

ETIENNE DE BEER

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Subjectivities in white youth narratives in post-Apartheid South Africa

Supervisor: Dr. LaKeasha Sullivan

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Declaration

I, Etienne Charles de Beer, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts (Community-Based Counselling) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

I understand that the University may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this work is not my own and that this work is not unaided, or if I failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Etienne Charles de Beer _____

14th day of February, 2014

Abstract

This study examines the subjectivities of white, English speaking youths in post-Apartheid South Africa. It aims to explore how these youths perceive their current role in South Africa and how this role and their experiences may change in the future. Twelve students between the ages of 18 and 25 from the University of the Witwatersrand were recruited and took part in three focus group discussions. The focus groups that were conducted with the participants were semi-structured and recorded. Data was analysed using thematic content analysis which was underpinned by critical race theory. The importance of this study lies in presenting rich and detailed descriptions of what it means to be a member of the youth of a group that has a history of unjust dominance over other groups of people in a society where that dominance has been (formally) overcome. It attempts to understand the difficulties and the privileges that come with being young and white in South Africa approaching 20 years after the Apartheid regime has fallen. The predominant themes that arose from this study include a discussion of language as a marker of whiteness and privilege, the need to be sensitive when dealing with issues of race in post-Apartheid South Africa, the desire to be seen as progressive and valuable in post-Apartheid South Africa, a general sense of positivity about South Africa and a feeling of being misunderstood by people of other race groups.

Key Words: Whiteness, Apartheid, subjectivity, Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, South Africa, Youth

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Dedication

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CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

South Africa is a country with a long history of racial discrimination, which formally ended in 1994 with the first all-inclusive democratic elections. As a result of this history the country is still quite racially polarised with a large amount of racial inequality still persisting – where many white people are still in positions of privilege almost always because of the benefits of Apartheid. A lot of animosity, suspicion and often discomfort between racial groups remains. White youths are one of the sectors of South African society that cannot only assist in achieving a more harmonious and comfortable society; but for whom it is sometimes a moral imperative. This is because they are a group of people who were not party to the decision to implement or perpetuate the system of Apartheid but still benefit a great deal from its legacy. They are also a group that has had the opportunity to experience a South Africa in transition and a South Africa where inter-racial interaction is often easier but also, at times, more difficult and complex than it was under Apartheid.

The current study looks to hear the voices of white youths and allow them to express their views about the state of the current South Africa, but also more importantly to discuss the way they perceive that they fit in to South Africa under the post-Apartheid dispensation. The study looks to explore the subject positions that white youths construct for themselves in post-Apartheid South Africa, and to investigate the role that they see for themselves in contributing to a productive South African society.

1.1. Research Rationale

In recent years, as a part of the legacy of the vehemently racist system of governance that was Apartheid, there has been a question around what the role of white people in the New South Africa should be (Nuttal, 2001; Steyn, 2001; Steyn and Conway, 2010). There have been many questions as well about what Steyn (2001) calls the “grand white narrative” and how to dispel it within South African society. This narrative is one where *white* and *European*

is seen to represent everything that is good, right and powerful – furthermore it is the dominant system of beliefs against which everything is measured.

As a result of the “grand white narrative” being so heavily endorsed historically in South Africa through Apartheid – and prior to Apartheid, through colonial rule – attempts to dispel it have often resulted in white people feeling like they should be ultra-tolerant and ultra-accepting of everything different to what they have traditionally been taught to believe (Altman, 2004; Straker, 2004b). In addition, it has meant the showing of remorse, shame and guilt at being the unwitting recipients of the benefits of the Apartheid system for so long (Steyn, 2001).

Steyn (2001) outlines what she believes her research shows to be the five narratives of white South Africans in today’s society – ranging from *Still Colonial After All These Years*, where the master narrative is very heavily ingrained and there is no sign of remorse for Apartheid (pp. 59 – 63), to secondly, there is *Under African Skies (or White, but not quite)*, where there is immense guilt and shame for the horrors of Apartheid and there is a real sense of intended conciliation (pp. 115 – 120). The problem with the final narrative (*White but not quite*) is that whilst there is a strong desire for reconciliation from its proponents, such reconciliation is deemed only to be possible through the denunciation of whiteness in many instances. This, presumably, is as a result of ‘white guilt’ or ‘white shame’ (Straker, 2004a).

In recent times in the post-colonial world, the “grand white narrative” seems to have changed somewhat from the original Grand White Narrative. A new culture for whiteness has been formed where whites need to display sufficient white guilt and white shame in order to be seen as acceptable in post-colonial societies (Steyn, 2002; Straker, 2004a). The new “grand white narrative”, it could be argued, would be one in which white guilt is displayed at all available opportunities – with the intention of gaining approval – to such an extent that it becomes, to some extent, fetishized and fashionable to be white and feel shame about the past inequalities (Straker, 2004a; Straker, 2004b).

In addition to these understandings of the ways in which whites construct their subject positions in post-Apartheid South Africa, recent work by Vice (2011) and McKaiser (2011) have proposed that there is a need for “silence” on the public platform from white people because almost all whites in South Africa still benefit politically, socially and economically from the legacy of Apartheid and as such need to allow the process of achieving a more equal and just society to proceed without offering ‘unfair’ and ‘misinformed or misguided’ contributions to the national dialogue.

Through investigating the cohort of young white South Africans at a historically liberal tertiary institution the researcher had the opportunity to get a sense of how white individuals construct their subject positions at this time and gain an understanding of how they will continue to construct their subject positions going forward, because the participants in this research did not necessarily construct themselves in the ways proposed by Steyn (2001), Straker (2004a) or Vice (2011). This study allowed for participants to produce new subject positions given their experiences in witnessing the transformation of South African society in the years following the end of Apartheid in South Africa. In addition to this it provided the prospect of exploring whether they feel the guilt that is spoken about in a lot of the literature on whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa, and if they do – how this guilt manifests itself – considering that that the participants were not in a position to either endorse or condemn the state of South Africa under the system of Apartheid. Coupled with this, it is important that their understanding of white privilege or oppression since 1994 was reflected upon, explored and comprehended.

Another common trend in thinking amongst many South Africans is the thought that there should be a complete move away from anything that stems from whiteness (Green, Sonn and Matsebula, 2007a; Guess, 2006; McCorkel and Rodriguez, 2009). This is perhaps an extension of the ‘white guilt/shame’ felt by some white sections of society and is representative of tension and animosity which still exists amongst many that were oppressed during the Apartheid regime. As such, there is a belief that an understanding of

whiteness is unnecessary, unimportant (Guess, 2006) and, in fact, that it reinscribes whiteness as important (Stevens, 2007).

While it is important to understand, as Stevens (2007) correctly argues, that the study of whiteness is not the “silver bullet for understanding and combating racism” (p. 427), it is also important to understand that, in order to remove the power that whiteness has over the psyche of most South Africans – whiteness and all it entails is an important (but not necessarily central) aspect of that process (Green et al, 2007a). Also, in order for white people to have an active role in shaping the New South Africa – some stories of positive whiteness should be explored and accepted. This research, because it looked for a diverse sample group, provided the opportunity for positive accounts of whiteness to be produced.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This research has aimed to explore the ways in which subject positions of white youths are constructed within narratives of racial identity and how these subject positions of the past and of the present are put forward through the lens of the present. Additionally, this research asked them to imagine what the future might be with the intention of understanding how the current subject positions of these individuals reflect their feelings and predictions about the future and the roles they see themselves playing in that imagined future.

Essentially, this research has endeavoured to discover and investigate how white youths understand their social location in the New South Africa – looking at how they view their ability to participate in the national dialogue on pressing social issues and in South African society in areas like politics and economics.

Furthermore, this research was concerned with investigating the subjectivities of white youths who have grown up in a South Africa in transition – some of whom have memories of the end of Apartheid and all of whom have experienced, at the very least, the way political change has altered racial

position. It has been concerned with trying to comprehend the ways they have experienced this change and how this change has shaped the way they understand their position in the South Africa of today. Finally, this research was interested in examining the differences and similarities in the ways that whiteness can be constructed with the intention of trying to understand the ways in which whiteness can be configured.

The research was conducted qualitatively through the use of three focus groups (two initial focus groups and a follow up focus group for some of the participants) of six white individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 who are currently living in Johannesburg and who attend the University of the Witwatersrand. All participants have experienced most of their formative years in South Africa after the political fall of Apartheid

CHAPTER 2

2. Literature Review

The literature review aims to review Critical Race Theory, literature on whiteness and its various configurations and some of the hypotheses put forward in the literature about white youth subjectivities. Both local and international literature has been reviewed and it has been found that notions of whiteness are similar in both contexts and that variations in constructions of whiteness, both locally and international, are very much alike.

2.1. Critical Race Theory

This research was underpinned by Critical Race Theory (CRT). Essentially, CRT looks to endorse and promote racial equality through a critical analysis of race and the way in which it influences everyday interpersonal interactions, dialogue, conversations and, in fact, attitudes (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). It recognises that racism has become ‘normal’ and often inherent in everyday social interactions – and looks to critique this very inherence – while recognising that often the racism is unconscious. “CRT’s challenge to racial oppression and the status quo sometimes takes the form of storytelling, in which writers analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minority groups one-down” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, p. xvii). This is based on the premise that culture is not fixed and that it constructs a reality that advances itself. CRT aims to shift the current constructed reality of white supremacy and dominance (Gibson, 2006) to a newly constructed reality which is fairer and more just. It is argued that this reality would be partially constructed through writing and speaking against discourse which, consciously or unconsciously, endorses white dominance. CRT sees racism as constructed both in the minds of people, but also and mainly in the way social structures are assembled.

2.2 Defining Whiteness

When looking at subjectivities of white people in the post-Colonial world – it is imperative to look at studies of whiteness (Nuttal, 2001). Whiteness studies, generally, look at what it means to be white in the post-Colonial, post-Apartheid world (Green et al, 2007a; Hartman, 2004; Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996; McWhorter, 2005; Steyn, 2007). Additionally, studies of whiteness were born in the context of persistent racial inequality (Hartman, 2004). Further, they look to decentralise whiteness as the universal standard by which everybody is measured (Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996; Steyn, 2001). As such, whiteness studies provide a very strong basis for understanding white subjectivities in post-Apartheid South Africa, and in understanding the mentality and resulting actions of white South Africans, generally, during Apartheid – and they are the point from which white people's predictions for the future will stem (McKinney, 2005).

Despite areas of contestation and how central it should be in race discourse, most will agree that whiteness is still an important area of investigation (Stevens, 2007).

It has been argued that whiteness is the most forceful construct to emerge in recent years as a tool for fighting the scourge of racism and that “[l]ocating whiteness, rather than racism, at the centre of anti-racism focuses attention on how white people's identities are shaped by a broader racist culture, and brings to the fore the responsibilities white people have for addressing racism” (Green et al., 2007, p. 390). There is also the belief that “we cannot comprehend white supremacist racism without exploring the construction of white identity. White identity defines itself in opposition to inferior others; racism, then, becomes the maintenance of white identity” (Ferber, 1998 as cited in Guess, 2006, p. 669). This looks to be a powerful position to present at first glance.

However, upon more careful examination – there are a few problems with it. Ratele (2007) argues that the best way to combat racism is through making

those who have been historically oppressed and marginalised unconscious of whiteness in its oppressive form. That is to say that the “Great White Narrative” – or ‘GWN’ (which will be further discussed below) needs to be marginalised and destroyed from the consciousness of everybody – especially those that have been at the receiving end of oppression that has resulted from it. If this is successfully done then there will be no resentment in the minds of those that have been historically oppressed (Gilbert,1996). Additionally, there will be no sense of entitlement on the part of those who have had to relinquish some of the power that was unfairly placed in their possession by systems like Apartheid. This process of destroying the GWN from consciousness cannot come from placing the study of whiteness – in its historical form – at the centre of racial discourse (Ratele, 2007; Steyn, 2007). An extension of this is the creation of a discourse in which a more positive conceptualisation of whiteness can become part of a broader debate in which the end goal is a multi-racial society. This more positive whiteness discourse can only really emerge through future studies of data like white narratives which are likely to support and endorsement of a multi-racial social order by important stakeholders (such as youth who have decades of investment in a future ahead of them) in such a future.

Ignatiev and Garvey (1996), argue a similar point to that of Ratele (2007) – that the white race needs to become unconscious in the minds of all. Their argument is more extreme, however. It is contended that not only does it need to be unconscious in the minds of all – but that it needs to be abolished altogether. They assert that that they “seek to move the question of race explicitly to the center of the political stage, and to argue that nothing less than abolition of the white race will lay the foundation for a new departure” (p. 2). What they mean by this quest for white abolitionism is that race is not, and has never simply been a matter of skin colour. Classification by race has always been inherently oppressive and definitions of race, and particularly whiteness, are fluid and constantly changing and being redefined. An example of this is that it is only relatively recently (the early 1900s) that Jews, Italians and individuals from Scandinavia have been considered white in the USA (Ignatiev, 1996, pp. 15 – 20). The reason for this change in outlook is not

because, miraculously, the skin colour of these people suddenly became lighter – it is because of a general change and upliftment of socio-economic situation amongst these ethnic groups. Because they became more affluent and moved up in socio-economic class they were ‘upgraded’ to being white.

Stevens (2007) presents another compelling argument against placing whiteness at the centre of anti-racist discourse. By placing whiteness studies at the centre of discourse around race and racism – even when trying to critique white power and the dominance of whites in areas where they are in the minority – one could be re-inscribing the power of whiteness by portraying it as a panacea that will destroy racism (Stevens, 2007). What this means is that, through labelling whiteness studies as the “most compelling theoretical concept to emerge... to deal with racism” (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1998 as cited in Green et al, 2007, p. 390) one is placing a sense of authority on the very construct that one is trying to critique.

So by the standards referred to in the previous paragraph whiteness is a product of one’s level of privilege, and not a matter of skin colour. In many ways it can be looked at as a club “that enrolls certain people at birth, without their consent and brings them up according to its rules” (Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996, p. 10). It is this standard by which whiteness and members of its club is measured that needs to be abolished and obliterated. It is declared that by speaking about whiteness in these terms and gaining this kind of understanding of whiteness amongst members of ‘the white club’ – and then by getting these members to disown whiteness on these terms that the white race can be abolished (Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996).

2.3 Configurations of Whiteness

It must be understood that whiteness is a fluid, mutable and mobile construct (Green et al, 2007b; Stevens, 2007). This means that it does not manifest in the same way and does not always occur through overt actions (Stevens, 2007). When it began to occur in colonial texts, for example, it was a means of maintaining ‘normativity’ under threat by the ‘other’ – and that conception of

whiteness has had a chance to perpetuate itself in societies where white people occupy the vast majority of positions of power and dominance (Stevens, 2007). “The study of whiteness contributes to understanding this complexity and encourages white people, particularly scholars and anti-racism activists, to look inward and reassess their contribution to the normalisation of white privilege and power.” (Green et al., 2007b, p. 439)

Steyn (2001) refers to what she terms to be the “Grand White Narrative” in which ‘white’ is equated with progress, rightness, and that which is superior. It is clear that this “Grand White Narrative” has been heavily ingrained in the minds of most of the world – and certainly in the minds of the majority of Europeans and those of European descent living elsewhere in the world (Kinloch, 2001, Guess, 2006) – and as such has, so often, resulted in oppressive attitudes and behaviours from these groups of people. A product of the GWN is the belief that the white race is superior to all other races - or that “the white race functions not so much as a race..., at times at least, *the* race – the real human race – and, at other times, *no* race, simply the healthy, mature norm of human existence as opposed to all those other groups of people who are somehow off-white, off-track, more or less deviant” (McWhorter, 2005, p. 534). These notions are similar to the aforementioned notion of the ‘white club’ (Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996). Resulting from this are actions, laws and discriminatory practices against those that are ‘deviant’.

