Its findings may also be presented at research symposiums and/or conferences if you permit them to be shared.

During the interview, you can decline to answer any question you wish. I will neither ask why you chose not to answer a question nor pressure you to answer any question. I will quickly move on to the next question and proceed with the interview if you choose not to answer a question. We can also stop the interview at any time if you wish. I will not ask you why you want to stop, I will simply agree and we can end the interview. You can also withdraw your informed consent to participate in this study up until the day before I must turn in my project, which is November 26, 2018. You can request for portions of the interview or any other information you shared as a part of this study to be omitted at any time until November 26, 2018.

Your anonymity will be protected and I will use a pseudonym in place of your name in my ISP report, unless you choose to be named. Your personal information will not be shared with anyone. The information you share in your interview will not be shared with anyone until the submission of my ISP report on November 27, 2018, in which the information will be shared as presented in my ISP report. All interview recordings will be stored on my phone, which is protected by a password only I know. All transcriptions of interview recordings will be stored on my laptop computer, which is protected by a password only I know and which is different from the password of my phone. All recordings, transcriptions of interview recordings, email records of our correspondence, and and other participant data and information will be deleted immediately after I submit my ISP report on November 27, 2018.

Please only share what you feel comfortable sharing. Please do not provide details of your participation in any illegal activities during the interview, if applicable. You will have access to the final ISP report if you wish and I will send it to you by email if you would like access to it. I will ensure that you have my updated contact information. Please ensure that your contact information is updated so that you may successfully receive the ISP report if you wish.

#### **Appendix 4: Interview Guide**

1. Could you talk about your upbringing in South Africa?
  - a. Sub questions\*: What was your childhood education like? What were the rules of your household as a child?

2. What or who shaped you as you grew up?
  - a. Sub question: Are there any moments you can share that had a particular impact on your upbringing?
3. Did you ever discuss race or whiteness in your household when you were growing up?
  - a. Could you share with me the moment or a moment that you first realized race existed?
  - b. Did you ever discuss race outside of your household among your peers?
4. Could you talk about any places you have worked in South Africa?
5. Could you name the things that are most important to you? It could be a person, place, or thing.
6. What parts of your identity are most important to you (could be race, gender, religion, political affiliation, etc.)?
7. Do you feel valued in South Africa?
  - a. Sub question: What would make you feel more valued?
8. What are your concerns about South Africa?
9. What are some changes you would like to see in South Africa?
10. What do you consider to be your rights as a human being?
  - a. Sub question: What do you consider to be a violation of your rights?
11. What do you think of the current land reform debate?
12. To you, what does it mean to be white in South Africa?
  - a. Sub question: What do you think it meant to be white in South Africa during apartheid?
  - b. Sub question: What do you hope it will mean to be white in South Africa in 50 or 75 years?
13. Could you name any particular characteristics of whiteness?
14. How does being white affect how you move through spaces in South Africa?
  - a. Do you think there are any disadvantages of being white?

\*Note that sub-questions will only be asked if the interviewee does not answer them as a part of their response for the main questions.

Note that in some cases, additional questions were asked to expand upon participants' responses.

### **Appendix 5: Consent to Use of Independent Study Project (ISP)**



Student Name: Mackenzie Berry  
 Email Address: berry7@wisc.edu

Title of ISP/FSP: “I hope whiteness means nothing”: A Narrative Exploration of Whiteness as Identity in South Africa

Program and Term/Year: Community Health and Social Policy, Fall 2018

Student research (Independent Study Project, Field Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Policy on Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISP/FSPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved.

By signing this form, I certify my understanding that:

- I retain ALL ownership rights of my ISP/FSP project and that I retain the right to use all, or part, of my project in future works.
- World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may publish the ISP/FSP in the SIT Digital Collections, housed on World Learning’s public website.
- World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive, copy, or convert the ISP/FSP for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility.
- World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archives my ISP/FSP in the permanent collection at the SIT Study Abroad local country program office and/or at any World Learning office. In some cases, partner institutions, organizations, or libraries in the host country house a copy of the ISP/FSP in their own national, regional, or local collections for enrichment and use of host country nationals.
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- World Learning/SIT Study Abroad is not responsible for any unauthorized use of the ISP/FSP by any third party who might access it on the Internet or otherwise.
- I have sought copyright permission for previously copyrighted content that is included in this ISP/FSP allowing distribution as specified above.



Student Signature

November 27, 2018

Date