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White Men: An Exploration of Intersections of Masculinity, Whiteness and Colonialism and the Engagement of Counter-Hegemonic Projects¹

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This study presents the case for the study of white masculinities in South Africa. White men, long seen as hampering gender and race transformation in South Africa, are seen here as engaged as potential allies in an exercise which, while locating whiteness and masculinity in a particular history, allows for the notion of multiple masculinities and whitenesses, and for alternative ways of being a man and white to emerge. Through exploring life stories, this study presents moments that illustrate the intersections of masculinity, whiteness and colonial legacy in the construction of these men's identities. It illustrates how these identities are complex and contradictory and that the ascendance into hegemony is heavily weighted with cost. Furthermore, it shows how different men, at different moments, inhabit these intersections differently. Some challenge the master narratives of masculinity and whiteness, some accept and perpetuate them. These challenges may manifest in the simple naming of power to a call to action to challenge it. The most important thing, however, is that master narratives are being 'interrupted' and the hegemony challenged.

Academic and popular interest in the study of masculinities is growing worldwide. In March 2004, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women released its first set of agreed conclusions on *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality* (UN 2004). In South Africa, these processes are echoed by endeavours such as the Fatherhood Project headed by the Human Sciences Research Council. It is becoming accepted that gender equality 'demands that men take on the challenge of changing themselves' (Morrell 2003). The struggle for men to see the privilege they have is central to this process (Wildman and

Davis 2002; Steyn 2001; Frankenberg 1993), and it can only be achieved through the inclusion of men in the struggle towards gender justice.

Although radical feminisms have been criticized for the demonization and exclusion of men, more inclusive feminisms have emerged. These acknowledge the value of men's involvement in the project of realizing gender justice. A 'third wave' (Frankenberg 1993) of feminism has endeavoured to undertake this project in the context of other axes of oppression, especially race² and racism,³ the driving rationale being that gender and race do not simply present versions of each other but actively constitute each other (Lerner 1997). African feminisms have pointed out that African women's realities are shaped by a 'plurality of values of which Africa consists' and that sound scholarship around gender needs to be 'located in that history' (Modupe-Kolawole 2000: 93). The reality of African women's oppression is criss-crossed by factors such as culture, nationalism, religion, globalization, colonialism⁴ and race. Gender is but one layer in the fight for equality. Modupe-Kolawole (2000: 92) goes on to say 'feminism' is viewed by many African men as a 'divisive concept' employed by the West to undermine the struggle against racism. It is also viewed with scepticism by some women, perceived by some to have been imported to 'ruin nice African homes' (Aidoo, cited in Modupe-Kolawole 2000: 93). The concerns of African feminists 'draws attention to the diversity of experiences amongst women' (Morrell and Swart 2005: 99) and illustrates the very intersectional nature of gender and racial oppression. It also underlines the 'need to theorise multiple forms of oppression, particularly where inequalities of race, gender and class are evident' and 'the need to highlight imperialism' (Oyewumi 2002: 3) in the study of gender in Africa.

In the same way that mainstream academic focus is shifting from women as the 'problem', the 'problem' of race can no longer be seen as 'coming from blacks' (Lipsitz, cited in Steyn 2001: xxix) but rather needs to be 'located and addressed in the discourses, socialization, political and economic privilege of white people' (Steyn 2001: xxix). In the past the analysis of race has focused largely on black people (Giroux 1997) but as bell hooks (cited in Giroux 1997: 291) argues, very little has been done 'to investigate and justify all aspects of White culture from a standpoint of difference'. More recently, however, for those engaged in critical analysis, just as men have become gendered, whiteness has become raced (Steyn 2001; Frankenberg 1993) and the primary task of those whites who are committed to transformation is to 'deterritorialize the territory of the White, to expose, examine and disrupt ... so that, like other positions, it may be placed under critical analysis' (Nakayama and Krizek, cited in Giroux 1997: 292).

Furthermore, the active co-construction of race and gender suggests that we cannot explore one without firmly contextualizing it in relation to the other. Failing to do so means failing to engage the complexity of these positionalities (Lerner

1997; Frankenberg 1993). This work is located within a critical postmodern paradigm and stands at the intersection of work around masculinities and whiteness. It joins the increasingly broad scope of work that examines the social construction of the complexities of masculinities and whitenesses, the way in which they interact and the implications that these interactions have for power, and the realization of social justice.

This study draws from a Masters thesis I completed at the University of Cape Town in 2005. My thesis was broad. Here, however, I wish to explore those aspects of my findings that most actively contribute to the debates around masculinity, whiteness and (post)colonialism.⁵ I also wish to present those instances that serve to disrupt the dominant narratives associated with white colonial masculinities. Before that, however, I will present the argument for the study of white masculinities in South Africa and the conceptual foundations on which this argument is built. As the methodology of my study was closely related to these theoretical foundations, I will briefly reflect on the methodology adopted to undertake this exploration. Finally, I will present the extracts from the men's stories and their analysis.

The Argument for the Study of White Masculinities in South Africa

Literature in the area of men's studies in South Africa has failed to address the complexities of men's gender projects (Morrell 2001; Shefer and Ruiters 1998; Oyegun 1998; Ratele 2001). This is particularly true for white masculinities, which seem to have slipped under the academic radar. A case in point was the Symposium on Manhood and Masculinities held at WISER (September 2004) in which only one out of twenty-five papers, presented over three days, focused on white masculinities while the rest were on black masculinities; Furthermore, a lot of the work, which was unnamed in terms of race, was about black masculinities. It may be that white masculine hegemony is still doing a pretty good job of not exposing itself, but it may also be that the complexity of that hegemony and challenges to it are not being adequately engaged.