The GWN is so historically enshrined that “Anglo-Saxon scholars such as John Locke, David Hume, and even Ben Franklin openly expressed popular opinions that dark skin colo[u]r was linked to moral and mental inferiority” (Guess, 2006, p 665). Whiteness studies seek to deconstruct this mentality through discussions of what it means to be in a decolonised world – where whiteness doesn’t always signify dominance and power anymore and what kind of identities white people in places where white people are part of the minority have formed or should be forming.

Although there has been formalised political change in South Africa since 1994, with the fall of the Apartheid regime, the promotion and reinforcement of

those whiteness ideologies – like that of the GWN – continue to shape social and political structures and systems of beliefs in South Africa (Collier, 2005 as cited in Green et al., 2007a). As such there is a need to move away from these ideologies as the centre of these structures for a genuine shift in power to be actually attained. Studies of whiteness seek to do this, and this study attempts to ascertain whether how white youth define their social position, impact and vision for the future and the distance from and/or identification with the GWN that permeate these definitions. It is important to gain some sort of understanding of what roles white South Africans can play in order to constitute a valuable part of South African society without re-inscribing the ideologies of difference that powered the Apartheid regime. “South Africans, willingly or unwillingly, successfully, or unsuccessfully, are engaged in one of the most profound collective psychological adjustments happening in the contemporary world” (Steyn, 2001, p. xxi) and the adjustment of white South Africans from complete power to a vastly reduced one (at least theoretically) is one of the largest – and the possibility for embitterment and resentment is high.

As part of her investigation into whiteness and white subjectivity in post-Apartheid South Africa, Steyn (2001) identifies 5 narratives of whiteness namely *Still Colonial After all These Years*; *This Shouldn't Happen To a White*; *Don't Think White, It's All Right*; *A Whiter Shade of White* and *Under African Skies (or White but not Quite)*. These narratives range from a sense of strong white pride, and a sense of ardent and quite overt racism in *Still Colonial After all These Years* (Steyn, 2001, pp. 60 – 61) on the one extreme, to a sense of a great deal of white guilt or white shame, but a powerful desire for forgiveness and reconciliation in *Under African Skies (or White but not Quite)* (Steyn, 2001, pp. 133 - 134) on the other. What this account of white subjectivity does not provide is a narrative where white people are in favour of an all-inclusive political and social dispensation without a sense of guilt about the past.

An extension of the logic behind Steyn's analysis is, then, that white people need to feel guilt in order to want a system of equality for races other than the white race – and this is not necessarily an accurate claim to make.

In addition to the above being a dangerous claim to make, there is also an additional concern with a narrative like *White, but not Quite*. This problem is well outlined by Straker (2004b). She posits that a strange phenomenon has occurred from the feelings of white guilt and shame (although she is speaking about white shame internationally and not just in the South African context). The phenomenon that she identifies is that this white shame has become fetishised by white people in the post-Colonial world. It has become an extreme form of metaphorical self-flagellation (Altman, 2004; Straker, 2004a; Straker, 2004b, Vice 2011). In other words, the cost of whiteness in South Africa today means that you have to take some ownership and show some guilt and negative feelings – it has become somewhat of a fad or fashion to denigrate oneself if one is white, in order to gain approval from society (Altman, 2004; Solomon, 2012). A problem with this, of course, is that no real remorse is likely being shown – people have learned that a display of this white shame is a way to win favour – and so the underlying sentiment behind genuine remorse for past acts of wrong-doing on the part of white people is lost. It is important, however, to acknowledge that no claim is being made that all expressions of remorse from white South Africans are designed to gain societal approval. The above claim merely explains that it is a common occurrence.

Another configuration of whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa which is the most in line with Steyn's (2001) *This shouldn't happen to a white* and *Don't think white, It's alright* is the occurrence of trying to move beyond race discussions in the South Africa of 2012. Essentially, this is a standpoint or configuration wherein the proponent advocates that there has been sufficient time since the fall of Apartheid and the first democratic elections that race and, especially, racial inequality in South Africa is irrelevant (Solomon, 2012). In these arguments it is common for white individuals to argue that the situation in current day South Africa is such that black-on-white racism has

become more the norm in South Africa and that the policies that have been put in place in South Africa as part of the attempts to restructure the society post-Apartheid have made it so that white-on-black racism is no longer as big a problem as it was previously (Solomon, 2012). Solomon (2012) contends that there is a kind of blindness amongst white South Africans who make these assertions and that a false dichotomy is produced by them. This dichotomy is that if whites have the political power their racism is a problem, but that if they do not have the political power this kind of racism is irrelevant. This, quite clearly, is a false dichotomy because, although political power has been lost (in a sense), the historical wrongs still mean that there is a huge amount of white privilege in South Africa, and complaints of white-on-non-white racism are of course still valid because, for the most part, power relations are nearly always in the favour of white individuals. It is important that this argument is understood properly, however. In making the argument that she makes, Solomon (2012) is not arguing – and makes clear that she is not arguing – that black-on-white racism is any more acceptable than white-on-black racism. It is merely being argued that the fact that black-on-white racist acts can now be harmful, it does not preclude white-on-black racism from being harmful as well.

Recently additional white narratives have been added to the discourse on whiteness in the South African context. The first of these narratives emerges in Vice's (2011) discussion of the role of whites in South Africa. In this discussion she discusses the extreme guilt and shame that she feels about being part of South African society, being white and still benefitting from the legacy of apartheid. She argues that whites, with very few exceptions, still benefit politically, economically and socially from being white in South Africa in the current day. She also argues that whites are morally obliged to feel guilt, if not shame, for being white – even though they cannot change the fact that they are. In order to adequately atone for being white, it is argued, that whites should embark on a silent, personal journey in which they are deeply self-reflexive and aware of their own whiteness, and actively look to counter it (McKaiser, 2011; Vice, 2011). In addition to this need for self-reflection, it is argued that while freedom of speech is enshrined in the constitution of South

Africa, it is morally imperative that whites desist from engagement on public platforms and not to contribute in the national dialogue – this in order to allow those who were formerly oppressed to form the type of society that they best see fit – without having to appease the former oppressors.

De Vos (2011) responds to the arguments by McKaiser and Vice by arguing that only through continued engagement by all people – whites included – on public platforms will a multi-racial, non-racist, society be formed. The argument presented also looks at what the Black Consciousness Movement – which provided South Africa with some of the most independent thinking individuals in the anti-Apartheid struggle (Mzamane, Maaba and Biko, 2004) – would have to say about the notion of whites needing to be silent 19 years into a democratic South Africa (De Vos, 2011). It is contended that such a silence would act in contravention to the underlying principles of Black Consciousness in that the primary premise of such a position would be that blacks – even with political power – would not be able to achieve the kind of society they would like to if white people are vocal in the national dialogue (De Vos, 2011). This contradicts the arguments of Black Consciousness in that Biko (1978) and other Black Consciousness Movement adherents (Mzamane, 1991) argue that the only way for black people to govern in a way that may be considered legitimate is being able to show that they are not the unsophisticated ‘savages’ portrayed by the GWN. This means being able to argue and reason articulately, and being able to advocate positions as well as, if not better than, white people (Biko, 1978; Mzamane, 2001). Vice (2011) and McKaiser’s (2011) positions seem to stand in contrast to this position.

An alternative response to Vice and McKaiser can be formulated through the argument of Sleeter (1996). It is put forward that if the silence being argued for is one in which positions which enshrine white privilege are removed from the public dialogue, and are therefore ‘silent’ then the silence is helpful. What this means is if a situation can be created where participation of individuals in public dialogue is freed from race consciousness, then a situation is created wherein multi-racial or non-racial relations can benefit and the abolition of the

white race that Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) strive for can be achieved (Sleeter, 1996).

The way that people perceive the future is often reflective of their attitude and feelings about their present situation. One of the most common themes that arises amongst whites generally in South Africa in this regard is a sense of Afro-pessimism wherein white South Africans tend to argue that the country is failing, and that a lot that was positive about it is seeming to fall apart and as such the future is far from positive (Steyn, 2001). Another common narrative here is where white people argue for or conceive of an idealised post-race world. In this imagined future, people will have transcended race and it would no longer play a role in the world. People are able to look beyond it (Gilroy, 1997). In the South African context those who produce these narratives would argue that it means that the future is positive and that South Africa's signs for development are good. A final narrative that has become frequently produced is one of circumspection. In this conception of the future people will not commit to whether the future is positive or negative and would argue that there are signs for both and that we 'will have to wait and see' (Steyn, 2001).

2.4 Subjectivity Amongst White Youths

There has not been much focus on white youth identity or subjectivity in the new South Africa, however it is possible to extrapolate and hypothesise about possible subject positions that may occur amongst this demographic based on literature that has been written on whiteness. These are generally to be found in news reports, prominent news stories that have occurred and data that is provided by organisations that do research on inter-race and societal interactions – like the South African Institute of Race Relations.

It is sensible to understand that a lot of an individual's view on race and race relations will, at least initially, be informed by the way it is spoken about, dealt with and engaged with in their immediate circles of friends and family (Bucholtz, 2002). With this in mind, it would be fair to assume that much of the way white youths will create their subject positions in the new South Africa

would be related to the way their white friends and family have dealt with and adjusted to the societal transition in South Africa in the post-Apartheid era. The subject positions outlined in above paragraphs – those by Steyn, Straker, Ignatiev, Vice and Solomon – are therefore likely to occur and it is probable that they, or variations of them, are the most common and prominent conceptions of whiteness amongst the white youth in South Africa today.

Mindful of the above, it is also important to understand that if these subject positions do exist they would have been laid foundationally at home and in interactions with trusted individuals; however – white youths today would also have had more interracial interactions than those of an older generation, and as such would also be altered and affected by interactions at education institutions, in social situations and, generally, in everyday life (Andrucki, 2010; Botsis, 2010; Holborn, 2011). As such, it would also be possible that, while subjectivities that have been discovered and identified in those of older generations might have a strong bearing on the way young people in South Africa today view race and racism – they would also have had their own experiences of race and other race groups that those of older generations would not have had, and that these experiences undoubtedly would also have had an effect on the racial identity of white youths in the new South Africa (Botsis, 2010).

As a result of multi-racial and multicultural schooling and a change in what is socially acceptable behaviour post-1994 in South Africa, it is likely that some of the subject positions in the youth of South African whites will differ from those in older generations. There would have been more opportunity to form interracial friendships and would have been exposed to both negative and positive stories about people of different races, for example, which may influence the way white youths experience the Grand White Narrative – and may call them to still accept and promote it, or it may cause them to reject it. It may also produce different manifestations of it (Horell, 2009).

Jansen (2008) argues that race relations amongst youths in multi-racial schools are generally, but obviously not exclusively, very positive and that

there are positive markers of comfortable acceptance and tolerance of school children in schools. This indicates that for the most part the subject positions of individuals who are or have been educated in schools with people of different race groups may include a sense of compassion and understanding, and are likely to be more tolerant of other race groups (Jansen, 2008). Along with this comes the strong possibility that white individuals will have unique new understandings how they fit into a multi-racial will differ from those of older people. There could be a more accepting attitude toward the need to be more submissive than whites historically have had to be in South Africa (Steyn, 2001).

At the same time, however, there is the possibility for white identity amongst youths to become less tolerant of difference. In the last few years there has been a rising white right wing conservatism (Andrucki, 2010). This can be associated with an increase in racially charged public dialogue and myths around anti-white violence being on the increase (Holborn, 2011). This trend can be seen with greater support for the Freedom Front plus – a conservative Afrikaans political party, (Holborn, 2011) as well as incidents in recent years like the humiliation of black workers by white students in the Reitz Hostel at the University of the Free State in 2009 and the murder of a black homeless man by 4 youths in Waterkloof, Pretoria in 2008.

Another important aspect to consider when looking at white youth identity is the effect of the transition of power from white people in one generation to black people in the next. In other words, in the generation that lived through Apartheid, white individuals would have understood and experienced their role as very powerful, whereas in the post-Apartheid generation white individuals would experience the same phase in their lives in a completely different relationship to power – and this is bound to produce some interesting subjectivities and psychological effects.

As has been discussed above, Vice (2011) argues that whites need to remain silent on the public platform because they still benefit from the legacy of

Apartheid – this can be extrapolated to include white youths – even if they were not actively involved in the implementation of the Apartheid system – because they will have been raised in a family that is white and therefore would still benefit from the legacy having had the same access to the financial, as well as social resources as their parents and older family members would have had. Naturally, the response offered by De Vos (2011) would also apply to the younger generation. In fact, it would probably apply more so, because by participating in discussions on pressing social issues, white youths would be part of the process of shaping the society that they will live in – if they choose to remain in South Africa in the future.

It is also important to note there are also some gender differences in subjectivities of whiteness. Morrell (2001) and Epstein (1998) argue white men and white women experienced or benefitted in different ways from regimes of white dominance – like Apartheid and Colonialism. Political change and all that results from it – like socio-economic change for example, will by this logic also be experienced differently. This appears to be the case because women are, along with other race groups, also a historically disadvantaged group. The fact that political change happened in South Africa in 1994 is important because this coincides with a period of time when women were also beginning to be granted equal opportunities for work and jobs (Nuttal, 2001). With this in mind, they may experience the political change more favourably by virtue of the fact that they began to feel like they had equal opportunities at the same time as political change took place. In addition to this, because they are considered previously disadvantaged in South Africa, women may not feel as threatened as white men by policies of affirmative action (Epstein, 1998). In addition to this, it is argued that men had a propensity for feeling emasculated by the political change in South Africa because their opportunities for work became more limited in post-Apartheid South Africa, as well as their status of superiority under Apartheid being removed (Morrell, 2001; Seidman, 1999; Walker, 2005).

2.5 Narratives of Whiteness

Looking at narratives is a very useful and fruitful exercise in qualitative research. Narratives presented by individuals allow them to give meaning and interpretation to our experience. They, in essence, allow individuals to construct themselves and their own lives in a way that they are comfortable with (Schiffrin, 1996).

Spoken narratives as a form of data are rich and valuable. The reason for this is that through spoken narratives one engages in an interpersonal interaction which allows the narrator to both speak the words of their own story, but also to offer clarity or explanation and, indeed, to alter their story if they feel the need to, based on how the listener responds to what they are saying (Schiffrin, 1996).

It needs to be understood, then, that narratives are very subjective and they allow the narrator to construct themselves in a way in which they are comfortable. The narrator has a vested interest in convey him or herself in a way that they feel is positive or acceptable based the context in which they are telling their story. It also allows the narrator to attribute meaning to their experiences, and to focus on elements of their own constructed reality that they would like to emphasise and share (Sand, 2004).

In addition, there is a cathartic element to narratives. Through being able to share one's story, narrators are able to gain insight into their own emotions – as they tell their story – and also the emotions that they experienced during the time of the story that is being told. They allow for the complexity of these emotions to be explained as well, in that people will often experience more than one emotion; indeed, often they will experience conflicting emotions about an event or set of events. With the platform to express and explain these emotions individuals are then able to convey elements of the story that they believe to be important, which in turn may assist the researcher in understanding the narrators' constructed, subjective reality better (Reed, 2008)

Narratives are also illustrative of the complexities of subjectivity. Because they allow an individual to attempt to construct in as 'acceptable' a way as they would like to – one is able to see how they would rationalise their subject positions in broader contexts (Hiltin and Elder, 2007). Narratives allow their narrators agency and it is often argued that “agency is a necessary aspect of organisms struggling to adapt and (in the case of humans) make sense of their environments” (Hitlin and Elder, 2007; Reed 2008). For the above reasons, it could be argued that narratives are the most appropriate ways in which to extract certain kinds of information.

The narratives that are collected in this study have been looked at in two ways. Firstly, they will be used to try and understand subjectivities in past, present and imagined future of South African society. In addition to this, however, it is also understood that narratives produced in the form of memory allow one to look at and track micro-ecologies of white racism in the interpersonal interactions that arise every day, and these narratives will be looked at for this purpose as well.

