

***‘Jy weet, jy kan jousef vandag in k\*kstraat vind deur jousef ‘n Afrikaner te noem...’ (‘You know, you can find yourself in sh\*tstreet by calling yourself an Afrikaner today...’):***

**Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters in Clinical Psychology, in the School of Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of submission: 2008.11.11

As the candidate’s supervisor I have approved this thesis for submission

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Declaration

I, Cornelius Tobias Verwey declare that

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- (ii) This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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## **Abstract**

Afrikaner Nationalism and the discourse of Apartheid have always formed a central part of Afrikaner identity. The fact that Afrikaner Nationalism has now been publicly discredited has had a destabilising effect on Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. This qualitative study explored the ways in which Afrikaners reinterpret their identity post-Apartheid. Fifteen adults, residents of middle-class Afrikaner suburbia in Bloemfontein, participated in in-depth interviews focusing on participants' dilemmas and struggles over their identity as Afrikaners, South Africans and Africans and the way in which these identities are being redefined in post-Apartheid South Africa. While participants condemn Apartheid, they are in fact 'recycling' the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism and Apartheid. The central argument which emerged from the data is one against acceptance of Africa and does not point to an adaptive re-negotiation of Afrikaner identity. Participants claim their entitlement to the category 'African' but there are no indications that they are discursively redrawing the group boundaries, such that 'Afrikaner' is part of a broader 'African' identity. Participants appear to be constructing a version of Afrikaner identity which is more acceptable, by jettisoning certain public aspects of Afrikaner of identity as liabilities in post-Apartheid South Africa.

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*‘Jy weet, jy kan jousef vandag in k\*kstraat vind deur jousef ‘n Afrikaner te noem...’* (‘You know, you can find yourself in sh\*tstreet by calling yourself an Afrikaner today...’):

## **Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa**

### **Introduction**

In 1994 Apartheid South Africa officially became *post*-Apartheid South Africa. Much has been made of the transition of political power from a white Afrikaner Nationalist dominated government to the present African National Congress’ rule. While many things changed for South Africans, many things did not. This study, however, focuses on one of the things that *did* change –Afrikaners’ loss of their dominant position in South African society. The Afrikaner people are now in a position where much of what they have always based their identity on has been publicly discredited. Afrikaners are aware that who they *were* had a place in Apartheid South Africa. They are also acutely aware that they are now in a society organised according to different rules. The changing nature of South African society, and Afrikaners’ reactions to it, offers us a unique opportunity:

This is one of those moments in a historical process where change is so far-reaching, but also so accelerated, that one may catch the process of social construction ‘in the act’ (Steyn, 2001).

Previous research on South African whiteness suggests that the power and privilege that comes



with whiteness is still being reproduced in South Africa (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007). There are also indications that the meaning of whiteness in the South African context differs from international whiteness and that the meaning of whiteness is undergoing change in post-Apartheid South Africa (Steyn, 2001). Afrikaner whiteness can be seen as a subaltern whiteness in that it has always been in a subordinate position to the more powerful whiteness of the British Empire (Steyn, 2004a). However, this is an under-researched area and there is very little published to date on either South African or Afrikaner whiteness.

This thesis is a continuation of my own previous research on Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. It aims to extend the research conducted for my Honours dissertation: *'Hoe ek die hele storie sien...'* *Present day narratives of Afrikaner identity* (Verwey, 2005). In that study I investigated the extent to which Afrikaners are repositioning themselves in post-Apartheid South Africa. My objective was to investigate how their loss of dominance in our society had affected their sense of identity, and to determine to what extent their stories were still situated in the discourse of the past. The results indicated that participants were, indeed, still constrained by the discourse of Apartheid. In addition, the dominant discourse was constructed in the shape of an argument for their perceived lack of responsibility for Apartheid. Another prominent discourse concerned the Afrikaner/African distinction and pointed to this distinction as a valuable site for further research. The findings of my previous research will be discussed more fully in the section dealing with literature relevant to the present study.

Research which explores Afrikaner identity can have meaning for Afrikaners in the following ways: In Apartheid South Africa, Afrikaners were located at the top end of South African social

hierarchies and now that Afrikaners are not (officially) in that privileged position anymore, there are strong indications that they are experiencing a collective 'identity crisis'. Looking at Afrikaner identity by way of the Afrikaner/African distinction could be useful to broader South African society, since this debate is an important site for the interface between Afrikaners and other South African groups.

The small amount of research on post-Apartheid Afrikaner identity to date seems to suggest that Afrikaners are indeed in the process of reinterpretation. The main question of this study is: *How* are Afrikaners reinterpreting their identity post-Apartheid? This study aims to build on previous research in this area by using the Afrikaner/African distinction as a mechanism to investigate constructions of Afrikaner identity. This can be investigated from two perspectives:

Firstly, to what extent is this reinterpretation a discursive repositioning of the group boundaries, such that 'Afrikaner' is part of a broader 'African' identity? A key indicator would be the extent to which 'African-ness' is valued in relation to 'European-ness'. In other words: Are Afrikaners merely involved in the construction of a 'politically correct' version of Afrikaner identity, while still situated in Apartheid discourse, or are they truly repositioning themselves in relation to 'the other'?

Secondly, what strategies or arguments are they using to construct post-Apartheid identity?