More broadly however, some theorists have argued, the exercise of conceptualizing masculinity tends to result in the fitting of men's experiences into pre-existing frames (Ratele 2001). The result is that the masculine subject is not allowed to change. In fact, it can be argued that the rearticulation of problematic masculinities further entrenches them. At the aforementioned Symposium on Manhood and Masculinity, Robert Morrell cautioned against the unproblematic assumptions undergirding many men's studies, of what he calls the man/power and man/violence couplet. He argued that to engage in the study of men from this theoretical platform is to lock the understanding of gender into these dichotomous relationships. Furthermore, it means losing the complexity and nuance

that characterizes gendered identities and relationships, and the complexity of the way in which power permeates them.

Although this argument has been made about masculinity, the same dynamic applies to whiteness. After Giroux (1997), Steyn (2001: xxx) argues that equating whiteness with racism 'is paralyzing for those whites who seek liberating subject positions'. Giroux (1997: 293) expands this point in arguing that what is necessary is an approach that gives whites the 'possibility of rearticulating Whiteness, rather than either simply accepting its dominant normative assumptions or rejecting it as a racist form of identity'. He further argues that the result of equating whiteness to racism is that white people have 'few resources to question and rearticulate whiteness' (ibid.: 296) and as a result retreat into a 'general sense of angst over racial politics' (ibid.). However, Steyn (2001: xxx) notes how Giroux makes the distinction between 'whiteness as a racial ideology and the many subject positions that are open to, and adopted by, white people'. The disaggregation of whiteness in this way allows the space for whites to 'reconceptualise their identities in emancipatory ways' (ibid.) and in so doing take on the responsibilities of social transformation. The same holds true for gender identities.

The purpose of this work is to explore some of the many subject positions that Steyn talks about and, in so doing, contribute to discourse around more 'emancipatory' ways of being both white and a man. *Everything But The Burden* (2004: 2), a group of young white men doing anti-racist and anti-sexist work in the USA, makes the point that it would be very cynical to believe that 'most white heterosexual males, if given the choice would trade the health of the people and the world's ecosystems for their own wellbeing'. I also agree, however, that in the current climate of world affairs, white men actually stand in a unique position to bring about change. It is about white men working to dismantle the power that they have and in doing so 'inhabiting' it differently (Erasmus 2004). It is about shifting some of the responsibility for transformation to the centres. Crucial to this redistribution of responsibility is the productive engagement of those who are by virtue of historical legacy, centred, in this case, on white men. Lack of engagement and the ongoing construction of all white men as barriers to transformation have resulted, and will continue to result, in most white men disassociating themselves from responsibility in these processes. More problematically, it may cause in those white men who are already involved in transformative processes to disengage. Productive engagement, then, requires a complex appreciation of the nature of transformation and the relationship it has with identity:

Change in practice... can be the long and difficult remaking of an inherited (determined) practical consciousness: a process often described as development but in practice a struggle at the roots of the mind – not casting off an ideology, or learning phrases about it, but confronting

hegemony in the fibres of the self and the hard practical substance of effective and continuing relationships. (Williams, cited in Sideris 2004: 88)

Sideris (2004: 89) goes on to argue that 'the pressure to conform to the dominant standard is not founded on an uncomplicated desire for power' but rather plays out in the conflict of identity and a coherent sense of self. The pressure to yield to the hegemonic is greatest when there is no social support for alternative practices (ibid.). The disaggregation of the hegemonies of white masculinity, by giving voice to those who critique and 'interrupt' them (Steyn 2001: xxviii), is central in the process of creating these alternative discursive spaces. It is these alternative spaces that my study served to explore, and in so doing contribute to the growing engagement of white men in processes of social transformation.

In order to embark on this task, however, it is important to be grounded in particular conceptual frameworks around masculinity, whiteness and their intersection. The following section lays that theoretical foundation.

Theorizing Masculinities

Assuming that gender is a project wrought of social resources, we are forced to reconsider the term masculinity and refer rather to 'multiple masculinities' (Connell 1995: 76) so as to appreciate the 'diversity of men's projects' (Wetherell 1996: 322). As Holland *et al.* (1994: 123) put it, there are various ways in which 'men do masculinity', and how they do that masculinity is determined by the cultural resources available to them (Edley and Wetherell 1997; Wetherell 1996; Morrell 1998). The disaggregation of masculine identity in this way is crucial in the realization of more 'emancipatory' ways of being.

One of the only things that can be generalized is that the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 1995: 82) does not pay out equally to all men. Connell (1995) defines the 'patriarchal dividend' as the accumulated advantage that men experience relative to women. This dividend is the result of hegemony. Hegemony is the 'cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life' (ibid.: 77). Gender is one dimension of that position and it intersects identity with equally powerful axes, like race and class. Hegemony is a crucial concept, in that it captures the power of certain versions of masculinity over others. In the exercise of working towards more progressive versions and challenging the obstacles to them, this is an important tension.

Different versions of masculinity become dominant in different contexts. To assume that the Euro-American version of hegemonic masculinity (the homogeneity of such a concept itself being problematic) is *the* hegemonic version of masculinity is in itself an act of cultural hegemony in that it assumes that the Euro-American version is, by default, the dominant one. This is particularly problematic when, in a global context, we have Euro-American systems of meaning being superimposed over and 'explaining' other cultural experiences. In

any given context, there may in fact be competing not only masculinities, but dominant forms of masculinity within different meaning systems. For the same reason then that we speak of masculinities we should speak of hegemonies (Connell 2004). An important tool for exploring the nature of these hegemonies, and the relationships that they have with each other and other less dominant versions of masculinity, is that of subordination (Connell 1995). This is an important development in the conceptualization of this work in that white masculinity is not conceived as *the* hegemonic version of masculinity in South Africa, but as one of many. This allows for the conceptualization of more than one dominant way of being a man and white and in different contexts, further contributing to a more nuanced understanding of masculine identities. This is crucial in capturing *all* the ways in which *all* these versions of masculinity serve to entrench male privilege.