CHAPTER 3

3. Methodology

The research for this study was conducted using a qualitative design. This was selected as an appropriate approach because it allows the researcher to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of the topic being studied (Reeves, Albert, Kuper and Hodges, 2008) – in this case subjectivities of white youths in post-Apartheid South Africa that quantitative research would not provide. This is the case because qualitative research asks open-ended questions which allows for detailed responses and questions of clarity, as well as discussion (Reeves et al., 2008). Two focus groups were used to provide an understanding of subjectivities and identities of white youths and the way they see themselves and their roles in the context of the New South Africa presently and going forward into the future. The participants were invited to return for a follow-up focus group, some of whom chose not to return.

3.1 Sample

The population comprised of twelve white youths between the ages of 18 and 25. They experienced much of their formative years in South Africa during its transition from the Apartheid system to the democratic South Africa. As such they were able to provide insight into what it means to be white in post-Apartheid South Africa and offered perceptive views on what they see their role as in South Africa currently and how they see their role changing as South Africa develops.

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was employed. This means that the sample has not been selected at random, and that individuals who act as participants in this study were approached by the researcher for specific reasons. In the case of this research these reasons were because they were between the ages of 18 and 25, because they were white and because they had grown up in South Africa – for the most part post-Apartheid South Africa. Males and females were included in all focus groups because there was a potential for them to provide different perspectives on whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa.

The sample was appropriate and provided sufficient and ample opportunity for variations in subjectivities since it was drawn from a population of young men and women who have had many similar and some very different experiences of race and whiteness while growing up in post-Apartheid South Africa. From these experiences they each had the opportunity to form their own ideas and opinions about whiteness and what it meant to be a young white person growing up in the changing South Africa, what it means now and will mean in the future, to be white in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Participants for this study were obtained through approaching students at the University of the Witwatersrand and over social networking sites, with the researcher posting advertisements on Facebook, with the hopes of increasing the chances of getting varying views on whiteness. The students were approached while they were in class – and the necessary permissions (from lecturers and/or department heads) were requested prior to approaching the students). It is believed that by approaching individuals over social networking sites there was an increased chance of acquiring a diverse sample. The focus groups provided the opportunity for varying views to emerge – which, in turn, facilitated robust discussion.

3.2 Procedure of data gathering

Qualitative research was appropriate in this research because the area of study is one that requires much exploration and needed to allow for the researcher to acquire clarity of concepts or views that emerged from participants. In order for this area to have been adequately explored in-depth, rich descriptions of their attitudes, perceptions and feelings needed to be obtained.

Data were collected through the use of three semi-structured focus groups with groups of white youths who volunteered for this study. Participants were then invited to reconvene at a later stage for a second meeting – some of whom chose to return and some of whom did not. The purpose of meeting on two separate occasions was to allow the discussions that took place in the

focus groups to be contemplated further than the participants had the opportunity to do in the first meeting. The first meeting of the focus groups was to allow for extended discussion on the topic of being a white youth in post-Apartheid South Africa, the second meeting was expected to be a shorter meeting where the participants will have had some time to mull over discussions and add any final thoughts to what had been spoken about in the previous meeting. The purpose of the second meeting was, really, to gain any additional insights from participants after having provided them with the opportunity to think more deeply about the topics discussed, allowing them to have more considered nuanced takes on whiteness with this time having been provided. In addition to this, it provided the researcher with a chance to extract a few of the key themes from the first round of focus groups to raise in the second focus group.

A date for a second meeting was established and agreed upon before the end of the first meeting so that an appropriate occasion could be established in order to control for schedule clashes that participants had.

Focus groups have been shown to be an appropriate research method when attempting to obtain an in-depth understanding of people's opinions, perceptions and experiences (Doyle and Kao, 2007; Morgan, 1996). Further, they allowed for the participants in the focus group to explore and discuss the topic and for differences in views to be explored and justified. Focus groups also allowed participants to ask questions of clarity in order to give more accurate answers (Ambert et al, 1995; Small 2005), and to provide new ideas and new areas of information which will be incorporated, through this research, into a greater body of knowledge. An additional advantage of utilising focus groups is that it created an environment in which participants engaged with one another which facilitated the production of subjectivities (Doyle and Kao, 2007) – which is essential to the conclusions drawn in this research.

As with all data collection methods, there are some limitations to using focus groups. The views that were expressed in the focus groups were,

undoubtedly, influenced to an extent by group dynamics. There were certain group members that were more dominant than others in the discussions, as well some group members who felt the need to censor their comments when they sensed that the other members of the group would disagree with them or be offended by their views (Ambert et al, 1995). There was also the natural limitation to confidentiality in that group members had knowledge about the identities of other group members in their specific focus groups (Small, 2005). These limitations were dealt with effectively because the researcher made use of facilitation and counselling skills acquired in his course, as well as skills as a community facilitator gained through work at an NGO, City Year South Africa, in 2006 to adequately deal with dominant group members and allow all members to contribute as far as they would like to, as well as to allow for differences in opinion. It was also the objective of the study to bring about differences in view and opinion – this was explained to participants at the beginning of each focus group, so as to avoid tensions and allow for free disclosure of opinions. In terms of confidentiality – all participants were required to sign a confidentiality agreement before participating in the study to protect, as far as possible, the identities of the focus group members (Ambert et al, 1995; Small 2005).

A schedule of questions (Appendix E) for discussion was formulated to ensure that all topics that formed part of the research questions were attended to and that they were suitably investigated. Each question in the schedule stemmed from available literature and some were derived from interviews and focus groups conducted in similar research done outside of South Africa. Questions were asked about the participants' understanding and conceptions of whiteness, generally (Hartman, 2004; McCorkel and Rodriguez, 2009). Questions were aimed at exploring each participant's experience growing up in South Africa while it has been in transition (Kinloch 2002; Steyn, 2001). In addition to this, participants were asked about their views of the future of South Africa in terms of the roles of white people going forward (McCorkel and Rodriguez, 2009; Mba, 2010). Finally, participants were given the opportunity to present anything that they believed relevant to the discussion

that had not already been covered in order for them to feel that they have filled any gaps that they felt had been left open.

The focus groups took place in a suitable, convenient location at the University of the Witwatersrand. The length of each focus group was around an hour and a half long and the discussions were transcribed by the researcher. The data was transcribed to create a verbatim account of both verbal and non-verbal contributions that participants made throughout the duration of each focus group (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This was done by listening to the recordings of the focus groups and consulting notes on non-verbal communication made by the researcher during data collection.

The transcriptions of these focus groups will be stored in a safe, password protected file for the 2 years after the completion of the research if publications that result from the research occur – after which they will be deleted. If publication does not occur after six years, the transcripts will be deleted at that point in time. No-one will have access to the transcripts with exception of the researcher and his supervisor.

3.3 Data Analysis

The type of research that has been conducted can be described as qualitative research that is interpretive in nature. It looked to investigate the subjectivities and identities of white youths who spent their formative years in a South African society going through a phase of major transition, looking at how they construct their subject positions at present and in a perceived future. The study aimed to analyse the transcripts from each meeting of the focus groups in a large degree of detail (Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006). Participants' accounts of similar experiences and perceptions of similar phenomena were explored through analysis of the recorded focus groups through the transcription of the focus groups. Through the process of transcription and further analysis of the transcriptions emergent themes were identified and information was grouped according to these themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The research describes the views of the participants through the lens of the researcher; with the researcher analysing the data through the critical paradigm - under which Critical Race Theory falls (Wong and Cho, 2005). While it is the case that the interviews were analysed through the critical paradigm – it was important for the researcher to acknowledge the views of the participants and that the research does not serve to undermine them. It engaged critically with the data from the interviews and investigated any inherent racism and anti-racism that emerged, whilst still trying to respect the integrity of the participants without undercutting every action and without questioning every motive (Federico and Luks, 2005; Gibson, 2006).

The data gathered from each participant was analysed using thematic content analysis. There is no definitive and clear agreement regarding the process of thematic content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). What is generally accepted is the aim of such analysis.

The aim of thematic content analysis is to describe data and interpret various aspects of the research topics (Boyatzis, 1998, as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006). Essentially, thematic content analysis looks to identify, analyse and report common trends, or themes, within data. Themes are commonly occurring ideas or thoughts which relate to the questions being researched. They represent patterns in responses and in meanings contained in the data that has been collected. In any data set there should be a number of themes which are expected to arise (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes that were expected to arise from this research would be race, race roles, racial stereotypes, white guilt/shame, (Bernstein, 2005; McCorkel and Rodriguez, 2009; Green et al, 2007a; Green, Sonn and Matsebula, 2007b; Nuttal, 2001; Ratele, 2007; Steyn, 2001; Steyn and Conway, 2010), in addition to white pride, non-racialism, disappointment and/or pride in South Africa (Altman, 2004; Gilroy, 1997; McWhorter, 2005; Straker, 2004a, Straker, 2004b). There was ample opportunity for all of these themes to emerge based on the questions that were composed for the purposes of this study. Additionally, other themes emerged in the research and these were analysed in the same way.

Thematic content analysis was conducted by the researcher: firstly through familiarising himself with the data through transcription of the interview material and reading and re-reading the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Secondly, initial codes were generated by establishing basic trends and dividing information from the data according to which trend it reflected (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The third aspect of thematic content analysis is to search for themes by arranging the trends into potential themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The themes that were initially identified needed to be reviewed after re-examining information that could reflect them. When there was sufficient data to constitute a theme – then a theme was defined and established. When a theme was established it was adequately explained, explored and described (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Finally, the themes were written up and a report was produced in which all of the themes are reflected (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The process of decision-making around what constitutes a theme and how to understand a narrative has to be a flexible one, since rigidity in thematic content analysis has been found to be unsuccessful (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Larkin et al., 2006; Smith and Sparkes, 2006). Because thematic content analysis is useful in both essentialist and constructionist paradigms, it provided a solid foundational method for the researcher – considering his relative inexperience (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun and Clarke, 2006). This is why thematic content analysis will be used as the primary analytic method.

3.4 Reflexivity

In qualitative research it is imperative that researchers display some kind of reflexivity. Researchers in the qualitative field are required to offer interpretive analysis of the data that they have collected and as such, if they have any beliefs or experiences that may have a bearing on the analysis they will be embarking on they have to be aware of them (Larkin et al, 2006). It must also be stated that qualitative research is never completely objective, and that the

data collected in qualitative research is expected to provide deeper and richer descriptive information because of this.

With parents that were both involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, and growing up in a home where political and sociological discourse were often the points of discussion, as the researcher in this study I was likely to have a unique perspective of the discussions that were had with participants in this study and had my own views and opinions about the topics that were discussed.

Being someone who fits into the sample specifications I was also able to relate to a lot of what the participants were saying, if not through personal experience, then by way of experience-by-proxy through discussions with many of my peers. The ability to relate to the participants in this way provided the opportunity for a deeper, more precise understanding of what it is like for white youths in post-Apartheid South Africa. That said, though, I needed to guard very carefully against the assumption that all subjectivities produced in this research would immediately reflect my own experiences of whiteness.

Another factor which was important to consider was that I am a person that has benefitted from privileges that were given to white people during Apartheid, even though I was too young to play an active role either endorsing or opposing the regime. The fact remains, I have benefitted from the legacy of Apartheid. What this means is that, I was able, in many instances, to relate to common feelings around whiteness in the new South Africa – feelings like white guilt, white shame, white pride and the uncertainty of how to fit into a society that is incredibly scarred by its oppressive past – and being a member of the oppressive group (whether willingly or unwillingly). The ability to relate to the participants in this way created an atmosphere that allows conversation to flow more freely and for deeper, higher quality information to be obtained in the focus groups.

A problem with both of the above is that I had preconceptions of what I would hear in the focus groups and that these preconceptions could have led to

deductions of information that may not be present in the data. It also had the potential to result in exaggerations of certain themes and I could 'fill in the gaps' in conversation with information that participants may not actually have reflected. For example, I may have read feelings of 'white guilt' into answers to questions, because of my own feelings on the subject; equally I may have read feelings of white pride into other answers.

For the above reasons it would be accurate to conclude that this research despite an awareness of possible preconception, may not entirely be objective in nature. However, my subjective and active role in this study allowed me to understand the data collected more accurately because I have 'lived' the research - making me more familiar with the data that was collected. With this in mind it would be fair to say that my being the researcher provided added depth and quality to the data and the conclusions that this research generates.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The research that was conducted was not of an invasive nature and was not working with a vulnerable group and as such it did not present a vulnerable cohort. Although the area of race was investigated, it is argued that research such as this could desensitize race, meaning that it may make race an easier topic to discuss moving forward, and as such the content of this research was not considered to be of a sensitive nature.

There were no material risks and benefits to participants in this study. With that being said – it is important to note that a fear of being judged or expressing an unpopular or controversial opinion in a group setting may have been considered a risk (Ambert et. al, 1995; Morgan, 1996). Additionally, there is the possibility that participants may feel that the research provided them with the long-term benefit through understanding their own position in society. Participation in the research was completely voluntary and informed consent (through a participant information sheet, consent form and consent to be recorded form) was granted before any research with an individual commenced. Participants also had the right to withdraw or to refuse to

answer any question that they felt uncomfortable with. Also, because focus groups were the medium of data collection – participants were able to be silent on issues which they were uncomfortable discussing, while others discussed them.

There are the natural limitations of anonymity and confidentiality that occur in any focus group-based research. This is because the researcher has knowledge of who the participants in the study were and also has knowledge of which participant made which comment. Added to this is the fact that participants also have knowledge of other participants in their particular focus groups – for this reason a confidentiality agreement was written up by the researcher and agreed to by all participants in the study.

In addition, direct quotations have been used in the write-up of the research. However, the researcher and the research supervisor have been responsible for removing any identifying information about the participants and in the case of direct quotation – are responsible for ensuring that information which could reveal the identity of participants is kept secret. In a further endeavour to secure as much anonymity and confidentiality as possible all data, recordings and transcripts of these focus groups will be stored in a safe, password protected file for the 2 years after the completion of the research if publications that result from the research occur – after which they will be deleted. If publication does not occur within six years, the transcripts will be deleted at that point in time. No-one will have access to the transcripts with exception of the researcher and his supervisor

CHAPTER 4

4. Results

The findings that are presented below pertain specifically to English speaking white middle class South African university students between the ages of 18 and 25. Although their views clearly cannot represent white youth in general, an interesting phenomenon of their position was how they *saw themselves* as representative of white youth in general - a point to which this report will return.

Four major themes have emerged from the data gathered through focus groups. The first of the themes is that the participants showed a far greater focus on the “general” experience of being white – as opposed to being able to reflect on personal experience in the way that they spoke about South Africa, race, whiteness and issues that have been a part of the national dialogue. The participants appeared to have an academic interest and curiosity about issues and events that occur and arise in South Africa, but seem not to have great emotional investment in these issues or feel that they have no point of access in addressing or acting on the issues – because they feel that whiteness inhibits access to the national dialogue. This leads to a sense that they believe their views on the greater South African national dialogue have little value, are unimportant or disregarded – except amongst themselves. An additional component of this theme is the sense that there is a great deal of pressure not to be construed as racist, particularly by other race groups; and this pressure results in conversations when white youths are together separate from other race groups that begin with a preface of, “I’m not racist, but...” followed by some criticism of, or generalisation about other race groups.

Another theme that emerged is a powerful desire for whites to be seen as a generally liberal and positive social grouping. There was an acknowledgement that there were conservative elements in the views of many white people in South Africa, but that there was also a general acceptance of social and political change in South Africa and that many embraced this change. A part

of this theme is that a class consciousness – as opposed to racial consciousness – has emerged and with that a need for focus to be shifted away from race and more onto class. This is exhibited in discussions that reflect the belief that there is a need for the history of Apartheid to be acknowledged and grappled with, but also for it to be focussed on less than it currently is – in an attempt to move forward and to progress as a productive, diverse and tolerant society.

