

The Constitutive Effects of Colonial Ideology on 'White' Subjectivity

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**“Every Generation
must out of relative obscurity
discover its mission,
fulfil it or betray it.” – Frantz Fanon**

Abstract

The role of colonial ideology in structuring the subjectivity of white people remains largely unexplored, and yet this has broad implications for facilitating equality and social justice. Whiteness can be demythologised as a persistent function of colonial ideology. By combining Fanon's notion of psychopolitics and Žižek's ideology "in and for itself", a link between the domain of politics and psychology can be made in order to examine the constitutive effects of colonial ideology on the subjectivity of people defined as 'white'. 13 University of Cape Town students racially constructed as 'white' were interviewed to investigate the operations of ideology on the constitution of subjectivity, as well as the experiences of a shift in ideology. The analysis revealed that 'white' subjectivities' are moulded in accordance with the aims of colonial ideology. This, in turn, may account for the social practices of 'white' people that maintain a hierarchal position in an unequal social order. As a result of identifying ideology as a core function of whiteness, effective interventions to disempower whiteness can be conceptualised. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, these findings require further research.

Keywords: whiteness; ideology; internalization; subjectivity; psychopolitics; social change

Introduction

Overview

South Africa (SA) remains a particular kind of post-colony. A privileged 'white' minority group still have great influence over forms of societal arrangements and social life, because of their ties with economic, social and institutional power (Plaatjie, 2013). Yet, the

general ‘white’¹ community remains unaligned with the aspirations of the majority population post-independence (Matthews, 2014; Steyn & Foster, 2008; Thamm, 2014). Therefore, it would not be misplaced to think that the traces and effects of colonial ideology remain in contemporary SA. Ideology, here, can refer to the shared system of practices, both institutional and personal, that “support certain representations and constructions of the world, which, in turn, serve to rationalize, legitimate and (re)produce particular institutional arrangements, economic, social and power relations within society” (Augoustinos, Walker, & Donaghue, 2014, p. 260). However, the study of ideology has been largely limited to the domain of politics (Augoustinos, 1999). To address this, the following section highlights the psychopolitical nature of ideology, using a combination of Fanon’s psychopolitics and Žižek’s notion of ideology. Such a combination makes the examination of the mutually constitutive effects of colonial ideology and subjectivity possible, by using whiteness as a point of analysis. The connection can be made because whiteness is “best understood as an *ideologically supported* social positionality” accrued as a consequence of unjust advantages gained through colonialism and apartheid, coupled with the *normalization* of these privileged cultural, socioeconomic, and psychological dimensions (Steyn, 2002, p. 121, emphasis added). The study argues that whiteness may be understood as the present manifestation of colonial ideology, and, because of this, colonial ideology continues to structure a congruous subjectivity in contemporary SA. To demonstrate this, the formation and function of ‘white’ identity in SA will be historicized. The premise is that, along with racism and white supremacy, whiteness achieves the same ideological end – to secure the central position of people racially constructed as ‘white’ in colonial and post-colonial societies. However, the domains of politics and psychology must be linked in order to examine the effects of ideology on the psychological make-up, or subjectivity, of ‘white’ people in SA.

The Psychopolitical nature of Ideology

Fanon’s *psychopolitics* is essential to this endeavour (Hook, 2012). Psychopolitics can be understood as the convergence of personality and society, Fanon’s primary paradigm to liberate the oppressed from *all* aspects of colonialism (McCulloch, 1983). Psychopolitics stresses the effects of political conditions on personal psychology in order to gain insight into the effects of power, thereby showing the extent to which subjectivity is linked to social

¹ ‘White’, ‘black’ and ‘race’ are all placed in inverted commas to highlight their illegitimacy as a biological category and emphasise them as socio-historical constructions (Erasmus, 2010). Furthermore, ‘black’ is used according to Biko’s (1978) definition, “those who are by law or tradition politically, economically, and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society” (p. 52)

context (Hook, 2004a). As such, psychopolitics is a bidirectional movement, in which the political register is located within psychology and the register of psychology is brought into politics, which inspired Biko's (1978) ideas. (Hook, 2004a). However, Fanon did not examine the role of the colonial order on the psychology of the traditional colonizer – the 'white' man - which is the primary concern of this research. Admittedly, Fanon's work was not on whiteness but the liberation of people *from* 'white' colonial power.

While Marx (1972), and Althusser (1976) infer that ideology and subjectivity are mutually constituted, however, they were not psychologically inclined in their scholarship. Unfortunately, ideology has not received much thought from psychologists, perhaps because psychologists adopt a rigid definition of ideology relating to the formal study of political systems, and thus "ideology" falls outside of critical psychological investigation (Augoustinos, Walker, & Donaghue, 2014). Interestingly, Žižek' (a political philosopher) by aiming to conceptualise a grand theory of the effects of capitalist ideology, examined the mutual constitution of ideology and subjectivity (see Žižek, 1989; 1994). His work offers a clear account of the workings of ideology in general, *and* on subjectivity.

Ideology operates in three ways, which all have the political "aim to legitimate, maintain and reproduce the existing institutional arrangements, social and power relations within a society" (Augoustinos, et al., 2014, p. 260). These three locations of the operations of ideology can be termed as ideology "in itself", "for itself" and "in and for itself" (Žižek, 1994).

Accordingly, ideology is a series of ideas (ideology in itself) (Skott-Mehyre, 2015). These ideas can exist materially in institutions that propagate these ideas and shape discourse in the material sense such as the church, university or media, known as 'superstructures' or 'state apparatuses' (ideology "for itself") (Althusser, 1976); and, finally, in the operation of social practice (ideology "in and for itself") (Wood, 2012). These locations, operating in tandem, allow for the effective functioning of ideology. The absence of one of those operations would mean that ideology could not manifest in social practices, such as racist behaviour, and neither could these social practices then guide value structures and belief systems in subjectivity (Žižek, 1994). Ideology "in and for itself" is of particular interest to this study since it represents the location where ideology becomes "invisible" - a key premise of whiteness (Frankenburg, 1994). This aspect of ideology, generally, can be defined as "the generating matrix that regulates the relation between the visible and the invisible, the imaginable and non-imaginable, as well as the changes/shift in these relations" (Žižek, 1994, p. 2).

Before proceeding, it is useful to metaphorically describe ideology “in and for itself” using the image of a canvas since it is a crucial concept in the present study².

Behind the canvas is a giant boot stomping on the face of a human, to evoke Orwell (1963), which represents the structures and systems that maintain inequality and oppression (the economic reality). The canvas is so large that it totally blocks the vision of the boot, but you can hear a soft thudding. The easier choice is to distract yourself with the painting. While one may paint the canvas in a variety of different ways, it is still the same canvas. The practice of painting, then, is a synchronous act of constructing a world view, as well as maintaining the “invisibility” of the scene behind the canvas. While the painting can be done in a number of ways, you are still confined by the textuality and contours of the canvas. Hopefully this imagery make ideology “in and for itself” it clearer.