One of the central characteristics of hegemonies is that they are only likely to be established if they are linked with some form of institutional power (Connell 1995). It is for this reason that it is important to locate the subjective experience of being a white man in South Africa very firmly in the reality of current socio-economic arrangements. South Africa's long colonial history and Apartheid meant that institutional power and resources were for a long time in the hands of one particular group of men, white men. Although since the new dispensation this arrangement has been rendered more complex, it is largely still in place (Epstein 1998). For example, according to the South African Department of Labour's Employment Equity Report for 2003, white men still dominate top management positions at 67%, while Indian, African and Coloured men hold 18% and women (white 9% and black 6%) make up the rest. Furthermore, unskilled labour is dominated by African men, who make up 62% of the total unskilled labour market, and African women who make up 22%. White men and women make up 1% each (Department of Labour of South Africa 2003). The exercise of colonialism was one that relied on a particular version of masculinity to achieve its aims: one that was dominant and one that was white.

Theorizing Whitenesses

The colonial endeavour was based on the 'superiority' of the colonizers, which was physically marked by their paler skin colour and socially by their 'civilized' customs. Conversely, the 'inferiority' of the colonized was marked by darker skin colour and less 'civilized' customs (Steyn 2001). Furthermore, the existence and legitimacy of whiteness in Africa relied on the 'inferiority' of dark-skinned Africans. Whiteness represented civilization, progress and moral enlightenment, which Africa was seen as clearly lacking, and in need of (ibid.). With God and science on its side, whiteness could claim not only moral superiority but endogenous superiority to a continent perceived as further down the evolutionary ladder. Whiteness relied on the deprivation and assumed sub-human position of the African in order to

stake its claim to Africa. This is an important theoretical point of entry in that it locates whiteness within a particular historical power dynamic.

The nature of the whiteness of the colonial project was that it constituted itself as infallible, as the only version of reality, the 'master narrative', the framework from within which all other versions of reality, narratives, were interpreted. This was achieved in large by the naturalization of the colonial order of things, dissociating it from the social and economic, and locating it in the endogenous characteristics of the groups. The effect that this had, however, was to mark the dominated as deviant from a norm that was 'naturally' located in the dominant positionality. When the dominated are thus marked 'the dominating position is unmarked, allowing freedom and greater possibilities, and simultaneously setting itself up as normal, positioned beyond any obligation to explain itself' (Steyn 2001: 21).

The power of whiteness in South Africa has been such that it has remained largely normative. White people have been able to ignore the way in which race has shaped their lives (Frankenberg 1993) and thus 'as the privileged group whites have tended to take their identity as the standard by which everyone else is measured' (Steyn 2001: xxvi). Giroux (1997: 294) argues that although whiteness is increasingly becoming an 'object of critical analysis', 'there have been few attempts to provide a theoretical language' for white people to view themselves as 'both White and anti-racist at the same time'. This is a valuable insight, in that it does not automatically equate whiteness with racism but, with full consciousness of the insidious nature of systematic racism and white privilege, endeavours to allow anti-racist subject positions to emerge. An important aspect of this undertaking is the examination of less centred varieties of whiteness, like white women (Ware 1992) and the inclusion of the experience of whites who seek alternative subjectivities to those presented by the master narrative (Steyn 2001).

Intersections of Whiteness and Masculinity and the Exercise of Imperialism

Defence of manhood demanded, above all, the defence of the white goddess of civilisation against the black sex crazed, barbarians at the gates.
(Hoch 2004: 100)

In their hegemonic forms, both whiteness and the masculine hold the 'centre' and, as such, employ similar dynamics to retain that dominant position. In fact, 'the very same mechanisms that were used to elevate whiteness, were utilized to elevate maleness as a natural category in opposition to women' (Steyn 2001: 20). The domination of women was an important mechanism for maintaining racial dominance (Frye, cited in Steyn 2001; Frankenberg 1993; Ware 1992; Hoch 2004). The protection of 'vulnerable' and 'precious' white women often served to justify oppressive relations between men, black men being constructed as sexually deviant

and aggressive (Frankenberg 1993; Steyn 2001; Hoch 2004). Conversely, the construction of the black 'other' as a threat relied on the construction of white women as vulnerable. White women's sexuality was policed not only for their own protection, but also to ensure the continuation of the superior race. Lerner (1997) illustrates how this same logic, for the policing of white women's sexuality, was used to protect and entrench class privilege. Furthermore, the blatant and often violent 'appropriation' of black women by the colonizers marked their superiority and domination over black men (Frankenberg 1993; Steyn 2001; Ware 1992; Hoch 2004). Whiteness as conceived by the colonial master narrative is 'absolutely centred, unitary, masculine' (Owens, cited in Steyn 2001: 151). Moreover, in South Africa it can be argued that the masculinity as conceived by this colonial narrative is, unerringly, white and that whiteness remains a powerful narrative in the rendering of the gender project (Epstein 1998). 'Colonialism was a highly gendered process' (Morrell and Swart 2005: 91). According to Anne McClintock (cited in Morrell 2005: 92), in order 'to understand colonialism and postcolonialism, one must first recognise that race, gender and class are not "distinct realms of experience" but rather, they come into existence in relation to each other'. Connell (2005: 75) adds that by the late nineteenth century 'gender ideology tended to fuse with racism in forms that the twentieth century never untangled' and that 'the imperial social order created a scale of masculinities as it created a scale of communities and races' (ibid.).