A third theme to arise was one of general optimism: a feeling of opportunity, a viable future and happiness in being in South Africa. Many expressed aspirations to contribute meaningfully and positively to the country's success; however, some feelings of ambiguity emerged from their sense of having no forums in which to express or enact such contribution. Part of this sense of frustration suggested that they felt separated from where political action may take place and therefore from those sectors of South African society that are able to participate freely.

The final theme is the sentiment that stereotypes of white conservatism and racism persist in the South African national dialogue because of a fear amongst the young white liberal majority (of whites) to be vocal. This fear is rooted in a belief that they should not be seen to be either critical of the actions of other race groups or of usurping political space reserved for other racial groupings. This seems to be the case because there is a belief that the views that are reflective of them are generally expressed by members of the black majority – who, because they are in the majority and come from a history of oppression, seem to have more credibility and gain more recognition. As such, participants felt that the predominant white voice that is expressed in the media and other platforms from which the national dialogue seems to be constructed is one that is conservative, defensive and, often, viewed as quite racist.

Each of the above themes will be outlined and explored in detail in the discussion below – with the use of quotes from participants to assist in illustrating the themes and generating the discussion. The participants were

each assigned a letter, from A to L, to represent them and maintain confidentiality.

4.1 The way we speak

4.1.1 The General Rather Than the Personal

C: I don't know, like I don't know how I actually feel about it I'm, I mean like on you know on one hand it's kind of like if you are a kid in Khayelitsha and you've gone to a really shit school and you still manage to get 70% average and you apply for Medicine I think like you definitely should get in, honestly, like that's my opinion, because there's no way in hell I would ever have even passed matric if I'd gone to a school in Khayelitsha.

H: They (Whites) are only interested as far as it affects them because if Marikana hypothetically were to get out of hand oh it's a problem. So that's why they're looking at it. It's sort of out of hand already which, I'm saying that it could get worse. Then it starts to affect whites then it spreads. You know, that kind of idea. "Oh text book crisis, oh no what happens if now service delivery gets worse and it starts to affect my little Sandton life?" That I think is a kind of idea that comes through here.

I: Since BEE started, maybe there've been like 300 000 let's say, I'm just putting a number out there, like people you know positively influenced by the like bits of even a big number, being generous like and then those people are rich and nothing's really changed.

A: I was intellectually talking about it (Marikana) with friends and I bring it up in my tuts (tutorial) because I'm tutoring uh international relations and also this semester I'm tutoring human rights, so Marikana has, we've had that discussion in almost every class.

A: I mean, if you are looking at your educated classes I'd say it's the same but there isn't, so but if you have no marketable skills then, ja, it's going to be a lot harder if you want to go and I don't know be a white brick layer or miner or something, because there are protected jobs so if you've got marketable skills I think it's not much of a difference but if you have none, then ja, because then now you are competing with the what 50% odd population that doesn't have massive skills, but it sounds rude, but I'm sorry you have no excuse you have 50 years behind you of protected employment but by this stage your family should have got you to a point where you should at least get a matric. At least that's my opinion.

It became apparent in the focus groups that were conducted that the way in which white youths spoke about South Africa, race, Apartheid and current affairs that the South African national dialogue comprises of that there was a great deal of comfort in speaking in generalities rather than providing personal accounts of issues. In addition to this it was also clear that there was a tendency for participants to speak about issues academically and to remove themselves personally from the issues being discussed.

The participants were overtly more comfortable and, indeed, able to speak about other people's experiences or experiences that the participants had heard of but not personally experienced. This may be, in part, due to the way in which the researcher phrased the questions – with some questions asking about the experience of being white in specific situations – for example, when topical issues of the time are being discussed. This may have provided the opportunity – or given the impression – for participants to speak in broad, academic or general terms about the issues. However, even when asked directly about personal experiences of the participants – there was a tendency to quickly revert back to speaking academically about the topics being focussed on at any point during the focus groups.

In speaking about race in a removed fashion, the individuals in the focus groups are also removing their opinions from the issues in a personal way. What this means is that in speaking about race or Apartheid, for example, they feel more able to speak honestly and openly if it is not based on a personal example or directed at a specific situation. The participants are able to speak about their whiteness and the privilege (or disadvantage) that it has placed in an abstract way, thereby unconsciously implying that there is an academic basis for what they are claiming or stipulating. In doing this – if their comments are challenged or argued against, they feel more comfortable in defending themselves and their claims – because they have some academic backing for them. They are also, then, able to say that their claims are not directly their own, but rather a claim made in academic arguments – thereby removing their own responsibility in putting the views forward.

In speaking academically about issues of race, Apartheid or current affairs, the participants are also able to feel that they speaking as spokespeople for a larger group of people – as opposed to themselves. The intellectualised or academic arguments that they present in the way that they speak allow a feeling that, because there is some academic backing to them – they speak for a large number of people. What this, again, results in is the participants not speaking in personal terms, but rather in general terms – by saying things like, “Whites have the belief that...” as opposed to, “I think that...”

A final important aspect of the tendency to speak in generalities and to reduce issues to academic constructs as opposed to relating to them personally is much more subtle. In speaking about issues as academic constructs individuals are unable to relate directly to the issues. In fact, at some level, it suggests that individuals have removed the possibility of relating to issues on a personal level or from getting involved in the issues in a personal capacity. What this allows people to, then, do is draw from intellectual discussions what they desire to see in a way that one cannot do if speaking about issues from a more personal perspective. This is also reflective of the possibility that participants may, in fact, have moved away from having a personal experience of whiteness as something important and relevant in every situation, and that there is a conscious attempt at trying to reformulate their identities in terms that shies away from race.

The data reflects a predominantly positive opinion and view of South Africa and South African society. The participants spoke about issues like the Marikana Mine Massacre in August 2012, perpetual service delivery protests that arise around South Africa and the Limpopo textbook crisis – where textbooks were not delivered to schools in the Limpopo province of South Africa in 2012 (thereby making learning in already underprivileged schools far more difficult) , for example, in a very removed way. This allowed them to draw some optimistic ideas from some objectively dreadful situations – which allows for feelings like hope, as an example, much more powerfully than if they had experienced the issues on a more personal level. It seems plausible, indeed probable, that if participants thought of the issues and experienced them in a more personal capacity positivity and optimism would likely have been more difficult emotions to feel. By speaking about issues in the way that people tended to do in the focus groups they do not allow themselves to deal with the more difficult and harsher realities that a large number of South Africans do on a regular basis. And this allows them to hold more positive and optimistic views – and potentially to feel more hopeful than if they related to issues on a more personal level.

4.1.2 Colonial Languages are an Emblem of Whiteness

J: I went to an ex- model C school from primary school, so it was a good school but because it was a public school there was still like lots of black kids and Indian kids and so it was quite mixed but then at the same time like when it came to choosing second language subjects, we had to choose between Afrikaans and Zulu and there were no white kids in the Zulu class, so it was quite obvious that you know – whites don't want to learn African languages. They're only interesting in English and Afrikaans. I kind of got the feeling that white people weren't, kind of, making the effort that they had the opportunity to make

L: A lot of white people don't think it's necessary at all to learn like African languages and they expect like it to be the other way around. It's just like an assumption.

I: All my black friends - they're polyglots, they speak four or five languages, so it's almost like a South African cultural thing that you can relate to lots of different people, crossing cultural lives and like I'm the only one who I only speak English so it's ja, it's definitely, I don't know like a cultural thing [for whites] that you kind of expect everyone else to be able to speak your language so that you can communicate with them.

E: [Who I relate to] It's more about culture than anything else because you do get those black people who are like white people – they usually only speak English or Afrikaans - and they're more white than you are.

E: I don't know I'm just saying that like there are those girls who are like whiter. I mean I have actually come across some black kids who are like you know like, "Black people suck, black people are ridiculous." You're like what are you?" and they kind of don't consider themselves to be black. I don't know, it's like, it's the class thing or if it's, I'm not quite sure what it is. It's also about the language they speak and how well they speak English. If they speak well, they're often scared of other blacks.

C: There's a black girl from my English tutorial class. I was walking with her - I can't remember how we got to it.... she was like "you should be black" or something like that because I was wearing a SAMWU (South African Municipal Workers Union) shirt. Then she said "Well I don't really feel black either." I think she was a well spoken person who is studying English, didn't feel like a black person should be in that situation.

A: That's where you get the annoying patronising comment of, "He speaks so well" or "You speak so nicely" or "It's easier to understand him than some of my friends" when speaking to or about a black person. I mean, what the hell? And it's just because they speak English without the hint of a "black accent"

J: To be very honest, I don't think it's necessarily race because I've got a lot of black friends but I'll be honest with you right now, most of those black friends are well educated and they come from, I don't want to say a privileged background, but they've got a really good education and they are generally speak quite well. English has normally been a more predominant language that they have spoken. I am not saying that I am not um friends with other black people so to speak, but it's just a idea that a lot of the ones that I get on really well with, are those that are still the ones that I can relate to in my language.

In the focus groups an attitude that is reflected very commonly is that the way in which people speak in South Africa – and the languages in which they

choose to communicate most often – is reflective of the race that the participants seem to identify the speaker as.

As becomes apparent in the quotes above, some of the participants identify black people who speak English (and to some degree Afrikaans) articulately and eloquently as being “white” – even going so far as to say that people who speak English better than they do are “whiter than” they are. A high proficiency in English is, then, seen almost as an emblem of whiteness – because it is the predominantly spoken language of white people in South Africa, and indicative of, at some level, an acceptance and adherence to colonial norms. This, by the logic of the participants, makes the eloquent, articulate black person “white”. This attitude is further reflected in an occurrence that is spoken about in one focus group as happening on a regular basis with white people re-inscribing this attitude in a patronising manner by saying things like “he speaks so well” when speaking about an eloquent black person.

The attitude of one being “whiter” because of their ability to speak eloquently in one of the two predominantly spoken “white” languages is then justified by some of the participants by reflecting on experiences of black individuals who they describe as “hating other blacks”, for example. In offering this as a defence for their position about language and it being inherently tied to race, the participants seem, again, to be trying to distance themselves from making any controversial claims – by suggesting an attitude of “Black people think this way too”. By doing this, the participants are able to maintain their own image of themselves as liberal and progressive, while still offering what many would consider to be a largely conservative and oppressive standard of what it means to be white. This ties into what Steyn (2001) refers to as the Grand White Narrative (GWN) – wherein white individuals prescribe largely European values, standards and expectations as being normative. Another justification for the imposition of English as a predominant language of communication that is offered by the participants is the attitude that everyone should be able to speak English, in particular, because it is an international language – which would allow a person to communicate effectively in most

places around the world (Fisher, 2007). In this there is another colonial mind-set being inferred – that of “It’s beneficial for them to know the language. It’s for their own sake” – which again ascribes to the GWN.

Of course, in the vast majority of the cases, when people are speaking about English proficiency, they are in fact speaking about class – as opposed to race. There is a suggestion in the focus groups that people relate to each other not along racial lines, but along lines that are dictated more by class. There is an implication, when speaking about “self-hating blacks” or “self-fearing blacks” that people struggle to relate to one another or associate with each other because of class differences. This is thought, by participants, to be reflected in black people who are able to communicate effectively and articulately in English not feeling an affiliation to black people who have more difficulty speaking the language. An extension of the logic in the previous paragraph is that the participants in the focus groups are, then, able to relate to black people of a similar middle-class background to them – and how they accept black people more readily into their social groups if they are proficient in English. In her exploration of white subjectivity a narrative that Steyn (2001) labels “*Don’t think white, it’s alright*” emerges. In this narrative white people show a propensity to try and remove discussion from race altogether in post-Apartheid South Africa. The tendency to attribute general differences between people – which can easily be ascribed to racial differences – is attributed to class difference in an attempt to remove race discourses. The participants in the focus groups seem, in many instances, to continue this narrative by speaking about proficiency in English, and to a degree Afrikaans, as indicators of whiteness and middle-to-upper class socio-economic status seem to be continuing such a narrative.

4.1.3 “I’m Not Racist, But...”

K: I went to Rhodes [University] for 2 years and like a lot of them, the majority of my friends were white. And I mean we had a few black friends and everyone was more than happy but I found like once it was only the white people, like the race thing kind of came out like “I’m not racist but” and then [something racist or critical of other race groups is said]

L: It sounds like [the attitude] is kind of like you can be slightly racist when you're only around white people. Like it just happens and it seems ok and I'm kind of frowned upon as the friend who's like "Guys, you really can't say stuff like that – it's not ok"

H: It's sad that you have to say before you say anything you have to say "I'm not racist but..." You can't just say what you feel.

J: [There's this attitude of] "Since I have one black friend I am entitled to say all these different things", it's just retarded and it comes out a lot like especially with some of my other friends. It's horrible and annoying.

A: It's those little unspoken things you hear around a table like, perhaps like a different batch of people you run into randomly at a bar and it's just like the odd comment that just really bugs me like that and like it's not overt but it's a matter of like the "we're not racist but" types – they bug me.

B: [White people create a] Division between being a racist and saying racist things.

Something else which was consistently reflected in the focus groups was that there was a great deal of societal pressure on white individuals and white youths, in particular, to be progressive and liberal. There is a tendency shown in the focus groups to portray very accepting attitudes towards diversity and other cultures, but to then speak in ways that suggest less liberal attitudes. The participants in the focus groups were quick to distance themselves from any such behaviour – and felt it very important to reflect that this is a pattern that they had observed in white youths, generally, but that they personally do not hold less liberal views. However, in some of the discussion and in a number of the quotes used to demonstrate other themes it becomes evident that they, too, are susceptible to reflect glaring generalisations about other race groups when in the company of other white people. The fact that the participants are so determined to show that they do not behave in this way is, in fact, further reflective of the pressure they feel not to be perceived as racist, and an unconsciousness of the their own tendencies to do the same thing.

As a result of the fear of being perceived as racist, the phrase "I'm not racist, but..." followed by a generalisation or negative attitude towards another race group has entered the white South African vernacular. There is a great deal of frustration reflected in the way the emergence of this phrase is spoken about in the focus groups. Participants were frustrated firstly by the fact that white

people feel there is a need to preface every critical comment about other people with a disclaimer proclaiming their not being racist, but also about the fact that the disclaimer has become so regularly used and accepted by other whites. They speak of a need to call white people to order when they make use of the disclaimer, because they either feel it is unnecessary or because they feel that the individual is, in fact, being racist.

It is interesting to note that the participants became very critical of individuals who use the “I’m not racist, but...” disclaimer as often being racist and unacceptable, but that they themselves were prone to creating the divisions that they were consciously condemning, but that their means of doing this was done in other ways. In many of the discussions on race, in particular, the participants would create dichotomies such as “they and we” or “them and us” when referring to black people and white people respectively. This suggests that all individuals have preconceived notions, generalisations and ideas about other race groups, but that the views are deemed socially acceptable in the company of some people and not in others. One participant proposed that *“everybody is racist at some level, but those who are not ‘racist’ are the ones that are conscious of their own stereotypes and constantly challenge them”* – which is a position that many participants communicated – whether consciously or unconsciously. This is a position reflected by Fisher (2007) where he reflects:

“I believe I am racist. Moreover, I believe that most people in South Africa are racists... But if I am a racist, I am not a passive acceptor of my racism. I am prepared to own up to my racism and I am doing my best to fight against it” (pp. 1 - 3)

4.1.4. We Have To Be Careful of Race

Participant H: People from a similar background to me, I feel like I'd be able to discuss it more effectively because I'm not exactly sure what all the views are, and so it would be difficult to talk and not know like at what point I'm overstepping my boundary without meaning to or without thinking that I am.

Participant E: I think race is a very touchy subject. You've got to be flipping brave to bring it up in an environment that kind of isn't secure and nice and neat you know.

Participant H: [Being white] you have to be so careful and tip toe around everybody.

Participant D: I think, I think white people do have to be a bit more sensitive than other people, um I think you can get into a lot of trouble for saying stuff that you shouldn't. I think if you do say comments in class you do have to watch what you say. Very much so.