Significance of Research

If social practices are to be consistently performed, the subjectivity that generates and regulates such social practices must be congruent with social institutions in a given society. Subjectivity, or the psychological make-up of an individual, then, might be constituted in such a way that it acts in congruence with, or is confined by, the ideology that informs these institutions. This, importantly, forms the conditions that make identity possible (Žižek, 1994). If the conditions of identity are made possible by ideology, it must then be examined how ‘white’ identity is ideologically informed as a social construction. Consequently, types of subjectivity can be historicised.

In order to successfully combine Žižek’s ideology “in and for itself” and Fanon’s psychopolitics to analyse the constitutive effects of colonial ideology on subjectivity, a twofold problematic must be addressed. Before this, it is helpful to outline the current status of the literature on Whiteness and relate it to ideology. The first problematic will be addressed by accounting for the role of colonial ideology “in itself” and “for itself” by historicising the formation and present function of ‘white’ identity. Secondly, if this account is successful, colonial ideology “in and for itself” will be analysed from of the experiences of ‘white’ students at UCT.

My work seeks to address this twofold problematic and due to the theoretical intersections will, in doing so, attempt to make a contribution to the literature on ‘race’, whiteness and psychology and, additionally, form a cultural resource to facilitate social justice.

² The credit for this metaphor belongs to Dr. Buhle Zuma, who suggested it during one of our meetings.

What is whiteness?

Whiteness Studies, which turns the critical gaze to the subjects of racism and related processes, has remained a contested field since its origins in the 1980's (Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007a; Nayak, 2007). Whiteness Studies has undergone three “waves” of research (Steyn, 2007), all of which can be related to functions of ideology. In the first wave, whiteness was conceptualised as a discourse to normalize the otherwise “invisible” dimensions that are enjoyed by a privileged ‘white’ positionality (Distiller & Steyn, 2004; Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007a; McIntosh, 2003; Morrison, 1992). While the second wave uncovered different expressions of whiteness internationally, it achieved the same end – to ensure the central position of ‘white’ people (Hill, 1997; Lopez, 2001; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Saxton, 1990). The third wave seeks to form a global critique of whiteness, by increasingly drawing on post-colonial literature, hence the importance of Fanon in this research (Levine-Rasky, 2012; Steyn, 2007). In the latest wave of whiteness research (see Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007b), clear references have been made to the role of ideology, but an investigation of its role on subjectivity has not followed.

Whiteness, as described by Steyn (2002) is “ideologically supported” (p.121). In light of this, it becomes imperative to understand whiteness as a social *and* historical construct which requires a genealogical investigation, which entails going beyond the “origins” of Whiteness Studies in the 1980's (McWhorter, 2005). From this, it is possible to historicise how the conditions for identity are produced, by interrogating how pale-skinned Europeans *became* ‘white’ in SA, and how this identity functioned. However, this requires linking the relationship between ‘white’ identity and the structural and social practices that continue to produce and maintain ‘white’ subjects in SA, otherwise, the analysis will be unacceptably abstract (McWhorter, 2005). Thereafter, the history of how ideologically informed political and social forces mould ‘white’ subjectivity can be examined.

First Problematic: The ideological formation and function of ‘white’ identity

Due to space limitations, the histo-political “genesis” of ‘white’ people in SA cannot be detailed. Briefly however, the notion of a specifically pale-skinned supremacy and dark-skinned inferiority only emerged during the colonial encounter in the mid-sixteen hundreds (Lopez, 2001). This is evident in the founding “master” narratives of whiteness, which “regaled the inherent superiority, and consequent entitlement, of Europeans over Others” (Steyn, 2002, p. 86). The social practice of colonial ideology led to a violent imposition of European supremacy on indigenous Africans (and others abroad) to create the colonies (Bulhan, 1985). However, for any repressive society to be maintained, such as the colonies,

ideological support is imperative (Augoustinos, 1999). To “justify” this unequal (dis)order, Europeans, from their power position, were able to propagate racist ideas (ideology “in itself”) and devices through various institutions that “shaped” public discourse and scientific knowledge (ideology “for itself”) (Smith, 2015). It was not a coincidence, then, that a colonial ideology was institutionalized in order to serve the economic interests of the European elite (Hook, 2012).

Crucially, from this analysis, ideological superstructures were able to shape the subjective experiences of subjects who acquired meaning through them, and were continually activated and consolidated according to the material interests of the European elite (Ansell, 2004). In order to unite all of the different European ethnic groups (German, French, Portuguese, English et cetera) under one category in order to universally benefit from institutional arrangements, ‘white’ became an ontological category (Fanon, 1967; Mamdani, 2001b; Memmi, 1965).

This is critically important, because, ideologically supported discursive devices, employed by superstructures, could more easily ‘naturalize’ the phenotypical “superiority” of the historical oppressor to “create” a particular kind of human and maintain unjust structural arrangements (Steyn, 2001). ‘White’ is an ideologically informed social construction, that over time was developed into a ‘natural’ category related to skin colour (Steyn, 2001). Therefore, one could argue that ‘white’ people, in SA as elsewhere in Africa, did not come from Europe, but were ideologically created in the colonies.

In line with this thought, Cesaire (1972) held that colonies were racialised not because of the incompatibility of indigenous civilizations with Europeans, but that the ideology which motivated and guided the construction of the colonies was *required* to be racist. Ideologically informed social constructions of ‘race’ were naturalized, as well as the relations of domination. Hence the ‘race’-class relationship

“The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. But to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental is an error only less grave than to make it fundamental” (James, 1963, p. 263).

From this, the institutionalization of racism is dependent on capitalism, but the effects of colonial ideology that supported this institutionalization cannot be subsumed into a class analysis and requires a complementary analysis.

In this regard, Fanon is a significant thinker in his analysis of the effects of racism. He argues that racism was not merely a matter of phenotype, “the object of racism is no longer the individual [hu]man but a certain form of existing” (Fanon, 1967, p. 20). Fanon, it seems, stressed ‘race’ as *the* determining factor, due to the strong stance he adopts in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1970), but his class analysis cannot be ignored. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) Fanon argued that black inferiority is “primarily economic” and the internalisation of that such economic deprivation allows (p. 10). Elsewhere, Fanon (1969) states that, “Questions of race are but a superstructure, a mantle, an obscure ideological emanation concealing an economic reality” (p. 28). This is affirmed by “Racism is the most visible [...] the crudest element of a given structure” (Fanon, 1969, p. 41). To obscure this economic reality, Fanon (1969) emphasised that the logic of colonial ideology sought to make humans defined as ‘black’ inferior *in a number of ways*; “Racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorization” (p. 50), hence, the *social* origin of racism which lead to material consequences (Nurse-Bray, 1980). The importance of Fanon’s analysis, which separates racism from merely a class analysis, is how colonial ideology gave birth to a Manichaeian psychology which dominated the relations of the colonized and the colonizer (Bulhan, 1985).