Disaggregating Whitenesses and Masculinities

Although race remains a very powerful axis in the construction of gendered identity, Ratele (1998) and Epstein (1998) argue that it is necessary to reject the notions of a singular black or white masculinity, as neither are homogeneous. South Africa is a strongly racialized society, and this has shaped the types of masculinity available to black and white men (Epstein 1998; Morrell 2001; Ratele 2001), but it has not resulted in two homogeneous masculinities. What is required is the disaggregation of both whiteness and masculinity into whitenesses and masculinities. This is important in that where alternative versions of 'self' exist, subject positions can and do change. These changes depend on the investment a particular individual has in taking up a certain subject position and the subject positions available, the nature of each being a function of historical processes (Morrell 2001; Epstein 1998). With the political illegitimation of the colonial narrative, as marked by the new dispensation in South Africa, came the illegitimation of the masculinity with which it was associated. Not only was the colonial version of masculinity no longer viable but in the wake of its unravelling, alternative positionalities were made more viable. In the context of the changes that South Africa has undergone, the gender projects that white men are engaging in at the moment are particularly tricky (Epstein 1998). More than ever there are 'no clear

models' for white men to follow (Frosh *et al* 2001: 1). Along with the reconstruction of the political system came the 'chance for the remaking of masculinities' (Epstein 1998: 50). 'Different masculinities become relevant, common or even possible, in different historical times, in different places and in different political situations' (*ibid.*: 49). This has never been truer than for white men in the new (post-Apartheid) South Africa.

A Reflection on Methodology

The thesis that this study draws on was informed by fourteen in-depth interviews. Two one-hour-long in-depth interviews were held with each of seven white middle-class men in Cape Town. This data was analysed drawing on two theoretical frames. First, Grounded Theory was used to explore themes emerging from the transcripts. This approach enabled close attention to be paid to the complexity of the men's voices and helped prevent the unproblematic reproduction of dominant constructions of whiteness and masculinity. Second, Critical Discourse Theory was used to explore the ideological positioning of and power dynamics implicated in the discursive resources accessed by these men. An important part of this process was the positioning of discourse emerging in the transcripts relative to 'master' narratives and the active exploration of counter-hegemonic discourse. Furthermore, intersections between race and gender were examined.

The methodology employed was rooted in a very particular understanding of the relationship between identity, culture and language. Theodore Sarbin (1986: 8) proposes that narrative is the organizing principle for human subjectivity, that 'human beings think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices according to narrative structures'. Riessman (1993: 4) adds that 'the primary way individuals make sense of experience is by casting it in narrative form'. In other words, it is through the telling of our life stories that subjectivities are constructed (Gergen 1994; Connell 1995; Hollway 1984; Frosh *et al* 2001; Mishler 1986a and b, 1995; Sarbin 1986; Riessman 1993). Furthermore, it is through our life stories that 'culture speaks itself' (Riessman 1993: 5) because in constructing our own narratives we draw off larger cultural narratives, and in turn rearticulate or disrupt the roles we play therein. The purpose of the present study is to examine the participants' stories within a critical discursive framework in order to explore how these stories are spoken to, and in turn speak and 'interrupt' (Steyn 2001), the cultural narratives of masculinity and whiteness. Connell (1995) identifies how these personal stories are central in contributing to a localized and particularized understanding of 'the material, cultural, and psychic practices and constraints that produce formations of masculinity' (Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003: 9).

One of the major characteristics of narratives is that they are constructed to be as coherent as possible, in terms of individual events, the overall point of the story and general cultural values (Agar and Hobbs, cited in Mishler 1986a and b).

This renders the subject position coherent and legitimate. Narratives need to fit into a cultural frame of reference to carry social weight. A legitimate story is constructed through mitigation with canonical narratives, that is, stories that have social legitimacy (Bruner 1990). Canons are, in a sense, like 'master narratives' that 'define rights and duties and incorporate the values of dominant social and political groups' and thereby 'conceal patterns of domination and submission' (Boje, cited in Mishler 1995: 115). Personal narratives are constructed relative to these master narratives and locate these personal experiences in relation to broader social processes (Steyn 2001). In this sense, narratives are not so much 'literal stories' but rather each is a means through which:

Respondents organise their memories, make sense of recent events, imagine the motives of others as they create coherent plot lines, to explain racial [and gendered]⁶ relationships, engage in impression management, and use the cultural resources available to them to fashion identities under changing circumstances. (Steyn 2001: xxvii)

It was these stories that an in-depth interview methodology aimed to encourage. Participants were asked to reflect on their life stories and to identify those times in their lives that were most significant. More specifically questions were asked to participants around their earliest experiences of being a boy and a man and of being white. What is presented are extracts of these men's life stories and an analysis of how they are positioned relative to master narratives.

The Stories

It is from these stories that the following extracts were drawn. The segments of the stories represented here were selected as they most clearly articulate the complex relationship between whiteness, masculinity and the colonial project. The discussion is primarily located within the spheres of school and sport, which emerged as important sites for the construction of these identities. Further to this, extracts that illustrate alternative rearticulations of these relationships are presented. It is these rearticulations of what is masculine and white in South Africa that are at the heart of this work's aim of exploring counter-narrative to challenge the hegemonies whiteness and masculinity.

'Almost like Going to War'

Going to a boys' only boarding school is almost like going to war, probably, because you do have to fend for yourself all on your own. At our school, for the first year, you weren't allowed to see your parents. That was the deal. So, you were to stand on your own two feet and get on with it. And there was a hell of a big seniority system in place which knocked you around if you stepped out of line. I'm not saying it was a good thing, but it was a good thing; I don't think that any beatings are necessarily a good

thing, but to have that system in place where you earn and learn respect for people (Andrew, Int. 1, 16/9/2004).