There is a sentiment reflected in parts of the focus groups that illustrates the belief that white people are required to be incredibly careful when engaging in discussions about race by much of South African society and in a lot of South African discourses. This need to tread lightly extends beyond discussions of race, however, and into discussions that contribute to the national dialogue in South Africa.

Individuals in the focus groups reflected that they believe that in discussions about any current affairs issue white people are required to think very carefully before they contribute – because their views are always understood in the context of coming from a white person primarily – and there is a feeling that with this comes the belief that the comments may be tinged with racism or an inability to relate to the rest of South Africa because of the privilege that most whites still enjoy as a repercussion of Apartheid. Inherent in this belief is the notion that the majority of South Africans anticipate and expect white people to be racist and as such one needs to be “brave” as a white person engaging with race or contributing to the national dialogue.

An extension of this belief is the need to preface most comments in the national dialogue with comments like “I’m not racist, but...” or, alternatively to subscribe to Straker’s (2004b) conception of self-flagellating whites – wherein an individual acknowledges and ‘atones’ for their whiteness and privilege before providing commentary – occurs.

Another aspect of this sub-theme is the feeling of isolation that accompanies the feeling that white people have to be especially vigilant when engaging in topical discussions. The notion that there is a need for cautiousness results in the feeling that white people become isolated from engaging in many issues and are hence not seen as fully part of South African society. There is a sense that the need for caution in cross-racial interactions means that white people find it difficult to have spontaneous interactions with individuals of

different race groups – which indicates not only a general isolation for whites from the national dialogue but also a personal isolation for individual whites. At the same time, the sentiments suggested by the majority of the participants also seem to contradict this – with many participants speaking at length about the fact that they have friends of different race groups and that comfortable interaction between race groups is quite easily reached.

A recurring example that arises in the focus groups around the fact that race and social issues need to be addressed with watchfulness from whites is the engagement on social media as indicated in the quote below:

I mean like you know what happens on facebook. You write something, anything that isn't like "I'm happy and the stars are cool". People get crazy fighting on your status. And then suddenly there is this huge argument on your facebook status and you've got like 62 comments and everyone's like, "Fuck you!", "That's ridiculous!", "You're being racist!" (Participant C)

A number of things are suggested by this theme. Many of the participants begin to reflect Vice's (2011) sentiment of the need to remain silent on public platforms while others are more accepting of the need for vigilance and care in engaging with race – reflecting Steyn's (2001) narrative of *"White but not quite"* – where they argue that it is necessary and understandable for immediate assumptions of racism to be made given the history of Apartheid – and the role of young white people in South Africa is to actively disprove the assumptions and to *"make it less easy for people to notice you're white"* (participant B).

4.1.5 We're Not Afraid of Authority

A: In Cape Town our friend, he's this Zimbabwean guy, black guy, tried to film the cops smack someone up in the street, next thing they grabbed him, put him in the back of the van and we (the participant and a white friend) run up and we start asking the cops "Why is he being arrested and not us?" They threatened to arrest us. We were like "Do it, go ahead do it but I want my phone call now, my lawyer will meet you there" and I told these guys the law and they packed the van, let our friend go and they left.

C: And in my building I see my black neighbours always have a much rougher time with authority, like your even your black security guards, anything with cops and IDs because as a white person we are used to throwing tantrums and like say no and if it's a one on one, ja I will make a scene and I will protect my small rights.

A: I can't speak for all white people, but I don't know, the majority who I have experienced who can stand up and argue, like and they actually tend to be more belligerent than I am, even when in the wrong. Like when you go back to school it was always the white kids who were like, "No ma'am, you can't kick them out of class. You can't do this. I have my right to education"

B: Ja, I'm generalising completely but you know it's also - black kids won't talk like that [to teachers or policemen].

There is a sense in the focus group that as a result of South Africa's history of Apartheid and the oppression that black people were subjected to under that regime that black people have a tendency towards being submissive to people who are in positions of authority. An extension of this logic is that because they have no history of subjugation and oppression, white people are more comfortable confronting authority figures than other race groups, generally.

In saying this the participants are making the argument that because of a history of empowerment, and the fact that many generations of white people have lived in South Africa, that young white people have less of a fear or aversion to dealing with people who are placed in positions of authority, like policemen or teachers in class because the ability to challenge others and to question their actions – even if they are in positions of power – has been transferred generationally onto them. This stands in contrast to the belief that young black people in South Africa have a fear of authority figures ingrained in them, and that even if they are treated unfairly by those in positions of influence they are less likely to get support from older generations than white people are. This stems from white people having a longer history of having civil rights, and therefore having more confidence in practicing those rights.

The above notion is one that was highly contested in the focus groups – with some participants arguing that black people are becoming more and more likely to question and challenge authority, but a consensus was reached when exploring that this occurs the further South Africa moves into its democracy – with black people becoming more conscious and capable of defending their own rights.

The expression of this theme is interesting, considering that for the most part in the focus group there is an agreement that white people experience a general sense of voicelessness. It is an interesting juxtaposition that young white people feel they are able to express and defend their rights and are comfortable in taking on those in positions of authority in personal, one-on-one situations, however they feel that they are unable to voice their opinions and views in a larger, broader societal context – like in discussing topical issues and taking part in issues of the national dialogue.

In exploring this theme, it appears that the sentiments expressed in Steyn's (2001) narrative "*This shouldn't happen to a white*" - where there is an indignation at having one's rights being infringed upon which results in a great deal of anger and action on the part of white individuals - are carried through into a newer and more positive narrative of whiteness expressed by white youths – where they are aware of their own rights, but also feel it is essential that their black counterparts have the same abilities to defend their own rights – because above all there is a great sense of the need for justice and human rights to be upheld expressed in all of the focus groups.

4.2 White youth as a progressive force

Interviewer (In a follow up focus group): The first thing that was really quite clear from all of the Focus Groups that I have done up until this point, is actually what I'm getting is a lot of, a lot of very, very liberal views and I'm just wondering if you think that's like reflective of the general kind of white population in South Africa or if it's just, or what you make of it actually.

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A: I would say reflective of the young white people, definitely not all white people.

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Interviewer: But do you think it's reflective of young white people in South Africa and generally.

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B: Totally like because I know some people who were in here the other day (in the first focus group with this group) who actually probably had other views but didn't really have a chance always to express them because um, they probably felt outnumbered. But like not on everything, I wouldn't say conservative, just slightly different views say on BEE, for example.

Interviewer: What is your role or what is the white person's role in post-Apartheid South Africa?

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B: I think to challenge conservative people as a white person is quite important, just to bring a new perspective to say just because I'm white, doesn't mean that I have to have these views. Even if I don't necessarily agree with everything I say, just to be able to challenge, is far more important. I'm also at the same time to not make it too obvious that I'm white, to try and be able to not relate to people according to their race.

A: I'd say the majority of whites tend to be quite liberal and have very nice views but they'll be quiet, to let rather than negative voice become the dominant one and then might tend to believe that because all they hear in that voice, I think it's take control of all the narratives and, or should it be more invested in this country.

It became very clear in the focus groups that there was a strong desire for white youths to be seen as and understood to be a powerful progressive force in South Africa going forward. In discussing the roles and responsibilities of white youths in post-Apartheid South Africa there were many answers but the unanimous sentiment amongst these participants that is evident is that it is important for young white people to constantly challenge stereotypes and assumptions of racism because of the shadow that Apartheid casts. There is a definite desire to be seen as separate from generations that imposed Apartheid on other race groups in South Africa in the past.

While there is a belief that the vast majority of white youths do hold more progressive views and have a desire to fit into a diverse, multi-cultural South Africa there is also acknowledgement that conservative elements and opinions exist amongst white youths as well. Even with the conservative elements that exist, there is a strong belief that most young white people have embraced the change that has arisen post-Apartheid and that most young white people would like to be a part of contributing to the society that has taken shape in the years since 1994.

A major component of this theme is the belief that exists amongst the participants that in order for South Africa to move forward as a society, a pre-requisite is that there be less focus on race as the South African democracy matures. The need for this change is reflected in the fact that the participants became resistant to speaking about race as the focus groups continued and preferred to shift the focus to speaking about class as a social barrier to communication and interaction. This may be, in part, due to feelings amongst

participants that white people's views expressed as contributions to the national dialogue and pressing social issues are viewed with an air of suspicion – and as such a way against guarding against this in future is to remove the focus from their own whiteness and onto something like class – which is less overt and has less of an obvious conflictual history in the South African context.

An additional element of this theme is the feeling that white youths feel that they are unable to be a potentially powerful progressive force because of preconceptions and expectations of racism that they feel abound from other race groups. The participants express a great yearning to contribute to the 'New South Africa', but feel that there is an expectation that they are racist which prohibits them from contributing as much as they would like to. This is reflected in the following quote:

"I'd like to help out. But it's made harder because people resent me for benefitting from Apartheid – even though I wasn't really party to making any the decisions that contributed to it. I'm like "We have the skills. I'm sorry we have the skills because of Apartheid, like I didn't mean to but now I want to share it with you." (Participant B)

There is a degree of patronisation in this attitude, of course, and when viewed out of context it may be viewed as somewhat of a colonial mind-set – of the educated white person coming into a situation of the (still) oppressed, less educated black person and teaching them skills that they require to flourish and thrive. At the same time, there is also an element of desperation in the attitude as expressed by a young white person. The desperation that seems to exist is around a desire to shed one's own privilege by people the same skill set and the same knowledge that they have, in other words, there is an underlying desire for empowering others and for creating and facilitating opportunities wherein they are able to empower others. The desperation that is reflected seems to stem from a similar place to Vice (2011) and McKaiser's (2011) notion of recognising one's privilege as a white person and working to counter that privilege. This attitude also seems to draw some credence from the argument presented by Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) – wherein they argue that in order for a multi-racial or non-racial society to reach a point where it

can function optimally – those who have been previously been advantaged work against their own privilege to put previously and currently disadvantaged people in more advantaged positions by contributing to knowledge systems.

The way that the history of Apartheid is taught in South African schools and the way in which it is engaged with, generally, is also thought to contribute to barriers that limit the effect that progressive-thinking white youths can have in making a meaningful contribution to South African society. It is argued by the participants that it is essential that Apartheid be spoken about, acknowledged and engaged with, but that the manner in which this is currently done creates notions of heroes and villains and is, as such, incredibly divisive. The participants suggest that Apartheid is taught too early in schools – before children have the opportunity to explore difference and become comfortable with it on their own terms. The suggestion is made that children need to have the opportunity to discover and enjoy differences between race group and cultures before they have to engage with a history as brutal as Apartheid is. In allowing this to happen when Apartheid is taught there has already been the opportunity to learn to appreciate difference – this making the likelihood of immediate racial division because of Apartheid smaller. The following conversation from one focus group reflects this sentiment:

Participant C: [In early primary school, let] Kids learn about other kids' cultures you know, like it's cultures that our parents don't necessarily understand and get, like you go to a black friend's house and they'll do a different thing at dinner or whatever, and it's not something you've ever experienced and need to explain it to your parents, and they're like "whoa that's weird or strange" or whatever. You know what I mean so I think there just needs to be a bit of a break, just you know. Just let children be children and then you can start teaching them about Hitler, Apartheid and racism.

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Participant A: It's also like the way you are introduced to race. Like it's one thing to be made aware of race, it's another thing for your largest, your largest academic introduction to race in school is racial conflict.

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Participant C: Ja exactly.

Gilroy (1997) aspires towards the creation of idealised post-race world in which race is no longer spoken of or noticed. In his conception of such a world, society has progressed to such a point that race has become irrelevant as a social marker of inequality or oppression. The above extract seems to suggest that if South African children's introduction to race was handled more carefully, such a society may eventually become possible – which seems to be quite an extreme suggestion given South Africa's history.

4.3 South Africa is a good place to be

Interviewer: As white people do you feel like you can get a job [in South Africa]?

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L: Ja, of course.

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K: It's more as a BA student, that there's a problem. It's not about race.

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I: Out of all my friends who have gone into the job market already, and the majority are white, they've not had an issue. It might have taken a bit longer but I mean if you go to America they probably would have had a tough time.

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L: Ja that's true I think.

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H: Because of the economy there at the moment so I don't think it's got anything to do with that (race), it's got to do with how well do you sell yourself compared to the next black person, if that makes sense. Well - the next person, actually.

B. I feel very comfortable as a white person but that's probably to some extent because I am from a middle class background and I have never really had, to be honest, had to relate to very rural people or ja, I've never really been discriminated against as a white person.

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A. I'm really happy here. I love it here. Um but ja, so it's rather I think one, like he (gesturing to another participant) says, we need to control the narrative of our own culture. It's too often, like, I'd say the majority of whites tend to be quite liberal and have very nice views but they'll be quiet, to let rather than negative voice become the dominant one and then might tend to believe that because all they hear in that voice, I think it's take control of all the narratives and, or should it be more invested in this country. Think this is too often as a sense of "oh we're going to Europe" or "we'll live our life in these enclosed neighbourhoods, or like separate, like apart". We live in the country but more kind of like floating on top of the country as opposed to like [being a part of it].

Interviewer: The first question I want to throw out there is what was it like growing up in Post Apartheid South Africa as a white person?

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A: Easy.

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Interviewer: Well, what do you mean?

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A: Well, we live in the colonial dream, I mean, like we have this amazing life but we don't have the white guilt because I mean I was what like five when Apartheid ended.... Now there are job opportunities and a beautiful country – nice people too.

H: You know it's, I think I would say that we are doing well, like, overall. I mean.

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I: Ja I agree

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G: The first revolution basically.

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H: We're like an infant country, we've had no time, we need tons more generations to pass by before we can start judging how far we've come.

From the focus groups there is an overriding sense of positivity about South Africa, as a country and as a society, amongst white youths. South Africa seems to be viewed as a country in which there are many opportunities, and the participants expressed the belief that they have a viable future in which they will be happy and comfortable. In addition, as has been discussed in previous themes, there is very much a sentiment of wanting to contribute meaningfully to the society – to make it a country that they will continue to be happy in.

Coupled with the general sense of positivity are some feelings of ambiguity, however. Many participants expressed that they felt removed from much of South Africa. The sense of isolation seemed to be a result of feeling of having no forums in which to express or enact the meaningful contribution that the desire to. There is a feeling amongst the participants that they have fewer avenues for of engaging on social issues than other race groups do. This is evident in the following quote by a participant:

"That's why we don't speak so much about social issues – I mean people just pick fights or think we're racist because we're white – so we're, like... it's easier to stay quiet and wait for someone who isn't white to say what we're thinking." (Participant E)

As has been discussed previously there is often a sense that there are preconceptions of racism or ulterior motives when white people act or speak. The sentiment that becomes apparent is that despite having good intentions and a strong desire to contribute to South African society, young white people face many obstacles and difficulties in trying to do so which gives rise to feelings of apathy.

Additionally, there is a sense that very little of what they do contribute on social networking sites, intellectual conversations and public platforms is taken seriously in many quarters of South African society. This is, again, because of the preconception of racism, but also because they recognise that they are a minority group and that South Africa, for the last few years, has really involved very much of a majoritarian political discourse – and so there is, in that sense, a lack of belonging in speaking about issues which are important and relevant in the country.

In speaking about how optimistic people feel about the country the participants reflect that they feel like there are better opportunities for them, as young white people, to access jobs than there has been historically in South Africa. This may seem an odd claim to make considering the addition of the black majority to the work force since 1994. However, the justification for such a claim is that South Africa was considered a pariah state under Apartheid, and subsequent to its (at least official) fall, opportunities for jobs in multinational corporations, for example, have opened up – which means that there are more jobs available – as well as a larger workforce to choose from. Also, the fact that the world, in general, has become a far more globalised place than in the Apartheid era, which has meant that skilled and educated people – a large proportion of which are white in South Africa – have even further access to jobs.