Manichaeian psychology refers to defining otherwise fluid expressions of humanity, including cultural, epistemic and physical characteristics as hierarchal value-laden binaries, “into separate species” (black/white; male/female; European/Non-European) (Bulhan, 1985, p. 140; Haraway, 2013). ‘White’ supremacy, racism and whiteness *all* reflect Manichean psychology, which follow a hierarchal logic because ‘white’ as the “superior” or the “standard” way of being human is constituted interdependently with the “inferior” ‘black’ or “deviant” “other” (Bulhan, 1985; Levine-Rasky, 2012). In other words, they refer to a hegemony, which implies a kind of dominance (Levine-Rasky, 2012). Manichaeian psychology accounts for how the racist structural splitting that occurred during colonialism and apartheid allowed for discursive devices to conceive and attach meaning not *only* to ‘race’ but to any perceived psychological, cultural and moral differences as well (Hook, 2004b).

It is indubitable that this legacy of colonial ideology continued into apartheid (Hook, 2012). ‘Race’ was continually naturalized as a way to stabilize the associations that accompanied ‘white’ and ‘black’ to advance a social arrangement of life that led to economic, political, social and psychological advantages and disadvantages (Ansell, 2004). Significantly, the lack of radical change in structural arrangements, social practices or

retributive justice, the transition into democracy which emphasized “Rainbowism” more closely resembled an acceptance of inherited racial inequalities, leaving whiteness largely undisturbed (Mamdani, 2001a). Therefore, post-1994, while things have changed, much remains the same in the ideological and structural constitution of whiteness.

Consequently, ‘white’ people are still better predisposed to prosper within SA in comparison to ‘black’ people. While political dominance has changed, the economic dispensation is still racially skewed (Selwyn, 2014). ‘Superstructures’ generally perpetuate whiteness, or ‘European-ness’ as the standard to aim for, maintained by the Eurocentric episteme in our curricula (Mbembe, 2015). The continuing segregation of ‘race’ groups and the presence of a distinct ‘white’ culture, being customarily racist and culturally Western, reflects a post-1994 *re-segregation* that echoes colonial and apartheid dynamics (Erasmus, 2010; Frankenburg, 1994; Steyn, 2007). This re-enacts Manichaeic dynamics, because the general ‘white’ community views segregation as not *just* a matter of skin colour, but of differences related to culture or language (Erasmus, 2010; Zuma, 2014). Consequently, past ideological processes can continue to (re)produce an ideologically informed ‘white’ identity, which subjects of European descent can largely use to explain their privileged social position as a matter of essence, and not of history (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

Whiteness commands attention in our present context, as it is a significant barrier to reconciliation, equality and social justice in SA because the aspirations of the majority are stunted by a ‘white’ population that will not “let go” of whiteness. The initial emergence of ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ provided an opportunity to bear witness to a small group of ‘white’ students to confront their whiteness, granting changes of ideology “in and for itself” to be caught “in-the-act”. Given the long history of ‘white’ domination in SA which continues culturally and economically, such reflective work captures what Steyn (2001) has referred to as “one of the most profound psychological shifts in the modern era” (p. xxi).

Research Aim or Problem Statement

The aim of the present study is captured by Mbembe (2015), “There will be no plausible critique of whiteness, white privilege and white monopoly capitalism that does not start from the assumption that whiteness *has become a part of ourselves* we are deeply attached to” (p.1, emphasis added). While he may have been referring to ‘black’ people, I assume that the same task must be undertaken by ‘white’ people. Consequently, the study aims to explore how colonial ideology is still, twenty years into democracy, a part of ‘white’ South Africans, and how this subjectivity acts as the generating matrix of whiteness. It can be argued that this may help to account for the widespread ‘white’ community’s lack of genuine empathy or

concern for the ‘black’ majority, which perpetuates the legacy of the consequences of injustice in SA. Letting go of whiteness, then, is nothing short of revolutionary (Tabensky, 2010)

Main research question

What aspects of ‘white’ subjectivity are constituted in congruence with the rationality of colonial ideology?

Sub questions

- (i) What are the mechanisms of ideology “in and for itself” that may account for the “invisibility” of whiteness?
- (ii) How does whiteness affect a ‘white’ person?

Method

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Psychology

Due to the nature of the research question, and the paucity of current research available, this research has had to draw from a number of different fields. However, it is primarily grounded on Postcolonial Psychology. Postcolonial would typically refer to the nations that were once colonized which have entered into independence (Hook, 2005). Postcolonial psychology, however, is interdisciplinary as it “engages with contexts and concepts related to historical, postcolonial development, and decolonization and aims to elucidate their psychological, political and cultural manifestations” (Moane & Sonn, 2014, p. 1444). It draws on the works of Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, whose psychological analyses detail the “unseen” effects of colonialism which were fundamentally connected to broader social forces and institutions (Moane & Sonn, 2014). Given the remnants of SA’s colonial history in our present context, postcolonial psychology is useful because it provides conceptual tools, notable in the works of Fanon and Biko, to better understand colonial ideology and whiteness (Hook, 2012). Using postcolonial theory, and the concept of ‘psychopolitics’, can permit an analysis of how politics impacts psychology and, in turn, how psychology influences politics. Psychological modes which influence the political sphere need greater awareness, in order to better understand how subjectivity repeats and reinforces a certain social order (Hook, 2005). Postcolonial Psychology claims that the two are intertwined; just as it would be an unrigorous analysis to dismiss the effects of the power of human psychology, it would not be responsible to engage racist forms of power without an analysis of the conditions of subjectivity that mobilises it (Hook, 2005). Postcolonial psychology offers the potential to examine the construction of a racist group identity, being ‘white’ and how such a phenomena has become

integral to the emotional life of the racist individual and, in turn, a racially hierarchal society (see Frosh, 2002; Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2000).

Research design

Qualitative research is an appropriate design, as knowledge is understood to be bounded in context and helps to gather data on phenomena from the perspectives of people themselves and the way they understand their world (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall 1994; Willig, 2013). My aim is to describe as accurately as possible how subjectivity is shaped by whiteness, to better understand its relationship with ideology, which may be inaccessible to positivist quantitative perspectives (Anfara, & Mertz, 2014). I, as the researcher, play a central role in the knowledge production process due to the interactive nature of a qualitative design. This makes the data and its analysis subject to my interpretive lens, and so such a design carries ethical implications (Banister, et al., 1994).