Within the frame of British imperialism, manhood is achieved through the enactment of rites that ‘separated them [boys] from home and the familiar, most particularly from their mothers’ care and influence’, where they ‘were to suffer the dominance of older boys with authority over them’, and they ‘were expected to stand on their own two feet until the time came for them to exercise authority and power in their turn’ (Kanitkar 1994: 184). Andrew’s account is almost a carbon copy of Kanitkar’s textbook British imperial schooling system. His war metaphor – ‘boarding school is almost like going to war’ – is very appropriate, as these institutions’ main purpose was to prepare boys for ‘positions of military and civil leadership in the far flung British Empire’ (ibid.) and to generate new loyalties, to school and sports teams, ‘preparing boys for later, greater loyalties to regiment, nation and empire’ (ibid.: 186).

The relationship between military and masculinity has been well documented (Dudink and Hageman 2004). ‘Many aspects of modern masculinity were forged in the nexus of politics and war’ (Dudink and Hageman 2004: 7). Politics and war allow for the exploration of different versions of masculinity and the power relations between them, including racial and colonial power (Horne 2004). The fact that Andrew draws the parallel between his school and this militarism illustrates the power of this narrative, with all its ramifications for racial and colonial power, in his own story.

In his work with South African boarding schools, Morrell (cited in Epstein 1998) illustrates how they are modelled on the British public school and serve to reproduce the same English-speaking upper-class masculinities. As Kanitkar (1994) points out, the nature of these masculinities is that they are inevitably white. The whiteness of the schooling system is illustrated in Andrew’s strong emotional reaction – ‘it’s enough to make me cry’ – to the postcolonial decentring of his whiteness by the fact that his school ‘has gone completely black’:

And she told me that High School 2, which was another boys’ only school that we were fairly competitive with, has gone completely black, there’s not one white scholar there now and they celebrated last year by killing a goat in the centre of the school, our hall, their mess hall, slaughtering a goat. And I thought you know, jussus man, it’s enough to make me cry to think that that school you know you do compete but at the end of the day you’re pretty close and to think that that’s going on now, slaughtering goats and celebrating (Andrew, Int. 1, 16/9/2004).

The incongruity of the African custom of slaughtering a goat occurring in the school hall is highly charged for him. It is this emotional chargedness that belies the extent of the disruption of his personal narrative and the extent to which it

aligns with the master narratives of colonialism. The enactment of this African custom in the school hall signals a deep disruption of the colonial narrative. The image of the slaughtered animal and the accompanying celebration represents, within this narrative frame, an undermining of civilization and descent into 'barbarism' (Hoch 2004: 98). 'The call for upper caste white heroes to prove their manhood by exerting civilisation over the dark brutes' was 'the key rationale for the conquest and control of the "darker" peoples of Africa' (ibid.), and it was this control that was one of the 'firmest supports for ... colonialism, slavery and all succeeding doctrines of social and racial supremacy' (ibid.). In this case the reality of changing power dynamics, whereby African customs are legitimately undertaken in what were strongholds of colonialism, creates a dissonance in this personal narrative. What is challenged is not only his narrative of whiteness but also its accompanying masculinity.

'The Sporting Boy'

But within the school environment, the enactment of this imperial masculinity is most evident on the sports field (Kanitkar 1994). Hierarchy is put into place through a combination of age, academic success and sporting success (Morrell, cited in Epstein 1998). Justin, who attended a private boy's school in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands (for a brief period), is very aware of how this hierarchy operates:

Claire: In what ways do you think you'd be different if you had stayed in South Africa?

Justin: I think I'd be a lot less sure of myself. The way you're measured as being successful at that age is to be either the brightest in the class. You know, if you're the brightest in the class but you're crap on the rugby field, that's okay, because you're the brightest in the class or the other way around but I was neither and I think I was probably whisked out at just the right time. I think my confidence would have been severely knocked (Justin, Int. 1, 4/8/2004).

He is also aware of the consequences of this intra-masculine hierarchy and recognizes that had he stayed there much longer, and was not 'whisked away', he would have been a lot less confident about himself. It is ironic, then, that the confidence that he would have been denied as a result of not meeting the requirements of sporting excellence in one context is reinstated by the very same dynamic, in another context:

Well, I left South Africa when I was eleven and I was just in the C [third] team or something. And then when I got to England and I was in the A [first] Team for my age group and that was like massive! Again it was a paradigm shift for me because I thought, Wow! It was a huge ego boost,

a huge confidence boost for me, to realise that actually yes, I was someone.
(Justin, Int.1, 4/8/2004)

In this environment he can meet the standards – ‘I was in the A team’ – as stipulated by the system that he finds himself in. More than a simple confidence booster, he can, as a result of being in the first team, validate his existence – ‘I was someone’.

Sport provides a continuous play of men’s bodies in motion’ (Connell 1995: 54). Men’s greater sporting prowess is that which serves to justify their dominance in all other social institutions and ‘as symbolic proof of men’s right to rule’ (ibid.). Sports, especially the organized team sports like rugby, cricket and soccer, are an important site for the enactment of hegemonic masculinities (Morrell 2001). When we consider the relationship between the colonialism and the hegemonic masculinity it invoked, it is not surprising that ‘the sporting boy’ (Kanitkar 1994: 186) is a key trope around which imperial masculinities are constructed. If imperialism is the exercise of dominating the peoples of Africa and hegemonic masculinity the exercise of dominating women and other men, then sport is the stylized enactment of the ‘superiority’ that facilitates that domination.