What is interesting to note is that there is also the suggestion that people that could be thought of as middle-to-upper class (read white) in South Africa live in a “country within a country”. What this means is that it is very easy for people who live in financially secure environments to live in blissful ignorance of some of the harsher realities that many South Africans have to contend with. This is evident in the following quote by one of the participants:

“I feel very comfortable as a white person but that’s probably to some extent because I am from a middle class background and I have never really had, to be honest, had to relate to very rural people” (Participant B)

Being from a white family also means that the individuals are less likely to have a connection with people who live in poverty as a result of Apartheid and the benefits and privileges it provided to white South Africans. The feeling of optimism that the participants seemed to express may, in some part, be attributed to the lack of a need for them to acknowledge some of the more difficult problems that South Africa faces because of a lack of personal exposure to it.

What is noteworthy about the above is that there is a clear exception to the notion that most white people have little or no personal connection to people who live in poverty or come from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the form of domestic workers and child-minders (Goldman, 2003; Shefer, 2012). It is telling that the participants do not discuss or acknowledge people who so often play an integral role in their upbringing. It is, perhaps, suggestive of the idea that they do not recognise their domestic workers as coming from a similar background to those who are 'rural' or from a poorer socio-economic group. It may also be indicative of the fact that the participants are choosing not to engage with this fact. What this, then, means is that the participants do, in fact, very often have personal exposure to people from lower socio-economic backgrounds to themselves, but they are not acknowledging it.

When Steyn (2001) describes the narrative of whiteness "*This shouldn't happen to a white*" she describes a resentment and antipathy that white individuals feel in post-Apartheid South Africa. In this narrative white people in South Africa feel very badly treated because they are not experiencing the same level of privilege as they previously had. The persistent calling for a platform on which to voice their views from the white youths in these focus groups appears to be a generational transition of this attitude in that it seems that there is expectation for such a platform to, merely, be provided for white youths to make their contribution to society. The notion that when a stage is not provided for white youths to become involved in social action or to contribute to the national dialogue that they meekly accept this and apathetic feelings begin to emerge is indicative of their unwillingness to actively seek out a platform. In situations where their motives are questioned they seem

unable to endure such difficulties – so they seem to give up and cry foul. On the other hand, there is also an inkling of Vice's (2011) notion of withdrawing from the national dialogue as well. The white youths may feel that the time is not right for them to become involved – despite their desires to do so – and are waiting on a more appropriate and accepting point to offer their own contributions.

4.4 The stereotype of white South Africans has become false, but how do we show this?

A: There isn't much of a like at least a white English youth voice in the media, I mean I know it's going to sound apathetic but most of for lack of better term, our cultural spokespeople tend to be quite old, I mean, not the best example but we don't have an equivalent of a white Julius Malema. Like even if he's saying things, well, they'd probably say these things I'd horribly disagree with, I suppose we don't really have.

-0-

B: Well, from a very liberal aspect.

-0-

A: Where is our like liberal news spokesperson.

-0-

B: Maybe that's the problem, maybe it's not possible for white people to ascend in liberal circles because they are mainly about black rights and therefore sometimes black people come from a more respected perspective

A: I think I'm turning into one of those liberal whites that are so terrified of finding myself in your kind of Vryheid ...Volkstad type um culture of like ja, this country's going to the dogs that I tend to pull the other way, just make sure to myself that I won't have these tendencies that I see in other parts,

-0-

Interviewer: What are those tendencies?

-0-

A: The scared white people. The boerbulls

-0-

C: Negative as a point of principal

-0-

B: Like not being able to like stop criticising the government but not being able to tell me the name of the person who they're criticising

-0-

C: I think it's also fear, I think it's fear as well. People who are like, "Oh my gosh, you're driving with your window open!" I would say, "Dude I'm driving past UJ, come on! [It's not dangerous]"

G: In some places it is, like in some cases like there's not enough, like there's some people, there is in South Africa that are still living in Apartheid, like, it's bad, like in certain areas like Orania

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I: It's not even subtle.

-0-

H: It's not subtle, like it's blatant so like. So I think like, like it's still a fresh wound like, it's still a very fresh wound, and but like, like how long has it been, it's been like a raw decade like.

-0-

G: Ja, because it's still so new.

-0-

H: You know it's, I think I would say that we are doing well, like, overall. I mean.

A: It's too often, like, I'd say the majority of whites tend to be quite liberal and have very nice views but they'll be quiet, to let rather than negative voice become the dominant one and then might tend to believe that because all they hear in that voice, I think it's take control of all the narratives and, or should it be more invested in this country.

I: I think White people... we did get the chance to be appreciative and like things like the TRC ... [were] put in place so that you know there wouldn't be terrible repercussions for white people and ... we should be really thankful for that, that we got the chance to have the TRC and that our White supremacists from Apartheid got a chance to get amnesty and I think that was a chance given and just wasn't really taken.

Something which has been referred to when speaking about previous themes is the feeling that prevailed in the focus groups that white people experience South Africa as a place in which they are, most of the time, voiceless and their opinions are disregarded because of a preconception from other race groups that whites are, generally, conservative and racist.

Aside from the obvious history of oppression by white people under Apartheid, one of the hypothesised reasons offered in the focus groups for this preconception is a lack of "cultural" spokesperson for young, white liberal South Africans. Rooted in this notion is a fear to be vocal because of a concern to be viewed as critical of the actions of other race groups or a worry that they would be usurping political space reserved for other race groups. The feeling is that many of their views are, indeed, expressed in parts of the national dialogue but that the views are coming from members of the black majority and are hence not seen as representative of white people or are not understood to be held by white people. The offshoot of this is where there are white voices in the South African national dialogue, they are often ones of conservatism, defensiveness and, often, racism. There is concern that inclusive political parties are seen as being "too conservative" for the majority of people in South Africa - including a notable proportion of whites.

Another hypothesis that is presented in the focus groups suggests that there is a sentiment amongst the majority of South Africans that white South Africans are not conscious enough of the oppression that was imposed on them by the system of Apartheid, and that there weren't very many repercussions for white South Africans post-Apartheid. In addition to this, there appears to be the belief that white South Africans have not acted in ways since the formal end of Apartheid that suggest that there is a great deal of remorse for a system that lasted for so long. The example of the truth and reconciliation commission is offered as an opportunity white people had to truly show remorse for Apartheid, and there is a suggestion that this opportunity was not taken. Additionally, in areas like language and culture, there is a perception that white people have not put in enough effort to embrace other race groups – which then results in the feeling from other race groups that white individuals are not interested in being a part of broader South African society.

In light of the two hypotheses proffered above, there is an aspiration that young white people need to feel more invested in South African society and that there needs to be a push for young white people to tolerate some of the criticism and preconceptions of racism and that they need to make a concerted effort to contribute to social action and the national dialogue. There is a feeling of a lack of representation in South Africa politically, and the lack of a young white liberal spokesperson – and the suggested response to this by the participants is that they need to take responsibility for changing opinions and the way to do this is to either show a deeper understanding of the oppression enacted by Apartheid and a greater appreciation of other race groups – much like Vice (2011) suggests, or to take social action and engage more vocally in the national dialogue and debates – as suggested by De Vos (2011).

Chapter 5

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study endeavoured to hear the voices of white youths and allow them to express their views about the state of the current South Africa, but also more importantly to discuss the way they perceive that they fit in to South Africa under the post-Apartheid dispensation. The study looked to explore the subject positions that white youths construct for themselves in post-Apartheid South Africa, and to investigate the role that they see for themselves in contributing to a productive South African society. This chapter attempts to provide some deeper discussion and analysis of some of the thoughts expressed in the previous chapter. It provides a further commentary on what the themes extracted mean about the way young white people see themselves in post-Apartheid South Africa, but also what roles they perceive themselves playing in that society.

5.2 White Youths are Very Cautious When they Speak

One of the themes that arose through the focus group conversations was that of the participants speaking quite generally about race and being a young, white person in South Africa today, but very seldom speaking about how these factors affect them personally. The participants would speak about how being white in post-Apartheid South Africa affects white people – or even young white people, but they often avoided speaking about their own personal experiences or relating the topics that they were speaking about to their own lives. They would often also speak about race and being white in South Africa in quite academic terms and in so doing they were framing the conversation as an intellectual exercise, relegating it from being about their own lived experience and therefore depersonalising it. As was mentioned in the previous chapter – by doing this participants are, at some level, distancing themselves from any of the comments that they were making and from the implications of any of those comments.

By framing the discussion as an intellectual or academic one, the participants are implicitly suggesting that the comments or opinions that they are putting forward are, firstly, not just their own – but also that they are grounded in facts and evidence. In doing this the participants are also, to some extent, ensuring that what they are suggesting should not be challenged, and that if it is challenged that they can withdraw from the conversation by referring to history or social theory or literature which supports their view. This makes race easier and safer to speak about and to discuss than if they discussed it from a personal point of view – which has been mentioned throughout the previous chapter and will continue to be a central point of discussion throughout this discussion. This is especially the case when they are discussing topics or are making comments that could be construed as negative or critical about other race groups or of the current political and social dispensation. What is inherent in all of this is a constant and persistent fear of being perceived to be racist and conservative – and hence not accepting of the ‘new’ South Africa.

What is also apparent in the discussions is that the participants quite quickly divert the conversation from being about race to being about other demographic factors – like class or gender. There is the possibility that there may be an awareness, amongst the participants, at some level that although race may be a component of a social issue, they frame it as though there are almost always other more pressing and pertinent aspects to any particular topic. In doing this, the participants seem to imply that a focus on race is unproductive, and that more progressive thinkers may want to underplay race in favour of other social constructs.

That the participants feel unable to speak about their own personal experiences, for the most part, could be seen to be quite reflective of how they see themselves in post-Apartheid South Africa. The participants may feel quite distant from a lot of what happens in South Africa, but also from other South Africans. It suggests that while they see themselves as being South African and part of South Africa – that they feel like they in some instances may not be seen by people from other race groups as being “as South

African” as them. That they don’t feel able to openly discuss their own, particularly, negative or critical feelings or experiences could mean that they are distancing themselves from those feelings. If the feelings are positive, of course, the participants were much more content and much more willing to express themselves in a personal capacity because this plays a social role – it shows them to be accepting and embracing of a social order that is diverse, progressive and multi-racial.

From the above one can ascertain that the participants appear to construct themselves as feeling quite lonely, estranged and isolated from other South Africans. In doing this they seem to be suggesting a sense of sadness about the way they perceive themselves fitting into the South Africa of 2014. It suggests that people of this cohort have to be very considered and, almost, calculating in every social interaction. The responses of the participants appear to say that people like them – white, educated and middle-to-upper class – feel quite alien in South Africa and that they feel unable to just be themselves and engage with situations that arise around them or with discussions that are being had. From this it becomes quite evident that the participants – and therefore in all likelihood people of this cohort – appear to feel like they are still struggling to identify and find a place for themselves in the South Africa of today. It would seem that they are uncertain of exactly where they fit into a society in which the group who they are representative of have historically perpetuated a great deal of oppression.

It is important to look at the above narrative of whiteness in South Africa quite critically. In constructing themselves as isolated and estranged from other South Africans, the participants appear to be, consciously or unconsciously, positioning themselves as victims of post-Apartheid South Africa. In doing this they look to be trying to garner sympathy for themselves and other liberal white youths. This is quite similar to Steyn’s (2001) narrative of *A Whiter Shade of White* wherein the participants are outwardly quite sympathetic and, indeed, apologetic for the past. In this narrative participants even recognise that there is a need for a change from the previous status quo – but seem to feel like that any change should not be at their expense or inconvenience.

An additional contributing factor to the feeling of alien-ness or, at the very least, distance that they feel from their counterparts from other race groups becomes apparent through the participants' discussion about language in South Africa. The participants speak quite candidly about how speaking English (and even Afrikaans to an extent) as a home language or with a great deal of eloquence and articulation is an emblem of being 'white' – even for people from other race groups. So, for example, if a black person speaks English with a 'middle class accent' they are immediately construed as 'whiter' than other black people. There is, of course, an implicit racism in this logic – and this is representative of the 'Grand White Narrative' that Steyn (2001) refers to. The reason that it perpetuates the GWN is that it infers that if black people have an accent that is usually associated with a poorer or lower socio-economic background they are immediately assumed to be less educated than a white person and because they are less-educated they are speaking from a place of ignorance (seemingly, regardless of the topic of conversation). This is very similar to what Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) speak about when discussing whiteness internationally – wherein colonial languages and those who speak them with great fluency are perceived to be more knowledgeable and more intelligent than those who cannot.

The above sort of logic, naturally, distances white people from those of other race groups – but the discussion about language suggests something which further estranges English speaking South Africans from others. With a fluent understanding of English comes access to the westernised canon, a very westernised perspective and, therefore, a tendency towards 'westernised' ways of thinking and 'westernised' ideals. So, the participants – and seemingly most young, white English-speaking South Africans find themselves in a very ambiguous position in that they see themselves as straddling two quite different and separate worlds and often find it quite difficult to situate themselves between them. To make this clearer: on the one hand the participants find themselves identifying with westernised ideals and patterns of thinking, but on the other hand they see themselves as South African and therefore aspire towards being identified as "African". This is not

limited to white South Africans. All sectors of South African society grapple with the issue of what it means to be 'African' to a greater or lesser extent. It is worth noting that there is a discourse in South Africa (as well as in other countries like Namibia and Botswana) that it is unlike - and quite distant from - the rest of Africa, with it at times being referred to as 'Africa-lite' (Armbuster, 2008; Doran, 2012). When this occurs it is often in reference to the prevailing social and economic conditions as well as the political systems in this country - with the economies being quite powerful relative to the majority of economies elsewhere on the continent (Doran, 2012). With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that there are still predominant African ideologies, debates and ways of thinking in South Africa (Armbuster, 2008). The battle in establishing an identity for white South Africans, as suggested by the participants, is that through skin colour they feel that they are often automatically classed and associated with European and Western patterns of thought.

What the above results in is a profound feeling of distance between the members of this cohort and with the rest of South African society in that the participants - and by extension young, white English-speaking South Africans - have a strong desire to be able to relate to other sectors of South African society, and that they often try and make considerable efforts to do so. However their own patterns of thinking and the ways in which they have been socialised to think and behave often stand in contrast to the ways the majority of South Africans have been socialised to think and behave. This extends to most aspects of their lives - from the expectation on the part of white English-speaking South Africans to be addressed in English to customs of speaking, manners of eating and, even, often extending to a lack of understanding of African belief systems (because the Western canon is largely scientifically and empirically-based). The challenge that young, white South Africans then face is to determine how to reconcile their "African-ness" with their seemingly predominant westernised patterns of thinking or ideals.

What is also quite apparent from the focus groups is that there is a major fear amongst this cohort of being seen to be conservative and to be perceived or

construed as racist. What arises out of this fear is a tendency to be very careful and very thoughtful about the way that they engage on any social issue. This also can result in a defensiveness on the part of white people – and this is definitely apparent in the focus group and by extension in the cohort of white youths. White people, then, that engage in discussions or actions around topical issues and current affairs are seen to be “brave” by this cohort – because they are placing themselves in a position that is likely to be questioned, scrutinised and possibly criticised. Inherent in this line of thinking is the sense that white youths feel quite voiceless when it comes to taking part in the national dialogue – they feel, at some level, like their opinions will not be listened to and that they will not be taken seriously – or that their voices will not be heard or will not carry any weight.

There appear to be three common by-products to the fear of being seen as racist and resulting defensiveness. The first response is what Straker (2004a) discusses – wherein the white person is almost self-flagellating in an attempt to disown their whiteness. In this response the white person deprecates themselves and almost apologises for being white in an attempt to create a situation in which their views will be listened to and in which they can enter into discussions or conversations about pressing social issues. In apologising for their whiteness the individual is making an attempt to acknowledge their privilege because of their whiteness and in so doing trying to communicate that because they are aware of their privilege and are able to be self-aware and self-critical that they are, then, worth listening to (Altman, 2004).