Sampling Strategy

I chose purposive sampling to identify the participants. According to Willig (2013) purposive sampling entails selecting participants intentionally based on desired characteristics. Because I chose to explore the effects of colonial ideology on ‘white’ subjectivity, I chose ‘white’ students. However, ‘white’ people are often unaware of their whiteness (Steyn, 2001), and so I intentionally chose ‘white’ students that were in the process of challenging their own whiteness, or ideology “in and for itself”. This was evident in their involvement in the initiatives surrounding the Rhodes Must Fall movement and anti-racist projects. The sample consisted of 13 ‘white’ students, of which 5 male; 6 female and 2 that did not identify according to the gender binary. The participants were between the ages of 19 and 23, of all class backgrounds except working class. All participants study at the University of Cape Town, in different faculties, who have lived in SA for at least 10 years.

Data Collection Method

Data was collected using a semi-structured interview process, which is suitable to examine and explore, using a critical framework, the changes and experiences of individuals (Willig, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were useful because the researcher could ask set questions but allow for unpredictable and novel directions to the interview process (Parker, 2013). Thus, the participant is able to exercise their own power in the interview and dictate, to an extent, what it is they would like to explore.

The interview method allows for the generation of an in-depth exploration and detailed descriptions of the participants’ subjective experiences as well as the broader social

conditions which affect them (Parker, 2013). This makes it suitable to the aims of the current research project. Interviews were recorded using an electronic voice recording device.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using Thematic Analysis, which is a method that involves analysing the entire data set to find persistent patterns of meaning, or themes to produce a scholarly report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the exploratory approach of this research, a thematic analysis proved useful to capture the sophistication, nuance and depth of the data, it requires a tool that can be applied across different epistemological approaches useful for exploratory research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Holloway & Todres, 2003).

Patterns can be identified by interpreting the interviews using the theoretical work of Fanon and Žižek, as aforementioned in the Introduction. To be clear, the concepts used in Fanon's work refer to the psychological make-up of the oppressed, and my intention is not to transpose those concepts onto the lived experiences of 'white' subjects. Rather, Fanon's ideas act as the conceptual scaffolding to explicate 'white' subjectivity, since the lived experiences as a result of identity are different. The entire process is outlined in the Appendix D.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics committee of the Department of Psychology. There are procedures that research with humans must adhere to for the protection of participant and for ethical research practice. These are outlined below.

Informed Consent. Participants were informed on the necessary information pertaining to the aims, purpose and procedure of the research before the interview took place, which was reflected in a consent form (Corbin, 2003). Before the interviews began, the researcher verbally confirmed if the participants consented to and understood the process and implications of the research.

Harm to Subjects. To minimise the risk of harm, the participant's identity remained strictly confidential and the interview was conducted in a safe space of the interviewee's preference. In the presentation of the analysis, the use of pseudonyms will keep the identities of the participants anonymous. The risk of emotional harm would be no greater than general incidences of life, but the right to withdraw at any point in time was emphasised and referrals to Student Wellness Services were given with the consent form (Louise-Barriball & While, 1994).

Debriefing of Participants. The participants had the option of being debriefed at the end of the interview. This helped to manage any uncomfortable emotions and distressed elicited by the interview process (Corbin, 2003).

Reflexivity

I would like to note that reflexivity is intimately connected with the limitations of this study. Reflexivity refers to the reflective analysis of how the researcher's positionality influences the construction of the research. (Crang, 2002). It would be disingenuous to make the pretense that this research was conducted with an impassive analysis. Racism continues to wreak havoc in SA and abroad. Since I occupy, as the 'white' person, the "obstacle

Researching whiteness, as a 'white' person, is to occupy the obstacle, object and subject of critique. Thus, there is skepticism about meaningful involvement in 'white' critics of whiteness. Hook (2011) holds a cynical position that 'white' anti-racists are egoistically motivated, concerned with being redeemed, instead of doing "behind-the-scenes" anti-racist work. In light of this, my approach was to respond to Biko's call to address the problem of 'white' racism in my own community, as well as doing work that aims to explicitly allow for whiteness to be disempowered (Biko, 1978; Probyn, 2004).

Being 'white' myself, I have had to come to terms with realizing that I cannot exonerate myself from the history of 'white' racism in SA because I am assigned privilege. As a result, Vice (2010) claims that 'white' people, because of the inescapability of being privileged, cannot have an unproblematic position in anti-racism and are, accordingly, morally obligated to leave 'black' people to liberate themselves. The process of 'white' introspection, is, in light of this, of the highest, and only, priority. However, she leaves the details of what this introspection entails quite unclear. In analysing my own motives, I have to stay implicated in what I critique, as I cannot "transcend" 'race' while living in a racialised society. At the same time, engaging *only* in self-reflection is itself a political move that, especially if you are a 'white' person, favours the current order. Rather than turning to the endlessly reflexive approach suggested by Vice (2010), my approach holds the contradictions of being 'white' and critiquing whiteness knowing that my analysis is both a critique of whiteness and a 'self-critique'.

Analysis and Discussion

Second Problematic: The constitution and function of 'white' subjectivity

Three themes, "Retropression", "The Neurosis of Whiteness" and "The Critique of Colonial Ideology", are explicated below because they represented recurrent patterns in the interviews. Each theme, either implicitly or explicitly, was mentioned by at least 12 of the 13 participants, with the exception of the last theme. Not all participants' voices are used for reasons of space limitations, meaning that quotations which offer sufficient depth for analysis

have been selected. Moreover, participants were at different stages in their engagement with whiteness and those who were more deeply so were given particular focus in the final theme.

The analysis of the first two themes use Fanon's insights, and other writers relevant to the South African context. This was done in combination with Žižek's work on the psychological mechanisms of ideology, the final theme in particular. Such an approach offers insight into the notable effects of ideology and what ideological change entails, explaining the persistence of whiteness and racism. The analysis revealed that 'white' subjectivity is, indeed, shaped in accordance with the (il)logic of colonial ideology.

Retrogression

Post-colonial writers have detailed "the negro and [their] psychopathology" (Fanon, 1976, p. 57), but not of the oppressor. However, Fanon (1967) makes reference to this, indicating that the oppressor is affected by colonialism in a different way.

"The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation. Therefore I have been led to consider their alienation in terms of psychoanalytical classifications." (p. 60).

The clue that Fanon (1967) offers is his research on the neurotic condition of the oppressed, which centres on an "inferiority complex" - an effect of internalizing deliberately created conditions of social and economic deprivation (p. 57). If it follows that if inferiority can be internalized as a result of economic deprivation, then *superiority* may be internalized to be consistent with the social order and the maintenance of unequal and racialized societal arrangements. By internalizing ideologically informed social constructions as "natural", and accepting inferiority/superiority as a result, has certain psychic consequences (Skott-Myhre, 2012). Therefore, this work offers utility in deciphering "the superiority complex of the white master" and its connection with ideology (Bulhan, 1985, p. 115).

All the participants made similar references to the effects of superiority on the basis of 'race', for example, because it justifies racism.