This sentiment is supported in a particularly sensitive insight by Justin, who links beating girls at games as a child with his actions in his relationships with women. He tells the story of how he and his brothers beat a group of girls at an avocado pear fight:

And there was something around we’re better than them because we won, we won the avocado pear fight, right. So that was one incident (Justin, Int. 1, 4/8/2004).

He links winning the game to being ‘better than’ the girls, and, in a particularly insightful reflection, finds that it translates into him not taking women seriously:

One of the things I notice is I don’t take... in my automatic way of behaving, I don’t take women very seriously.... So I’m thinking about how does that relate to as a boy... what’s the word, demeaning or like an invalidation of girls because we can outgun them in the avo fight or we can, whatever, and being one of three boys as well (Justin, Int. 2, 15/9/2004)

He makes the direct link between being able to ‘outgun’ the girls ‘in the avo fight’ to not taking women seriously. The war metaphor – ‘outgun’ – is important here as there is a direct link made between sport, its implications for masculinity and a discourse of militarism. Jansen (2002: 196) argues that the conflation of ‘Sport/war tropes are crucial resources for mobilizing the hierarchical values that construct, mediate, maintain, and when necessary, reform or repair hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity’ (ibid.: 186). The result of the ‘invalidation’ of women

through sport is important in that it has material consequences like all forms of oppression:

Mark: Besides women being crap at sport, no (laughs).

Claire: Have you thought that women are crap at sport?

Mark: No just less powerful. I have a serious problem with for instance women's tennis where women complain that they don't get paid enough and they don't, then I think Well then why don't you play five games of tennis as well or five sets of tennis rather than three, things like that and it's just (laughs). I think equality is great and I think it's very important but then make it equality for equality's sake and not equality but you get special kind of preference or whatever. I think if it's equal then it should be equal all on the same playing field and I think the same about gender and race (Mark, Int. 2, 10/8/2004).

What Mark's comments imply is that because men are perceived as physically stronger and therefore play longer and harder, it is only right that they be paid more. What is interesting is that he links his gender argument to the same logic that prevails around racial equity in sport. His comments feed into discourse around standards and performance and do not question the way in which these standards actively serve to exclude women and other marginal groups through what Anderson and Accomando (2002: 505) call a false neutrality'. This false neutrality is constructed by reference to the fact that 'if it's equal then it should be equal all on the same playing field', which 'makes sense only if the larger context of male [and white]⁷ power is ignored' (ibid.).

Mark's conflation of gender and race in equity in sport is important. Sport is one of the markers of manhood not only because it is a show of superiority over girls and women but it is also a show of superiority among men:

I definitely also feel that there was bigger competition between the boys only schools that were boarding and they looked at the boys only schools and or the co-ed school that were day boarding or day scholars as inferior because we always beat them at sport (Andrew, Int. 1, 16/9/2004).

Furthermore, 'class and race values are institutionalized on and through the sports field' (Kanitkar 1994: 186). This is most evident in the great rugby/soccer divide, which is clearly a racial one. Morrell (2001: 23) illustrates how soccer, with its emphasis on artistry, came to be the sport of black township boys while rugby, with its focus on 'physical confrontation, perseverance and skill' was 'equated with white masculinity'. The emphasis on artistry in the black sportsmen and skill in the white taps into a broader interpretative repertoire; artistry speaks to natural ability, while skill speaks to learnt technical ability (personal communication, Z. Erasmus, 15/03/2005). As Weaver (1994) illustrates, the rational and natural are

diametrically opposed; that which is natural in a human sense can easily being equated with primitiveness. The construction of the 'other' as having 'natural' ability only serves to highlight our own technical ability and, by extension, rationality (Chabal 1996). The effect of locating black and white sportsmen in this dichotomy is that of locating black and white on opposite ends of a natural/primitive and skilled/rational continuum (Weaver 1994). This was an important distinction in the colonial project, the rational being one of the cornerstones of colonial domination. The racialized nature of this divide on the sports field is clearly articulated in some of the narratives:

My major memories of that time were probably playing soccer, this guy [a black friend at school] knew how to dazzle with the ball (Mark, Int. 1, 23/7/2004).

You go to rugby, I went to go and watch a UCT [University of Cape Town] first team rugby game on Tuesday night, they were playing Maties [Stellenbosch University] and like you look at the breakdowns [racial breakdown] and it's still the majority of the people, like the overwhelming majority, are white, that play rugby, and supporters. In terms of soccer we go play rugby at UCT quite a bit, and if you look at the soccer team it's completely the other way round (Bryan, Int. 2, 12/8/2004).

This demarcation of race through sport illustrates the very co-constructive nature of masculinities and race. The stylized enactment of rugby may produce the masculine but it also secures the white. This echoes with Justin's encounter with the West Indian cricket team (cricket being the domain of white colonial endeavour), which upset his racialized expectations of black men:

Justin: I was going to say something round... because I love cricket and when I got here to England and then I saw these black guys who were West Indians playing cricket and it felt like such a mindfuck that these people should be subservient.

Claire: Can you tell me a bit more about how you reacted to that and why?

Justin: It was just so odd. It was, God, these guys can actually do things! I know they can dig ditches and they can do roads but, wow, they can do other things on a par with white people (Justin, Int. 1, 4/8/2004).

The fact that he knows 'they can dig ditches and they can do roads' speaks to the boy's expectations of what 'these guys' can do, 'be subservient'. The fact that 'these guys can actually do things' emerges in relation to a node around which colonial power was articulate and is significant for the depth of this experience. To see this symbolic enactment of power by black men who are expected to be labourers and servants, 'on a par with white people', truly is a 'mindfuck', in that it is, within the master narrative, a contradiction in terms.