Another common response is the “I’m not racist, but...” phenomenon (Jackson, 2006; Kennedy, 2007). In this response the white person, before saying anything that may be thought to be or could in any way be construed as racist or critical of another race group, prefaces their sentence with the disclaimer of “I’m not racist, but...” and then continues to put forward a view which is, in fact, often prejudiced or racist (Jackson, 2006). This sort of behaviour is reported, by the participants, to occur very frequently and most often when in the company of other white people. In perpetuating this particular line of action there is an embedded assumption that other white

people would condone it and find it acceptable. The fact that this particular discussion arose organically in each focus group is indicative of the fact that it has become commonplace and has become very much part of the white South African vernacular.

A final response is one of antagonism or what one of the participants refers to as the “*News 24 syndrome*”. This is a reference to the comments section of www.news24.co.za, a prominent South African news website which is renowned for being hostile and openly antagonistic towards the government. Essentially, this response entails quite aggressive commentary in the face of any suggestion of racism. The participants suggested that this kind of anger and hostility is a result of a constant feeling of defensiveness on the part of white people against the immediate expectation of racism when a white person offers a comment or opinion. What is also mentioned in this discussion is that it is amongst the group that responds in this way that the conservative elements of white South African society are expected to be placed.

In this case of the first two responses, what often results is that young white people like the participants of this study feel that they are unable to contribute meaningfully in broad socio-political conversations or discussions about prevailing current affair issues and so they choose to be largely silent in the national dialogue and may only proffer an opinion when in the company of those that they trust or that they feel will not judge them.

All of the above responses are purported to be to a feeling of voiceless-ness on the part of the participants but this sentiment needs to be challenged on a couple of scores. The participants claim that there are no real avenues to express themselves but - given that South Africa has a long history of colonialism and Apartheid - historically whites have enormous experience of structures that allow for both speech and action. This is something which by their own acknowledgement has become entrenched in the way whites engage both academically and politically. In this there appears to be some sense of entitlement – that some platform should be provided for them because, as a result of their previous status as advantaged, their views are

quite often viewed with an air of suspicion and scepticism. This can, again, be related to Ignatiev's (1996) argument of an unconscious sense of entitlement amongst whites internationally that is so deeply ingrained that even when trying to appear progressive still becomes quite evident.

The above mind-set is also spoken about at length by McKaiser (2011) and Vice (2011). In the conclusion of both of their papers they make the appeal for white people in South Africa to remain silent in the national dialogue. While this appeal can be critiqued on many fronts (and has been above in this paper and in other papers), what most critiques agree on is the implicit assumption upon which the appeal is based. Inherent in calling for white people to remain silent on the national platform is the belief that white people have a disproportionate amount of access to the public platform as a result of their remaining privilege due to Apartheid (de Vos, 2011; Vice, 2011).

Another challenge for this point of view is that the lack of access to a platform to voice their opinions is constructed as something that is unique to the white population and quite clearly it is not. It is not acknowledged in the focus groups that, even though poor and uneducated black youth may have a place in the governing ANC party and within ANC structures, very large numbers are likely to experience profound sense of disempowerment and an inability to make their voices heard (McKaiser, 2011). This is evident in the high numbers of service delivery protests that occur across South Africa on an annual basis, for example. These protests happen because, evidently, a lot of people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who are disproportionately not white because of Apartheid, do not feel that there are other ways in which they are able to make their voices heard.

An interesting paradox that is discussed and exposed in the conversations that took place in the focus groups is that this cohort felt profoundly unable to fully engage in the national dialogue for fear of being perceived as racist or conservative or rejecting of the current social order. However what is also spoken quite a lot about in the focus groups is that there is a strong sense amongst white youths that they are much more confident in expressing and

exploring their own human rights on an individual or one-on-one basis. What this means is that while this cohort feels largely voiceless on a large scale – they feel much more powerful than those from other race groups when confronted by authority figures. The examples which are spoken most about in the focus groups are of white students confronting teachers at school – where even if they have been misbehaving the scholar is very comfortable to claim their right to an education when their teacher tries to remove them from the classroom – or when confronting police men who are acting in an aggressive or corrupt manner. The feeling of power in interpersonal situations is integral to the Grand White Narrative (Steyn, 2001) as well as what Jackson (2006) refers to as the hegemony of whiteness.

In this discussion there is quite an overt acknowledgement that white privilege exists quite strongly in South Africa, and that there is much more of a sense of entitlement amongst this cohort than there is amongst their peers from other race groups. This could be indicative of the fact that there is an ingrained and internalised sense of authority and power amongst young white people which has been transferred generationally through the behaviour of their parents, and that there is much more caution on the part of their black peers for similar reasons – because there is a long history of oppression and unjust treatment of black people in South Africa and so black youths may have experienced their parents as more submissive to figures in positions of power and authority.

It is interesting to juxtapose the lack of authority and power that the young white people feel on a larger and national scale with the profound sense of power and authority that they feel in one-on-one interpersonal interactions. In a way what is interesting about this is that it could be expressive of the feeling amongst the participants that when they are dealing with or confronted by the redress of Apartheid within society as a whole (and often this will be racially driven) that they feel like they have to remove themselves from the equation by not contributing to the discussion. But that the way they then handle this is to then be extra vigilant and aware of exercising their rights in their interactions with other people – and even in with that mentality there is a

strong sense of defensiveness, because the need to be so vigilant in protecting one's rights seems to arise from a fear, at a deeper and possibly unconscious level, that those rights may be taken away.

5.3 White Youths Are a Potentially Progressive Force

Something else which is spoken about in a large amount of detail is that the participants emphasise that they firmly believe that the majority of white youths in South Africa have embraced a multi-racial, multi-cultural and equal society and have a strong desire to contribute to that society wherever possible.

The participants articulate quite clearly and on numerous occasions that they feel quite burdened by the legacy of Apartheid and how it reflects on them. As has been discussed at length above and in the previous chapter – white youths are extremely concerned about being construed as racist. There is a clear sentiment amongst them that it is important for them in interactions with other race groups to be able to show that they are not racist because they feel that there is very often an immediate assumption that they are racist and that people expect them to hold quite conservative points of view.

The participants speak about firstly having to be cognisant of disproving any preconceptions of racism in their attitudes, but more importantly of trying to find ways in which they can shed their white privilege. A common proposal of how they want to shed their privilege is by sharing their skills with people of other race groups who may not have had access to as good an education as they will have had. They also appear to believe that in doing this they are proving that they are not racist. It is from this position that they feel most able to contribute in a meaningful way to South African society. This is, to some extent, an extension of what has been spoken about above wherein white people feel that they have a point to prove and have to be self-deprecating and give of themselves in order to be considered part of South African society (McCorkel and Rodriguez, 2009).

What is quite interesting about the above is that there appears to be an implicit assumption on the part of the participants that access to a superior education is the major benefit bequeathed to them by the history of Apartheid, without the recognition of other benefits – like material wealth and possessions, social positioning or other potential further economic benefits that they may have access to through connections and networks that may have been forged in the past. In addition to those mentioned another benefit that many white people have as a result of Apartheid is something which is less tangible – an understanding of what it means to be powerful. These are all benefits and privileges which a great deal of people from historically disadvantaged groups simply do not have – even approaching two decades since the formal political conclusion of Apartheid.

Even when speaking about the white youth as a potentially progressive force there is a sense, on the part of the participants, that other race groups should unquestioningly just allow them to be one – by allowing them to share their skills – and for other race groups to be passive and submissive recipients of the skills and knowledge which they have historically been deprived of. This attitude is one which is quite clearly rather patronising and seems to infer that without the assistance of white people – black people would not be able to gain knowledge and skills of their own accord.

Inherent in the comments made by participants is a sense of real frustration and indignation that they are not being “allowed” to share their knowledge and skills. It must be noted here that the frustration of not being able to share skills and knowledge in this instance is a product not only of the participants’ whiteness but also of their youth.

It’s a product of the participants’ whiteness in that they appear to be quite unaware of the patronising attitude inherent in their comments – which is a clear component of Steyn’s (2001) “grand white narrative” and of the white privilege discussed by Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) – and along with that the assumption that they need to be allowed to be the saviours, at some level, of those of other race groups.

In saying that it is a product of their youth what is meant is that it is a natural impulse for young people to both show their knowledge and skills, but also to put that knowledge and those skills to work in an effort to build. Being young – the participants will have only recently acquired a number of skills and a great deal of knowledge and it is expected for them to want to explore it and experiment with it – often to contribute to something more meaningful (Hall and Montgomery, 2000). In the case of the participants that thing which is more meaningful is building the society of South Africa – but while they do that it is also important for them to display their acceptance of non-racialism.

In addition to the above discussion, participants also mention the belief that, in their opinion, it would be beneficial for future generations of South Africans if Apartheid is introduced into the education syllabus far later than it is at present. Their motivation for this is that by introducing the topic of Apartheid to scholars at such a young age there is a possibility of creating a hostility and tension between children of different race groups before they have the ability to engage actively and constructively with the information. More precisely, the participants suggest that by being introduced to the history of Apartheid at a young age there is the potential for creating anti-white sentiment amongst children of other race groups. There seems to be a degree of logic in the thinking of the participants – however it also feels as though this suggestion serves a social purpose for the participants and allows them, to some extent, to suggest a situation in which there is a denial of the Apartheid – and this is problematic (Steyn, 2001).

What the above analysis indicates is that, while there is a strong desire for white youths to be a progressive force in South Africa, the participants are unsure of exactly how they can contribute towards being progressive without re-inscribing their power as white people and the privilege that is associated with their whiteness. It is exactly this dilemma which leads to Vice (2011) and McKaiser (2011) to call for whites in South Africa to practice a “respectful” and “reflective silence” with regards to the national dialogue. The participants seem to feel that a better way to contribute towards building South Africa is to

identify areas and communities which require assistance and upliftment and to try to provide whatever they are able to while, as one of the participants framed it, working to ensure that their whiteness is less obvious to those around them.

5.4 South Africa is a Good Place to be

There is an undeniable sense of positivity about South Africa and about living in South Africa that is apparent in the focus groups. The participants seem to view South Africa as a country where there is a great deal of opportunity for them and where they feel that they can have a long and prosperous future. And, again, there is a strong sentiment of a desire to be a meaningful contributor to South African society from the participants. They express that they see the country as a very good place to be and that they want to be a part of sustaining the positivity that they feel and perhaps making it an even better place going forward.

It is important to note that the participants think that, for white people in particular, living in South Africa is a positive experience. However, within this claim there is also an acknowledgement that it is because of the legacy of Apartheid – where the vast majority of white people are middle-to-upper class – that South Africa is such an easy place to live in. With this acknowledgement comes the understanding that South Africa is not such an easy place to live in for a lot of its population – especially those that have not benefitted from the privileges and opportunities that white people were afforded during the Apartheid era.

In analysing the viewpoint that South Africa is a good place to live for white people it becomes quite apparent that the participants feel quite a strong divide and a very clear distance from those that live in lower socio-economic backgrounds and hence feel quite disconnected from large sectors of South African society. So there is a sense of abstruseness to their feelings of comfort living in South Africa – and for some of the participants a definite feeling of guilt about the luxury in which they live. In a way, the participants

claim to feel that they are very much a part of South African society, but there is also an acknowledgement that the South Africa in which they live is not the South Africa in which the majority of the population lives – and they are uncertain of how to reconcile the two South Africas in the way that they think.

It is undeniably true that at a material level white South Africans do, generally, have an exceptionally high standard of living – better than that of many more wealthy countries. In having access to a good education (through private schools, in particular), access to a good private healthcare system, access to travel opportunities – essentially they have a ‘first world’ experience and lifestyle while living in Africa. Where some of the participants diverge from this thought process is around access to safety and security – through mentioning that they have to live behind high security walls with electric fencing. But even with that being true – the majority of the population wouldn’t have access to resources that would allow them to attempt to safeguard *their* own safety in the same way that the majority of white people are able to.

It is possible, indeed probable, that the participants view South Africa as such a positive place in which to live because they have been quite sheltered from the hardships and difficulties that the majority of South Africans have to endure on a daily basis and, therefore, that they have a very privileged and skewed perception of what it is really like for most people of other race groups to live in South Africa. Participants are not able to personalise these abstract issues because their sheltered positions have not allowed them the opportunity to confront these harsh lived realities and therefore it does not seem to enter into their reckoning when considering what it is like to live in post-Apartheid South Africa. All of this is indicative of how deeply entrenched the effects of white privilege are – even in a group of people for whom it feels essential to be progressive and even more importantly to be *viewed* as progressive.

What is interesting to note is that there is some consciousness amongst the participants that they have not been exposed to the ‘real’ lived South African experience and that tied into that is a desire, not necessarily to have that

experience but certainly to engage with people who do have that experience. The participants speak about not feeling like they necessarily have a forum in which to express themselves – but they also imply that they are not sure how to engage and interact with people with different class backgrounds to themselves without displaying their privilege and without flaunting the advantages that they have had access to through the legacy of Apartheid. And there does seem to be a genuine desire – at least amongst the participants in this study - to connect better with other South Africans and to strive towards making South Africa a better place to live for all South Africans – even if they are not sure of how to do that.

5.5 The stereotype of white South Africans has become false, but how do we show this?

Something which has been referred to when speaking about previous themes is the feeling that prevailed in the focus groups that white people experience South Africa as a place in which they are, most of the time, voiceless and their opinions are disregarded because of a preconception from other race groups that whites are, generally, conservative and racist.

Aside from the obvious history of oppression by white people under Apartheid, one of the hypothesised reasons offered in the focus groups for this preconception is a lack of ‘cultural’ spokesperson for young, white liberal South Africans. In essence the reason that young, progressive white people feel voiceless or under-represented in the national dialogue is the belief that the majority of opinions that they would set forth would correlate with opinions of those proffered by ‘spokespeople’ or representatives of other race groups. Because there is a history of oppression in South Africa and the perpetrators of that oppression were white, it is thought by the participants that ‘allowing’ people of other race groups to make comments and offer opinions that they agree with and that they believe are coherent with their own feelings and opinions is only sensible. The reason for this is that they believe that opinions or comments about pressing and prevailing social issues that are made by members of groups that were previously disadvantaged in South Africa are

more credible, will be taken more seriously and will, therefore, hold more water. In saying this, the participants believe that they are being pragmatic because views that they believe are representative of their own are being expressed; are being discussed and are contributing to and shaping national discourse - and are being considered to be much more credible than if someone who was demographically more representative of them had expressed such an opinion.

In their opinion an unfortunate by-product of this phenomenon is that the prevailing and dominant white voice that is then heard in the national dialogue is one that is very conservative, reactionary and often quite racist. It is because of this that there is a perpetual preconception that white people are almost always racist. This leaves the members of the cohort that made up the participant group for this research in quite a precarious situation in that they feel as though they have constantly got to prove that the predominant white voice that is heard in the media and in the national dialogue is not representative of them and that they are not conservative or racist.

The above is quite interesting in the context of Vice's (2011) appeal for white people's silence in the South African national dialogue in that the result is exactly the same in both her paper and in the subject position constructed by the participants of this research. However, the logic in getting to the same result or conclusion is completely different. In Vice's (2011) argument the need to be silent is a product of needing to allow black people the space and the opportunity to get their voices heard – without being, at some level, drowned out by white voices. Juxtaposed with this is the suggestion from the focus groups that the need to be silent is because views that are congruent with them and representative of them are already being put forward – and that those views are more credible coming from a group that is previously disadvantaged – and so if they were to proffer the same opinion – it is the white voice that would most likely not be listened to or taken as seriously.