"Whiteness is ... it's like a vehicle of superiority, that like gives us permission to oppress and hurt other people." – Toni

Importantly, this also re-emphasises the Manichaeic logic of whiteness and white supremacy, as aforementioned. Whiteness is not conceptualised as vulgar supremacy, rather as a standard- implying an implicit sense of superiority- but both functionally dehumanize ‘black’ people as a manifestation of colonial ideology (Morrison, 1992).

“I realized in that friendship [with a ‘black’ person] that I was [...] very dominating, which didn’t happen in my other friendships. I think quite an important part of that is only now I’m seeing that as a racial thing.” – Peggy

Dominance, here, is an important reference due to the colonial and apartheid insinuations of ‘white’ supremacy and whiteness, which is reproduced in the post-apartheid context. Importantly, it has been noted that oppressive behaviours seem to have a *bidirectional* effect,

“Part of you is dead too but you’re not necessarily aware of it.” – Peggy

This echoes Memmi’s (1965) statement, that “if colonization destroys the colonized, it also rots the colonizer” (p. xvii). Bulhan (1985) conceptualised this as ‘retrogression’, “whereby violent and dehumanizing actions boomerang on their perpetrator, further harden the oppressors, and their oppressive practices becomes further entrenched [...] Repressed guilt and fear of reprisal also come to dominate the psyche and social relations of the oppressor” (p. 126). Interestingly, “white guilt” is a common condition in the ‘white’ community (Steyn, 2005).

“The guilt comes from whiteness, the unconsciousness of, the inability to acknowledge it, [...] perhaps they’ll acknowledge on some level their material privilege, but their psychological privilege is all there, [...], the implicit sense of superiority that’s been ingrained” - Albie

A method to attenuate this guilt, would be to further protect a dominant position, as a way to “reinforce...feelings of omnipotence and superiority” (Bulhan, 1985, p. 127). Cross-cultural evidence in America and SA supports the claim that those in higher social positions are more likely to emphasise individual achievement, and show entitled, narcissist and self-interested behaviour (Piff, 2012; Wale & Foster, 2007). Hence,

“Whiteness, you know, brutalises me as well” – Jean

The above accounts affirm that the role of ‘white’ people remains, generally and socially oppressive; again, this is congruent with the aims of colonial ideology. Participants, such as Peggy, made references to becoming cognisant of whiteness, but were, at one stage, unaware. While it is a function of ideology to “hide” the relations of domination on the level of society (Žižek, 1994), it is not clear how colonial ideology is “hidden” on the level of subjectivity. In other words, it is speculative how ideology “in itself” and “for itself” coalesces into ideology “in and for itself” that renders a social practise, like normalising whiteness, as “invisible” to ‘white’ people but visible to ‘black’ people (Hook, 2011).

However, with the psychopolitical paradigm, it is possible to explore this. The process by which the political, referring to an external socio-political and historical reality (ideology “for itself” and “in itself”), is assimilated into the ‘internal’ and subjective reality (ideology “in and for itself”), can be illustrated by internalization. In another sense, internalization is the process in which the “interests”, or (il)logic, of colonial ideology become one with the individual. The next theme examines how superiority is internalized by virtue of being ‘white’ or as a function of ideology “in itself” and “for itself”.

The Neurosis of Whiteness³

Internalizing ‘race’, according to Fanon (1967), is a double process: Firstly, it “entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities” (Fanon, 1967, p. 10). This referred to the racially divided economic realities and ubiquitous racism in the colonies, which still pervade SA. Secondly, this external reality is assimilated into the subjective reality, or made cognitive, which further entrenches the socio-political context. Consequently, one’s own subjective reality can be constructed from this logic, as a foundation to create an “inner-world” that is congruent with the exterior. This disrupts the understanding that the individual is separate from their society (Bulhan, 1985; Hook 2012).

Accordingly, Fanon (1967), in conceptualising the internalization of inferiority, elucidated that a person can be alienated on the basis of ‘race’ (Hook, 2004b). The psychological effects of alienation was likened to the experience of someone’s humanity being expropriated, and thus can become a stranger even to themselves (Kovel, 1990).

³ This theme was inspired by the philosopher Pedro Alexis Tabensky (2010), and draws from much of his work which can be related to psychological processes. Neurosis, here, refers to an individual’s loose grip on reality, rather than a radical break from it (Tabensky, 2010).

Alienation not only refers to the expropriation of one's "human-ness" but also *estrangement* (Hook, 2004b). Estrangement refers to "the individual person's ability properly to understand him- or herself and their social predicament." (Hook, 2004, p. 95). This phenomenon of estrangement, which Fanon specifically examines through internalized inferiority, was remarked on by the participants when referring to whiteness and 'white' people,

"I've come to deeply associate it with an almost oblivious naivety" – Ruth

Fanon's (1967) notion of estrangement is useful in combination with Tabensky's (2010) analysis of the process of internalizing superiority as a 'white' person. To reiterate, internalization would entail different psychological outcomes dependant on social positioning and identity (Marx, 1972). Estrangement certainly applies to the general 'white' community due to the ignorance around whiteness, collectively and individually, which leads to a distorted meaning of the racialised body, identity and occludes possibilities of universal essences of humanity (Hook, 2004a). This was mentioned by the participants,

"Just looking at the power of dialogue [...] how we manage to avoid truth in everyday situations because you don't talk about things that we need to talk about, and so we are just left to our own speculations and the damaging effect that that has in that people are not aware of their identities or they're not aware of other people's identities because certain racial topics are taboo" - Peggy

In the above, estrangement is re-enforced by 'white' social practices of intentional ignorance of racial issues, considered to be "taboo".

"Ignorance is like social capital [...] whiteness protects us and lets us hide in a veil of ignorance, it's obviously a lot bigger than the colour of our skin [...] it's a way in which we see the world." –Toni

Encapsulation can describe the general 'white' indifference and ignorance to issues that are not pertinent to the problems faced by the 'white' community, such as whiteness. This point is clearly made below,

“You aren’t aware of it, I think it manifests in people’s behaviour. It’s like, for me, a nice example to give is how offensive behaviour can really manifest in a way people don’t realize it’s offensive” – Simone

“If I think, what is defining about whiteness, its oppression and that’s when I think of the history of whiteness.” – Rick

This is not entirely unexpected, as encapsulation seems to be a function of ideology “in and for itself” (Wood, 2012). This is not only a consequence of only being ‘white’; for example, Haraway (2013) highlights how male-dominated ideologies can distort reality due to a finite perspective and the inability of males, in general, to “see” their domineering behaviours. This is consistent with Tablensky (2010), in that the consequence of racist beliefs is “the *distortion* in the basic truth-tracking function of belief” (p. 79, emphasis added).