Rough and Tough

The importance of ‘manly sports’ like rugby and other mechanisms, such as strong hierarchy and separation from families, ‘which serve to toughen boys up’ (Epstein 1998: 56), alludes to an important characteristic of the masculinity under construction. Through his use of the war metaphor, Andrew alerts us that these masculinities emerge in the context of violence. ‘War was a reflection of the aggressive masculinity implicit in imperial policy’ (Morrell 2001: 12), and school as the incubator of these imperial masculinities exhibits the same violence and aggression. One of the mechanisms of this institutional violence is ‘organised bullying’ (Epstein 1998: 56) perpetrated by both students and teachers. Andrew’s account at the beginning of this section reflects this, as does Justin’s, and it is no coincidence that this bullying occurs on the sports field:

Claire: You also mentioned that when you got to England your confidence grew at school. What was it about the schools in South Africa that didn’t allow that?

Justin: Bullying. Bullying, really. I think it was that whole macho stuff. The headmaster we had when I was at school and obviously I’m only speaking from my experience, I can’t speak for any other, but he was just a bloody sadist! Whipping people with a whistle, with the whistle end, if they wouldn’t get down with their heads into the scrum (Justin, Int. 1, 4/8/2004).

There can be no doubt that the systems that Andrew and Justin have endured are brutal and damaging. What is significant here is the way in which they now engage with that brutality. It is worth revisiting Andrew’s account:

And there was a hell of a big seniority system in place which knocked you around if you stepped out of line. I’m not saying it was a good thing, but it was a good thing; I don’t think that any beatings are necessarily a good thing, but to have that system in place where you earn and learn respect for people (Andrew, Int 1, 16/9/2004).

He is ambivalent, he oscillates between saying it wasn’t a ‘good thing’ to saying that it was, and that although beatings are not necessarily good, they are there for a reason, in this case ‘you earn and learn respect’. It is where you go to learn your ‘life skills’ and where you go to become a man:

And you know what, I reckon if I had the choice now, I’d probably send my son to a boys only school because even if I just look at university and how the guys that went to boys only schools became men and the guys that went to co-ed [co-educational, i.e. boys and girls] schools, not that they didn’t but just it wasn’t as if you’d gone off somewhere and learnt your life skills, you’d remained in society (Andrew, Int. 1, 16/9/2004).

The payoffs are great, so much so that he would send his own son to a boy's-only school. But although Andrew colludes with this harsh system, Hardiman and Jackson (1997) alert us to the complexity of the dominant positionality. Those who are dominantly positioned exist in a paradox in that in the process of exercising dominance they themselves are dehumanized (Freire, cited in Hardiman and Jackson 1997). Andrew's experience talks to the dehumanization that dominant positionalities are subject to in that they are 'trapped by the system of social oppression that benefits them, and are confined to the roles and prescribed behaviour for their group' (Hardiman and Jackson 1997: 20). It is the costs of this brutal system that Justin engages in and confronts. His very articulation of the negative effects that it had on him – 'my confidence would have been severely knocked' – and his negative and emotive language – 'sadist' – suggests that he does not in any way see it as 'a good thing'. In doing so, he actively serves to challenge it.

Towards New Masculinities, Towards New Whitenesses

There are two points to be made about the masculinities and whitenesses that these men inhabit. First, engaging the violent hegemonic colonial masculinity that the contexts of school and sport perpetuate is not an uncomplicated and easy ascendancy into power. It is a sometimes painful trial that, although it reaps great rewards, also involves heavy costs to the humanity of these boys. The second point is that these men do not inhabit these positionalities in the same way. Some men, like Andrew, acquiesce and accept the system. Others, like Justin, are questioning and grappling with it, and those who do, do not inhabit their postionality comfortably.

Thus far, the co-construction of whiteness and masculinity and its relationship to the legacy of colonialism have been explored. What has also become evident is that, as Justin's last narrative clearly indicates, this interaction is not taken up unproblematically, and in the same way, by all these men. The following section explores the problematization of, and challenges to, the hegemonies of masculinity and whiteness. In one case these challenges manifest in an interrogation of positionality, in another as direct articulations of challenge to the master narratives. In another still, they emerge as a call to action. In all cases they 'expose, examine and disrupt', so that their positionalities 'may be placed under critical analysis' (Nakayama and Krizek, cited in Giroux 1997: 292) and in so doing contribute to the counter-hegemonic project.

Challenging the Hegemonies

Some of the men display a deeply sensitive understanding and interrogation of their positionalities. Adam is gay. According to Phillips (2005: 137) (who is also gay, white and a man), homosexuality 'interferes with the smooth assumption of

many of the other manifestations of power in my life, jarring my easy occupancy of an otherwise ascendant identity within hegemonic structures'. But being gay also 'empowers me, as it forces me on to a liminal path from where centralised power and the singular absolutism of its truth are inevitably challenged' (ibid.). Like Phillips, Adam is at once in marginal and dominant positionality and these dimensions play out in different contexts. He feels relatively powerful to:

Men who are younger than me; men who are physically smaller than me; men who are somewhat more gentle, I suppose would be the right word to use, I feel more power over if that's the right word. Ja, I feel like I'm the person in power and I enjoy that and sometimes – I wouldn't say I abuse it – but I use it to my advantage (Adam, Int. 2, 26/8/2004).

But disempowered to men who exhibit more hegemonic qualities:

Men who are taller than me, men who are older than me, definitely straight men, sporty men, men who are hyper-masculine, twenty-two, twenty-three year old sporty post-grad students with some attitude and a sense of style – those men I feel disempowered by, if that makes any sense? There's a sense of less power and to some extent it's not quite the same with women (Adam, Int. 2, 26/8/2004).