If one looks more deeply at the perception that white people are voiceless or will not be listened to if they provide any kind of critical commentary of post-

Apartheid South Africa – the ramifications are quite thought-provoking. If it is true that young white liberal South Africans feel that they are will not be heard or listened to, it inevitably leads to the sense of isolation that has been discussed at length elsewhere in this chapter – but if one extends this line of thinking further for the young white person it may lead them to question their own value as an individual as part of South Africa. Further and perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this research, it may lead them to question their value as a member of South African society. What this could result in for young, white people is the stripping away of their identity as part of the South African ‘group’ and may result in a much more individualised identity – which would be further perpetuated by their large exposure to the Western canon and Westernised ideals of individualism over collectivism – which then in turn further estranges members of this cohort from other sectors of South African society which theoretically ascribes to values of Ubuntu or the collective. And this is perhaps the greatest challenge for young white South Africans – to find an access point to their own “African-ness”. What the participants make quite clear is that they don’t feel like there is an access point to “African-ness” or and African identity that they can relate to in the political sphere in South Africa – and so, perhaps, they need to look at other avenues like music or language or sport or cultural activities, for example, as a means of connecting with or maintaining their “African” identity.

It is important to mention that there could be social utility for white people in constructing themselves as isolated and ignored - which has been discussed elsewhere in this paper. The social utility is that it constructs white people as victims in post-Apartheid South Africa in that they are not made to feel as though their opinions and views are understood to be valuable and valid contributions to the national dialogue and it hence prescribes to the Grand White Narrative as outlined by Steyn (2001).

5.6 It is Confusing to be White in South Africa

Perhaps what is most clear from the results of this study is that the participants feel very confused and quite uncertain of their role in the South

Africa of today and where they fit in to that society. There are many paradoxes and contradictions that arise through the analysis of the data.

One of the major areas of confusion and tension for the participants is around the idea of power. The participants speak very openly about the fact that they are fully cognisant of the fact that they experience a great deal of privilege in South Africa merely by being white – and that there is an awareness that this privilege is as a result of Apartheid. They continue to express the fact that because of the privilege that they experience they have had access to far more resources than the majority of other South Africans and that they are conscious of the fact that this places them in a position of power. The power they experience is a result of numerous factors – amongst those is access to a high quality of education and access to material wealth that other South Africans just simply have not had the same opportunity to access as they have had. So, the participants are aware that they are empowered and are very grateful for this. But with the gratitude for the power that they have access to comes a great deal of negative emotions – like guilt, for example. In response to these negative emotions the participants look for ways in which they are able to share their privilege or, at the very least, the products of their privilege. At the same time, however, they feel quite unable to share their privilege because they feel as though their motives for doing so would be scrutinised and viewed with a degree of scepticism. All of which places them in a situation that they are uncertain of how to navigate.

Another area of confusion is how to best make use of the power that they have. On the one hand, the participants speak about the voiceless-ness that they feel in not feeling adequately able to contribute to the national dialogue. In a sense they feel as though they are powerless in this regard. On the other hand, though, the participants are quite clear on the fact that in interpersonal interactions and in situations in which they have to defend their own rights – they are much more able to do so than counterparts from other race groups. This, again, gives rise to a sense of confusion and uncertainty – because the participants are aware of their power, but also feel quite disconnected and

unable to express their power in situations of a broader scale – for fear of being construed as racist or prejudiced or conservative.

The fact that there is a major concern, amongst this cohort, of being construed as racist also gives rise to some quite confusing feelings. The participants contend that in many situations it should be their role to try and make their whiteness as little obvious as possible. And intellectually they are able to understand the reason for this and, perhaps, that there is a utility in doing so. More than that - they are able to intellectually accept that there is a serious need for redress after the atrocities and oppression of Apartheid. At the same time, however, it appears quite difficult at times to accept policies like Black Economic Empowerment at an emotional level. The participants are able to intellectually accept that more opportunities need to be offered to previously disadvantaged groups, however there is a sense that it is difficult to understand on a personal level, or rather that it is difficult not to take it personally when they are not given a job that they believe themselves to be well qualified and hence deserving of. What this may result in is an intellectual acceptance and understanding of the need for redress but a difficulty in always being able to support it – which, again, clearly creates a sense of uncertainty and confusion.

Chapter 6

6. Conclusions

6.1 Addressing the Research Questions

Participants in this research presented mixed forms of white subjectivity in post-Apartheid South Africa which is very similar to the rest of the white population. Many of the participants express that they feel generally quite comfortable in South Africa at the present time and that they are comfortable for future white generations to live here if it continues on its current trajectory. They also suggest that, as young people, they see a future for themselves in South Africa assuming it maintains the direction it is following presently. At the same time, however, none of the narratives are overly idealistic and all of them convey a sense that they are deeply aware that South Africa, at present, is at a crucial point in its history and that political and social decisions which are made in the near future will have a long term influence, and that these decisions and actions will decide the future trajectory and that there is still a possibility for post-Apartheid South Africa to fail and become further polarised racially than it is currently and has been historically. In these sorts of narratives the participants fit into the category of white narrative that can be referred to as “Circumspection” – in which there is a sense of positivity, overall, but there is also an awareness that all is not necessarily well and that the non-racial South Africa that they hope for has not yet been totally achieved and that there is a possibility that it will not be achieved.

An important area of inquiry for this research was around the understanding of urban and educated, English-speaking white youths of their social location in post-Apartheid South Africa. As a general principle the participants expressed a strong desire to be part of a non-racial South Africa and suggested that they aspire to belong in such a society. Many of the participants argue that race is becoming increasingly less relevant and suggest that there is a need for this trend to continue. The proposal that is offered is that class is fast replacing race as the most important and significant social marker. There is an approval of this social change expressed in the focus groups – with the emergence of a black middle class and elite – being proffered as a reason for the need for

race to no longer be the predominant focal point in social relations. It is quite clear that class has become a far more comfortable marker, and one that obscures some of the racial issues – this despite an awareness on the part of the participants that class in South Africa still runs mainly (but not exclusively) along racial lines.

When speaking about their ability to participate politically in South Africa, the participants expressed that they felt fairly hindered. There was a distinct sense that they felt that, in this area in particular, race was an important factor. Participants reflected that they felt there was, firstly, no political party which adequately represented them or their views or had credibility with the majority of South Africans, but also that they felt very little ability to take part in political activity. When discussing areas that required political action, participants suggested that platforms many white people make use of – like social media or phoning into radio stations – were ineffective and as such quite useless. They argued that making use of strategies that other race groups have used, such as protests and strikes, is not considered an option for white people because they do not feel that such actions are taken seriously – citing a boycott of Woolworths stores (for openly advertising jobs for blacks only) as an example. A major theme that emerges (and has been discussed extensively) is that the participants felt that there was no platform for them to take political action – and that many of them have a powerful desire for such a platform to exist. This is an idea which has also been critiqued extensively above.

Despite feeling very little ability to participate politically in post-Apartheid South Africa – it is clear that participants felt empowered and able to form part of the South African work force and to contribute to the economic development of the country. There was a clear sense that the participants felt that policies like Black Economic Empowerment are, in principle, necessary in South Africa and that such policies did not limit their opportunities for gaining work. When speaking about job opportunities in current South African society compared to South African society in the past - issues like gender and access to education were spoken about as far more relevant to the discussions as the

issue of race. As with the topic of class, gender appears to be a far safer and less contentious social issue to discuss than race – for the participants of the study.

In discussions about current affairs and contributing to the national dialogue participants conveyed that there was a general trend of needing to add a disclaimer like “I am not racist but...” before making any politically critical comments – for fear of being construed as racist or as a white supremacist. This is reflective of the attitude held by most participants that there is very little space for a white voice in the national dialogue – because those that do exist arise from quite conservative sectors of society – which leads to all white voices being construed similarly and painted with the same brush. The suggested reason for this is that white progressive voices would be saying the same things as are often heard when listening to the contribution of progressive black people to the national dialogue. Due to the history of white domination in South Africa, black voices appear to have far more credibility and so it is seen as pragmatic for white progressively thinking people to allow the progressive black voices to highlight their thoughts on social issues.

6.2 Strengths of the Research

The strengths in this research lie in the fact that the topic is under-researched and thus opens the doors to future research considering the subjectivities that arise in the narratives of white youths and it contributes to a large body of knowledge in many areas. This research contributes to fields of whiteness, but also to fields which investigate the experience of social transition from members of a previously oppressive group, that are in the first generation not to have experienced formal dominance.

Race is a contentious issue anywhere, but it is especially so in South Africa. With recent discourse emerging around the need for whites to be silent on public platforms, and alternative discourses emerging around the needs for whites in South Africa to be more vocal on public platforms, this research

considers debates which are had on an everyday basis in many parts of post-apartheid South Africa.

Using qualitative data strengthened this research as the use of focus groups allowed for participants to express their personal views with relative anonymity which would encourage honesty. It did, of course, also allow for a variety of views that arise from the participants' discussions on many topics related to race. This provided the participants a chance to share their own unique perspectives and views on South African society during its formal transition from oppressive to democratic. The fact that focus groups were used allowed the participants to ask questions of clarity about concepts that they were unsure of – thus allowing for optimal understanding of questions.

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While the researcher endeavoured to maintain as much objectivity and tried to be as neutral as possible, the way the data were interpreted may have been influenced by the views, opinions and biases that he holds and this could affect the results. This said, audio-taping and thorough analysis allowed the researcher to be immersed in the data and this allowed for a good, strong understanding of the material presented – which would have assisted in controlling for biases.

The topic of whiteness is a contentious one in post-apartheid South Africa and the data obtained were reliant on the participants speaking honestly and openly about the topic. It is common that people censor their own views in order for the views to appear to be more socially acceptable. Given that the data set was collected in the form of focus groups – which are essentially social environments – the participants may have felt some pressure to be socially acceptable in the ways they chose to present their views. This is a definite limitation, but may also be understood as a strength of the research because it allowed the researcher to understand the way conversations about race take place in less manufactured social environments which is reflective of social discourses which exist.

The findings of the research indicate that South African society has not reached a stage where it can be considered truly non-racial in its general thought patterns and in the way pressing social issues are engaged with in the national dialogue. There is a strong sense in the findings that young white South Africans feel that there is a need for race to be engaged with in much more productive ways than it is currently. There is also an indication that young white people feel quite isolated, socially, from other race groups in South Africa and that they feel that there is a need to be quite self deprecating; or to qualify their behaviour and viewpoints in order to be accepted as a part of South African society – similar to the mentality that Straker (2004b) suggests. This also implies a real desire to be a part of society and for South African society to move away from such a strong focus on race in the public discourse.

Another major implication from this study is that there is a real need for more research to be done on whiteness because a large proportion of discussions on whiteness that have been taking place in recent times has been from the standpoint of personal experience, as opposed to being based on empirical findings. Much of recent discourse around whiteness suggests, as Vice (2011) does, that white South Africans need to withdraw from the national dialogue for the most part – but the findings of this research suggest a need for a stronger liberal/non-racial white voice to be heard – as a means of breaking down stereotypes of whiteness and the views of white individuals, in particular.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Information sheet



Good day

My name is Etienne de Beer. I am a Psychology Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently doing research in fulfilment of my degree of a Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling (MACC).

Specifically, the aim of my research is to understand the way that white youths understand their social location in post-Apartheid South Africa. Specifically, this research looks at how white youths take part in political, social and economic debates and actions in the country. This research is important in understanding how white youths understand their place and to ascertain what they see their role being in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Participants who are willing to take part in this research will be put into focus groups that will be presented with some questions for discussion. The focus group discussions should not take much longer than an hour and a half and will take place at a convenient and suitable location at the University of the Witwatersrand. After the initial focus group meetings, participants will be asked to return for a shorter second discussion a few weeks later in order to give further impressions or opinions on the topics discussed previously. This meeting should not take longer than 45 minutes.

Consequently, I herewith invite you to participate in this research project and to take part in the focus groups facilitated by myself. The discussions will be transcribed and analysed by me and the only people who will have access to the tapes will be myself and my supervisor. All recordings and transcriptions will be kept locked safely in a cupboard and will be destroyed 2 years after the completion of the study if the findings are published. If no publications happen within 6 years of the completion of the study, the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed at that stage. If you agree to being interviewed, please complete the attached Consent forms (both to take part in the study and to be recorded in an

interview) and be aware that you will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement on arrival for the focus groups. This agreement is to ensure that what is discussed in the focus groups will be kept confidential in order to protect fellow participants.

On completion of the research, my research paper will be kept in the library at the University of the Witwatersrand. Findings are expected to be presented at conferences in the future and, in addition, it is hoped that they will also be used in future journal articles. If it is requested, a summary of the paper would gladly be provided to those who take part in this study.

Please note that your identity will be kept a secret and any identifying information will be changed in order to maintain your anonymity. Kindly also note that you may withdraw from the research at any time and that you would be under no obligation to answer any question that you would not feel comfortable doing so.

There are no particular risks or benefits for those participating in the research, aside from the opportunity for participants to share their stories. If, however, you feel the need to discuss feelings that have arisen in the focus groups with a therapist the contact details for the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) and the Emthonjeni Centre have been provided. Additionally, if you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at the email addresses or phone numbers provided below.

Etienne de Beer (Researcher), Tel. 082 490 6874/

Email: Etienne.c.deBeer@gmail.com

Dr. LaKeasha Sullivan (Research Supervisor), Tel: 011-717-8329/

Email: Lakeasha.Sullivan@wits.ac.za

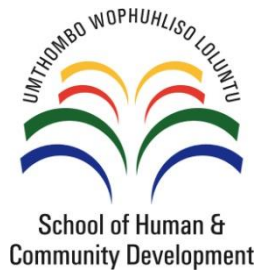
Counselling Services

CCDU: 011 717-9140/32

Emthonjeni Centre: (011) 717-4513

APPENDIX B

Consent to Participate



I _____ consent to being part of focus groups facilitated by Etienne de Beer for his study on white youth perspectives of post-Apartheid South Africa.

I understand that

- Participation in this study is voluntary
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to
- I may withdraw from the study at any time
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential
- There are no risks and benefits of this research
- Direct quotation from the interview will be written within the report
- Transcripts and recordings will be destroyed 2 to 6 years after the completion of the study

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Consent to Being Recorded



I _____ consent to my part in focus groups facilitated by Etienne de Beer being recorded for his study on white youth perspectives of post-Apartheid South Africa.

I understand that

- The tapes and transcripts will only be seen by Etienne de Beer and his research supervisor
- All tape recordings will be destroyed 5 years after the research is completed.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report
- The tapes will be locked away safely in a cupboard and only Etienne de Beer and his research supervisor will have access to them.
- Transcripts and recordings will be destroyed 2 to 6 years after the completion of the study

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D

Confidentiality Agreement



I _____ undertake not to disclose the identities of fellow participants in focus groups as part of Etienne de Beer's research on White youth perspectives on post-Apartheid South Africa.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Question Schedule



1. What was it like growing up being white in South Africa in the post-Apartheid years?

Prompts to be asked if areas are not covered:

- Was being white an issue?
- Was it a hindrance or a privilege?

2. How do you think political change has reflected in your life?

3. Did you vote in any of the recent elections and for those of who weren't of an age would you have voted?

Prompts to be asked if areas are not covered:

- Did you feel that your vote made a difference?
- If you feel like any of your rights are infringed upon, what would you do? Do you feel like this is happening at the moment?
- Is there a political party that you feel represents you?

4. How optimistic do you feel about getting a job in South Africa?

Prompts to be asked if areas are not covered:

- Why?
- Are your employment prospects better or worse than your parents' were?
- Are there better prospects for jobs elsewhere?

5. Do you feel that your tax money in South Africa is well-spent?

- If they respond that they don't pay taxes – Do you feel that tax-payers' money is well spent?

Prompts to be asked if areas are not covered:

- Where would you like to see the money spent?

6. What controversial issues that have had a lot of attention in the media have you found interesting?

Prompts to be asked if areas are not covered:

- Who did you talk to about these issues?
- Did you take any action, like blog, facebook or phone into a radio-station about these issues?

7. Do you feel part of a South African culture?

8. Is there anything else about being white in South Africa you would like add to today's discussion?