The explanation of this aspect of encapsulation must be examined cognitively, owing to the social *and* cognitive process of internalization. As noted, a function of ideology is to misrepresent or modify information in a way that justifies a given social order (Augoustinos, 1999). Interestingly, there is a wealth of psychological research that examines cognitive biases, such as stereotypes, which may well be ideological representations that can confirm one’s world-view of superiority/inferiority (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Information to disconfirm them is often automatically ignored and, if it is engaged, is likely to be misrecognised, through an attentive bias, which seeks to confirm one’s perspective and, incidentally, maintain ideology which affirms the above statement (Jost, Wakslak & Tyler, 2008). “[A]n ideology prevails, in fact, when even the facts that at first sight contradict it begin to function as arguments in its favour” (Žižek, 1994, p. 80). Internalization, therefore, seems to be the mechanism that blends ideology in the domains of politics, or “in itself” and “for itself”, into the psychological domain “in and for itself”.

This is not to imply that internalization leaves a ‘white’ person with *no* agency, but it is clear that agency can be limited by racist beliefs as such beliefs form part of other beliefs. If racist beliefs serve to distort reality, it seems that racist subjects are, consequently, guided by a “compromised” agency “which may serve a pragmatic function” (Tablensky, 2010, p. 80). Thus, when colonial ideology “in itself” and “for itself” is internalized, becoming “in and for itself”, it *masks* the exploitative relationships on the level of subjectivity, hence, they become unavailable to immediate *conscious* awareness. In layman’s terms, encapsulation may be likened to dreaming. While external stimuli may be perceived by a dreamer, they are

interpreted within the logic of a dream. Consequently, the stimuli are *misrecognised* as something other than they are. Therefore, the racist individual is not truly in touch with their reality, and may be understood to suffer from a neurotic condition⁴.

However, this does not wholly account for *unconscious* awareness. Žižek (1994) argues that because ideology is not merely imposed, we also employ our ideologies *spontaneously* in response to our social world and how we perceive both ourselves and each other. If ideology is spontaneous, then it can lie outside of immediate conscious awareness, which is consistent with research on the automaticity of social cognition (Augoustinos, Walker, & Donaghue, 2014). Consequently, to expose the ideological assumptions which are treated as normal, or “common sense”, implies bringing internalized ideology into conscious awareness. A break from an ideologically encapsulated world view requires a so-called “critique of ideology” (Žižek, 1994, p.1), which suggests the ‘canvas’ of ideology can be “torn” (Scott-Myhre, 2015). Thus, the final theme aims to distinguish the ideological mechanisms that regulate the invisibility of whiteness.

The critique of colonial ideology

The critique of ideology, then, is to shift subjectivity “outside” of ideological thought, in order to render the “invisible” as “visible” (Žižek, 1994). This does not imply falling into a pre-ideological subjectivity, for ideology is a part of everyday life (Wood, 2012). The function of ideology “in and for itself” is to make the conflict, or violence, of living in an exploitative society “invisible”, which is done through rendering any contradiction between oneself, one’s social practices and one’s society outside of immediate conscious awareness (Žižek, 1994). This is the “invisibility” of whiteness, as the normality of whiteness is not perceived as particular or oppressive by ‘white’ people (Frankenberg, 1994). Accordingly, the function of the critique of ideology is to expose the contradiction between one’s subjective reality and objective reality through becoming conscious of that contradiction (Žižek, 1994).

As mentioned, ‘white’ people do not generally feel the contradiction of living in a post-colonial society if encapsulated in colonial ideology, for they are not the targets of whiteness or racism. As a result, when a ‘black’ person says that ‘white’ culture is racist, it is often met with indignation (DiAngelo, 2006). Thus, a ‘black’ counter-gaze is necessary, in order to bring ‘white’ subjects back to the problem of whiteness (Yancy, 2012).

⁴ For more concrete examples of how racist and other oppressive behaviours can affect psychic integrity, refer to Fanon (1965: 212-217) and Gobodo-Madikizela (2003: 50- 51).

“So that really opened my eyes quite a lot, [...] interracial relationships really brought to my attention whiteness” - Simone

What was described, in numerous ways, as a consequence of being exposed to a ‘black’ counter-gaze, is a sense of a psychological “disruption”, “dysjunct” or an “existential tear” which seems to be a description of a psychic split. Certainly, this is reminiscent of the contradiction of the critique of ideology as aforementioned and the shift that can entail.

Ben: You’re probably going to crack yourself [...].

Interviewer: Crack yourself? [...]

Ben: Taking all that weight of everything you’ve never seen.

The description, “to cracking yourself”, points to psychological pain. However, pain is undesirable, and so there is an active avoidance of this experience of “taking that weight”. This is alluded below,

“I was thinking earlier today, [...] why do white people cross the road when they see a black person walking towards them in the opposite direction? [...] I don’t think white people fear the black man, I think white people fear the truth about themselves and so when you cross the road it allows us to not have to deal with that anxiety and question, “Why do I fear this person?” [...] I think there’s something that we know about ourselves but we just choose to avoid it for some reason.” – George

The avoidance of psychic pain is detailed by Swartz (2007) who argues that the embellishment of the ‘other’ in our imagination is “all that is too unbearable to be contained in our mind, and so projected outward [...] the self we cannot consciously entertain” (p. 180). The implication here, then, is that we can better understand what constitutes our subjectivity *precisely* in encounters with those who are considered ‘other’. Such incidences reveal the intolerable qualities of ourselves that, once appraised consciously, lead to an affective appraisal (Swartz, 2007). Thus, ideology also serves a pragmatic function in subjectivity, which is to keep psychic pain at bay (Tabensky, 2010). Importantly, while we may not be

able to read the unconscious directly, “it sends messages from the edge” (Swartz, 2007, p. 180).

The Marxist notion of ideology echoes with Swartz’s (2007) claim, but a person can choose to ignore them and keep false assumptions “hidden”. In other words, an individual, in their activity, is actually *aware that they are following an illusion but do so anyway* (Wood 2012). In other words, beliefs, despite their falsity, require believing, because not doing so would not allow them to function (Tablanksy, 2010). In other words, ideology is not simply imposed, people are unconsciously aware they are simply painting on a canvas, but *maintain* that illusion because of the benefit it affords.

“I’m struggling to find, ja, I think the main thing is a sense of indifference [...] and people not wanting to move out of their bubbles, that white framework or whatever” - Albie

This is the point where the analysis departs from Žižek, who would claim that employing ideology is enjoyable, noted in his references to commodity fetishism (Žižek, 1994). The deployment of colonial ideology within the “white framework” is not in itself enjoyable, due to its retrogressive effects and consequence of guilt, among others. Furthermore, as a neurotic condition, it is a sign of psychic defectiveness because healthy subjects can readily change their opinion or beliefs in the face of counter-vailing evidence⁵. Rather, it is an *avoidance* or a psychic escape of something that would be painful to hold in conscious awareness, which deceptively contributes to the person’s sense of well-being (Swartz, 2007; Tablanksy, 2010). To affirm this notion of avoidance, a function of ideology is to blunt, or silence, social antagonism (Augoustinos, 1999).