It is not a power dynamic that he can transpose on to women. And when he considers his positionality vis-à-vis women he is very aware that 'simply the fact that I am a man gives me power over women' even if they are in positions of power:

I'm more comfortable and I feel more empowered when I'm with a woman I regard as a competition. She can be the MD [managing director] of a company and I would be much less anxious if I had to meet with her professionally. So definitely, simply the fact that I am a man gives me power over women. And dare I say it, to some extent still the fact that I'm white gives me power over people who are not white (Adam, Int. 2, 26/8/2004).

He is also aware that his whiteness works in similar ways to his masculinity, in that it 'gives me power over people who are not white'. His is a complex positionality, which also occupies different sides of different binary oppositions (Ware 1992). These oppositions serve not only to create tensions between himself and others, but within himself as well. Through his experience of relationships, he is sensitively unpacking his positionality, and in so doing engaging in a fundamentally counter-hegemonic act – interrogating and exposing his power.

It is this interrogation and continuous vigilance that Justin exhibits:

But I'm just so aware of how I've been brought up as a racist and how those old habits take a lifetime of breaking down. I have to confront my racism every single day. I was driving just now and there was this really

slow car in the middle lane and this woman was driving like this and it was a black woman and just in my head was all this tirade of real racist shit and I'm a grown man and I'm responsible for that and what's important is that I'm able to own it rather than it own me. But it's quite scary it is quite scary (Justin, Int. 2, 15/9/2004).

Owning one's racism, taking responsibility for it and confronting it daily are the greatest challenges to the colonial narrative. Justin's, like all the stories in this section, fall *Under African skies*, one of the five narratives of whiteness in South Africa identified by Steyn (2001). *Under African skies* is told by those whites 'who are moving away from their whiteness' and represents a place where there exists the potential for 'exciting new ways of being' and where the narrator is committed to his own 'potential for growth'. More importantly, it is a place where whiteness is 'blended, contradictory and complex' and thus 'hyphenated', no longer with the 'power to abuse' (Steyn 2001: 147).

Furthermore, it is a whiteness that can mobilize, that can 'stand up to white people', be accountable for its past – 'be aware of it, be very aware of it' – and work towards transformation. It is a whiteness aware of, but not paralysed by shame and guilt, and a whiteness that can therefore find a place *Under African skies*:

It's my role to stand up to white people and say, Don't be ashamed of being white. Stop that bullshit! That time is gone. Ja, we did fucking bad things, make no mistake, but being ashamed of it is not going to change it. Be aware of it, be very aware of it, actually. Don't just stand here, I'm ashamed I'm white, it's not going to go anywhere (Carl, Int. 2, 11/8/2004).

Conclusion

This study has presented the case for the study of white masculinities in South Africa. White men, long seen as the barriers to gender and race transformation in South Africa, are here engaged as potential allies. Whiteness and masculinity are located in a particular history, that of colonialism, but, importantly, the approach adopted here also allows for the notion of multiple masculinities and whitenesses, and alternative ways of being a man and white to emerge.

Through exploring life stories, it has presented moments that illustrate the intersections of masculinity, whiteness and colonial legacy in the construction of these men's identities. It has illustrated how these identities are complex and contradictory and that the ascendancy into hegemony is heavily weighted with cost, which ranges from enduring humiliation and physical beating to psychic damage resulting from co-optation into enacting brutality in turn. Furthermore, it has shown how different men, at different moments, inhabit these intersections differently. Some challenge the master narratives of masculinity and whiteness,

some accept and perpetuate them. These challenges may manifest in the simple naming of power to a call to action to challenge it. The most important thing, however, is that master narratives are being 'interrupted' (Steyn 2001) and hegemonies challenged. Alternative discursive spaces around masculinities and whiteness do exist, and through the processes of exposure, examination and rearticulation, these are becoming more robust.

Notes

1. I would like to acknowledge Dr Zimitri Erasmus, who was my supervisor for the thesis on which this paper draws and therefore instrumental to its conception and completion.
2. In this study, the concept of race is recognized not as the biological and social criteria set out by Apartheid, but rather as a social reality (Lerner 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Erasmus, with De Wet 2003) defined, like class, by the social resources made available to one on the basis of certain criteria. In South Africa the criteria of skin colour, through Apartheid, has been 'overdetermined' (Epstein 1998: 52) to shape that reality.
3. 'Racism emerges not only as an ideology or political orientation chosen or rejected at will, but also as a system of material relationships with a set of ideas linked to and embedded in those material relations' (Frankenberg 1993: 70). Furthermore, it exists as 'everyday racism', which is 'expressed and contested in ordinary situations' (Essed 2002: 203). As such, this study 'relates day-to-day experiences of racial discrimination [both by target and agent] to the macrostructural context of group inequalities' (ibid.) and understands it as a means to determine social reality through the everyday exercise of ideological power.
4. In this study, I follow Morrell and Swart's (2005: 91) definition of colonialism as 'a phase in world history beginning in the early 16th century that, eventually, by 1914, saw Europe hold sway over more than 85% of the rest of the globe'. I also follow their further definition of colonialism as 'the political ideologies that legitimated the modern occupation and exploitation of already settled lands by external powers' (ibid.). Like Morrell and Swart, I recognize this concept to be contested.
5. I also follow Morrell and Swart's (2005: 91) understanding of postcolonialism as 'the period after colonialism'. After Morrell and Swart (ibid.: 92), I also acknowledge that it 'refers inexactly to a political and geographical terrain' and that 'it is used to denote a position against imperialism and Eurocentrism'.
6. My addition.
7. My addition.

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