[I get asked] “How can you be so sweet and understanding towards everything, what are you?” Because [...] the impression I get from people is that basically I’m categorically wrong to be so aware of this stuff” - Gloria

It is a common occurrence for ‘white’ people to dismiss discussions of whiteness, ‘white’ privilege or racism evident in the concept of “white fragility”, a supposed gut-level

⁵ “Although a complete elimination of racist habits can typically be expected only once the social conditions that replicate deeply entrenched habits are transformed.” (Tablansky, 2010, p. 84)

pushback when ‘race’ or ‘white’ privilege is spoken about as a problem of the ‘white’ community (DiAngelo, 2006). This affirms the unconscious protection of the ‘canvas’, in order to render the boot “invisible”. However, when it cannot be avoided, it explains why, when being ‘white’ or the legacy of whiteness is critiqued, it is painful,

“It literally is a tear of everything that I believed, it’s exposed the lie of everything that I’ve been told and everything that I believed about myself, [...] that I’m kind to everyone [...] when actually I’m only kind towards those who are like me.” – George

In reference to George, the critique of ideology can be explained by expanding the canvas metaphor. In some instances, while painting, a hole appears in the canvas (this is the critique of ideology). Only a partial glimpse of the boot is presented, which evokes a number of jarring emotions. However, most importantly, the significance of the hole is that it allows for the realisation that the canvas, and the painting which informs your worldview, is not the whole picture. The emotion experienced is painful, but to ward off the pain, the painting is protected. It seems “natural” to do so because, having become attached to it through an immense investment of time and effort. The choice is then presented: either you can patch the hole up and paint over it, or, to see what lies behind. I would argue that most ‘white’ people choose the former. Suppose one chooses the latter, (like the participants), and decide to tear the canvas and split it open. This is a difficult process, due to the canvas’s size and your attachment to the painting, but revealing more and more of the ghastly scene behind the canvas is harrowing. Only after psychological suffering and concerted effort, the whole picture is revealed: One’s, metaphorical leg, is intertwined with the boot.

The experience of a “tear” is in reference to George becoming aware of what it means to be ‘white’ from the perspective of someone who is ‘black’, and confronting, what Ben refers to, the oppression you have never seen. For George and the other participants, likely the first time, looked at *themselves* (being ‘white’) as a problem. This is a seeming reversal of du Bois’s observation of being ‘black’ in a ‘white’ world who stated that the ‘white’ gaze left him feeling as though being ‘black’ was a problem (du Bois, 1920). The congruency between George’s personal narrative, as good and valued, became incongruent with how he was perceived by the ‘black’ gaze. It brought the internalized ideology, the problem of whiteness, fully into his immediate conscious awareness.

“It’s not like, it’s like, then within all this, these, ja, with all these like opposing forces, there’s always like contradictions within” - Albie

From this, the generating matrix of ideology “in and for itself” that renders contradictions “invisible” must be detailed. A powerful mechanism of ideology “in and for itself”, is that an ideologically informed subject discursively “rationalizes”, *through* the act of elucidating, the deep reasons by means of which the subject thinks or acts (Žižek, 1994). The “rationalization” can be compared to the accounts of the participants, their personal narrative, or the general totality of the thoughts, reflections and feelings to do with self-identity were fundamentally “torn”. In the reflections of growing up as ‘white’, before this instance, were interpreted as *non-ideological* (Yancy, 2012).

The critique of whiteness was judged by the ‘white’ participants as painful, in part, because it was perceived as relating to self-identity. Self-identity is “the imaginative view of him/herself as *s/he likes to think* of him/herself being and acting as an occupant of that position” (Owen, Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2010, p. 11, emphasis added). Self-identity, “who I am”, also refers to the internalized nature of identity meanings, even if those identities arose from social and structural positions, such as being ‘white’ - which is shaped by ideology “in itself” and “for itself”. In this way, when the personal imaginative meaning of self-identity, or “who I am”, is ideologically informed, it entails that a critique of ideology, and the meaning that it ascribes to being ‘white’, would be exposing the contradiction that many have of being ‘white’. That the striving for a positive self-identity (Tajfel, 2010), is made naught by how the social practices of many ‘white’ people are perceived by those who are affected by such practices.

“But that dysjunct that I had between who I thought I was and where I find myself, doesn’t exist anymore. It’s just very strange, I don’t know how to explain it because I can’t tell you when it happened but I know right now that I can’t jump ship, I can’t turn my back, I can’t pretend what happens in this place doesn’t matter to me” - Ben

The “dysjunct” is affective because ideology that is a part of the self-identity, and its critique reveals that what ideology aims to cloud is on the level of subjectivity. Here, clearly, is the result of how ideology “in itself” and “for itself” actually forms subjectivity. The overwhelming cognitive dissonance, as experienced by the participants, due to the dialectic of

the personal narrative of self-identity and a ‘black’ counter-narrative, results in a cognisance of a psychic split, as already argued (Yancy, 2012). The accompanying “tear”, then, is not only achieved by a logical re-organisation of belief systems. The intensity of the transference in the lived experiences of ‘black’ students allowed for a momentary ‘white’ intersubjective intelligibility, a short-lived *affective* immersion that could potentially “crack” the supposed ideological lens that internal self-identity and the external world is perceived with. Ideology “in and for itself”, from the above account, is exposed when confronted with a social counter-gaze of the ‘black’ subject (Yancy, 2012). This exchange, and the recognition of the social conditions of another, of the subjective reality of the lived experience of racism, and when affectively apprehended by a ‘white’ person it can facilitate a *re-cognition* of identity. Identity, and the personal narrative that this generates, seems to be an important aspect of the regulatory matrix of the invisible and visible. The effects in the change of identity are notable,

“The fact that people wouldn’t even begin to think that they owe something to black people or to justice in this country is very uncomfortable.” - Gloria

“I don’t want that [white] life, [...], it’s ironic because most people [...] fight for basic needs of existence [...] my fight is different, my fight isn’t solidarity with that fight, but my fight is to break out of this way of being that I feel like is hugely damaging to me and it’s damaging to other people.” – Simone

Lastly, the irony, at the heart of demythologising whiteness evident in the above accounts, is that its socio-political condition of possibility lies in the counter-gaze and counter-narrative of suffering ‘black’ people. This recognition opens up a set of questions about whiteness and its future that cannot be explored in the present study. It also seems to perhaps point to what Biko (1978) may have meant when he wrote that “the great gift [that] still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face” (p. 48).

Limitations of research

The research limitations are continuous with my reflexivity notes above. I am wary of the “double-edged” nature of whiteness research, in that I may unintentionally re-center ‘whiteness’ or reify it as a monolithic category of experience (Ahmed, 2007). To acknowledge the latter, the small sample size entailing the experiences of the participants do not represent

the ‘white’ population. However, due to illustrating the links of subjectivity with the political domain, the evidence provided implies that, despite a small sample size, the psychological processes may reflect the experience of many other white people in SA. Furthermore, my positionality does afford a broad insight into this community.

Ahmed’s (2007) concern above refers to research that aims to simply reveal whiteness through discourse; here, there is an active search for ways to disempower it which makes the nature of this research quite different. However, this makes self-reflexivity a necessary *pre-condition*, before meaningful anti-racist research can take place (Ahmed, 2004). Although, in my own way, I have tried to identify what this pre-condition may be, in the form of ideology, it is acknowledged that my positionality has affect the analysis in certain ways.

Hook (2005) and Vice (2010) warn against this, which, because of the nature of my research question, is a critique that can be avoided. While I certainly agree that this is a risk of whiteness studies, it does not entail that ‘white’ anti-racist research will *always* be problematic or unsuccessful, as that would imply essentialist notions of identity. Nonetheless, it is navigating through these risks, then, that presents the primary challenge and the central premise of higher education, namely, to try and better understand ourselves, other people and the society in which we live. These risks, due to the severity of problems related to whiteness and inequality in SA, are worth taking. As a (hopefully) minor limitation, the length afforded does not allow for more complicated concepts to be expanded, and this may affect clarity. Although an argument may be made for a lack of intersectionality in this research, but I would argue that the specific history of ‘white’ people in SA, the diversity participants chosen (aside from skin colour) and the limited space afforded was enough justification not to include this.

Summary, future directions and conclusion

It was found that the internalization of colonial ideology “in itself” and “for itself” coalesces into ideology “in and for itself”, moulding the subjectivity of ‘white’ people in accordance with the aims of colonial ideology – to maintain the central position of ‘white’ people in post-colonial societies. The psychopolitical link, accordingly, is that whiteness is not appraised as ideological *strategies* by racist ‘white’ people, rather, they are appraised “common-sense”. Such strategies remain “invisible” to ‘white’ people because such a way of thinking is *congruent* with strategies that maintain an unequal racial order.

The congruency is afforded, in one instance, by encapsulation, the consequences of which explain the “invisibility” of whiteness to ‘white’ people, and their widespread indifference to the suffering of the ‘black’ majority (Tabensky, 2010). This particular ‘white’ subjectivity in turn, consolidates, rather than disrupts, particular structures and systems which

continue to act against the interests of the ‘black’ majority (Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, & Small, 2002). While this congruency that ideology “in and for itself” affords can ward off psychic pain, it is an ideological function that distorts the oppressive nature of unaddressed injustice inherent in South African society that the ‘white’ community are responsible for, thereby perpetuating racial inequality (Tabensky, 2010). However, this is not without a cost, as oppressive behaviours have a retroactive effect, thereby damaging the psychological integrity of ‘white’ people, evident in accounts of ‘retrogression’

Ideology “in and for itself” informs decision-making, and a consequent mode of being which *maintain* structural arrangements in South African society, even colonial statues, hence the *bidirectional* relationship of psychopolitics and the importance of Fanon’s work (Hook, 2012). Whiteness is a social, structural and psychological problem, which is kept in place by a colonial ideology that influences all three locations. Without addressing those locations of ideology concurrently, social change is unlikely to occur, and ‘white’ political subjects will be continually (re)produced.

Future research can broaden the analysis of the effects of internalizing superiority that this study did not allow for. It would be useful to investigate the psychic contradiction, as a result of a critique of ideology that disrupts subjective congruency in relationship with mental illness. This process may fundamentally challenge the medical paradigm of psychological suffering. In doing so, our psychological condition may be far more closely linked to the health of our society, which Fanon proposes (1965). Prolonged mental suffering may arise out of a rational recognition of the pains of past injustice, rather than a result of an illness (Kovel, 1990).

This seems to closely relate to the persisting inability to rectify historical consequences. As a result, 2015 has seen the rise of identity politics, which Mamdani (2001b) predicted,

“There is a lesson here. At the core of identity politics is a question of entitlement. The question of entitlement is really that of social justice. *If we do not address the question of justice forthrightly and swiftly, it will boomerang on us in the form of identity politics.* This means so long as we do not address the consequences of apartheid, the core identities of apartheid will be reproduced” (p. 496, emphasis added).

This should signal a call to settle the overdue debt of justice owed to the ‘black’ community, and so the issue of social justice must become of political imperative (Mamdani,

1997). While this is a subject for another study, I do have a small suggestion. The experience of a shift in ideology, from the above accounts, while difficult, can facilitate such a political imperative through a change in political identities. Letting go of whiteness will lead to a kind of “self-death”, in other words, the “death” of an identity that is shaped by colonial ideology. A start, simply, is to recognise that the socio-political condition of possibility lies in engaging with the counter-gaze and counter-narrative of suffering ‘black’ people for “the [new] self is made at the point of encounter with an Other” (Mbembe, 2015). Once the consequences of colonial ideology are rectified across the three locations of ideology, we can all look back, together, as survivors of an era gone by (Mamdani, 1997; Wynter, 2003).

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*Appendix A***Interview Questions**

1. What does whiteness mean to you?
2. Can you please describe your experience of how you came to be aware of your whiteness?
3. If you could think about your life history, what was the most significant time for you growing up as a white person?
4. Was there any particularly important experience that you can remember that made you aware of your whiteness?
5. Did this change the way that you saw yourself, or other things?
6. How did this awareness of whiteness make you feel then, and how do you feel about it now?
7. How did this change your sense of self?
8. Do you have any feelings of guilt or shame?
9. How do you deal with these feelings?
10. Do you feel like you have a place in South Africa, why?
11. Have there been any other changes as a result of your awareness, or how do you think your life has changed?
12. Did you approach any family or friends about this, and how did they react?
13. How did you respond to their reaction?
14. How would you describe to someone else what it is like to be a conscious white South African?
15. How do you think that whiteness can come to be based on progressive and anti-racist values?
16. How did you see your role as a white South African growing up, and as a young South African now?
17. What is your opinion on the future of whiteness and white people?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent for: _____

I am Alexander Pennington, a student at UCT.

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by a psychology student at the University of Cape Town.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

This research will require you to complete a one hour interview.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate, and may stop your participation at any time with the promise that nothing will change.

I am asking you to help contribute to a greater body of research on this topic. If you accept, the information recorded is confidential; your name is not being included in the study.

There will be no direct benefit or consequence to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about masculinity and gender identification.

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact zoopennington@gmail.com.

PARTICIPANT

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me, and understand it. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent _____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent _____

Date _____

*Appendix C***Referral Form**

LIFE LINE Services: 24 hour telephone counselling

Payment Services free of charge

Contact: Office: (+27 21) 461-1113 Crisis: (+27 21) 461-1111

Appendix D

The process of a thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), firstly involves familiarizing with the data. Once transcribed and analysed, codes are generated. Codes are relevant features of the data which are collected across different data sets, and collated to form themes. These themes are reviewed so that they may be named, refined and defined. Compelling examples can be extracted and further analysed in relation to the research question.