The purpose of this study is *not* to answer the question of whether Afrikaners are Africans. Instead, this study will focus on Afrikaner *talk* around this distinction. This is a current and contentious issue for individual and collective Afrikaner identity. This distinction could,

therefore, be an effective mechanism to investigate the main question.

This study aims to tease apart the tensions, dilemmas and conflicting claims made by individuals in order to see how Afrikaner identity is evolving. In essence, the research question is: What exactly are Afrikaners 'doing' with their 'talking' (Wood & Kroger, 2000) in order to achieve their post-apartheid identities?

## **Literature review**

I have divided the literature relevant to this study into three parts: identity, Afrikaner identity, and 'whiteness'. All three parts are equally important to the study of Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. In addition, there is considerable overlap between them. Although I have separated them for the sake of clarity, in reality, this distinction is somewhat arbitrary.

### ***The study of identity***

Mainstream psychology, as influenced by positivism, has generally understood 'identity' as something inherently personal and contained *within* the individual. The assumption was that identity is something both static and measurable. If, then, it can be adequately 'measured' it can also be used to predict behaviour (Breakwell, 1983).

This traditional view of identity was taken up by social psychology and underwent significant change from the 1960s onwards. However, social identity theory (SIT) (e.g. Tajfel, 1978, 1982) and the closely related self-categorisation theory (SCT) (e.g. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) were instrumental in changing the positivistic concept of 'the self contained identity'. These models account for the ways in which individuals categorise themselves and make (biased) comparisons with other groups. The shift resulted in a consideration of the contexts in which identities occur were now taken into consideration. Individuals are understood to have a 'social identity' (or self concept), as opposed to a 'self contained identity' and that individuals often strive for a *positive* social identity, to increase self-esteem (Tajfel, 1978, 1982)

and they do so by identifying with *groups* (be they racial, gender or national groups) in order to produce identity (Turner, 1991).

Additionally, 'identity' is increasingly seen as merely a theoretical construct used to explain behaviour, and *not* a static and individualistic trait. The study of identity has become more and more concerned with the dialectical relationship between identity and its different social contexts. The social constructionist approach to psychology thus views identity as something that is actively *constructed* and therefore always open to change (Breakwell, 1983):

Identity, being something always in process, constitutes a constant realignment of intra-affiliations between ethnicity, class and gender as well as perspectival shunting between self and other (Wicomb, 1998, p. 4).

The concept 'identity' has changed from a static stable 'thing' to something that is continually in the process of being constructed. This is especially true of 'Ethnic' or 'National' identities:

Ethnic and national identities are unpredictable and unstable cultural productions with which we identify. They are not universal or absolute 'things'. Rather, ethnicity is a cultural accomplishment (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 122).

### *Afrikaner identity*

Some researchers point to the fact that 'discussing their identity has been an Afrikaner

predilection for decades' (Goodwin & Schiff, 1995 as cited in Steyn, 2004a, p. 149). In what follows I will not attempt to define the essence of Afrikaner identity. In post-Apartheid South Africa, more so than ever before, this is an impossible task. Instead, I will trace the ways in which Afrikaners have been involved in an 'ongoing, self-conscious, and contested discursive activity for more than a century' (Steyn, 2004a, p. 149).

First, I will discuss Afrikaner identity as it was consolidated by Afrikaner Nationalism. I will also discuss the importance of the Afrikaans language for Afrikaner Nationalism and Afrikaner identity. Following this, I will take a closer look at the implications of the recent changes in South Africa for Afrikaner identity. I will then focus on the Afrikaner/African distinction.

#### *Afrikaner Nationalism and Afrikaner identity*

In order to understand Afrikaner identity, we need to understand the pervasive influence of Afrikaner Nationalism. Thompson (1985) investigates the ideological underpinnings of Apartheid and in what follows I draw extensively from his work. The ideology of Afrikaner Nationalism is a complex, interwoven mesh of religious mandates, racial purity, patriarchy, struggle against oppression and struggle for an own language. The religious element has been crucial throughout the mobilizing phase. This element is illustrated in the following quote from J.C. van Rooy, who was chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond in 1944:

God created the Afrikaner people with a unique language, a unique philosophy of life, and their own history and traditions in order that they might fulfil a particular

calling and destiny here in the southern corner of Africa. We must stand guard on all that is peculiar to us and build upon it. We must believe that God has called us to be servants of his righteousness in this place (Thompson, 1985, p. 29).

In May of 1948 the National Party came to power in South Africa and the ideology of Afrikaner Nationalism provided legitimacy for the regime (Thompson, 1985). Afrikaner Nationalism would eventually become a racist, militaristic, authoritarian force (Du Pisani, 2001). Pieces of Afrikaner history were dusted off and used by the then leader of the National party, D. F. Malan, who displayed a 'skilful use of symbols' (Steyn, 2001, p. 37). This 'new' South Africa was to be 'built around a new hierarchy with Afrikaner identity at the core'. Afrikaners were 'encapsulated in a network of schools, social clubs, churches, cultural and business organisations which created a self-referential Afrikaner ideological world' (Hyslop, 2000, p. 5). The impact of this complex network of religious and educational institutions cannot be overstated, since it 'dominated the historical consciousness of most Afrikaners' (Thompson, 1985, p. 46). The most powerful of these organisations, the Afrikaner Broederbond, had as its openly stated goal to 'gain control of everything it can lay its hands on in every walk of life in South Africa' (Thompson, 1985, p. 46). Thompson (1985) illustrates how the National Party systematically took control of state machinery. This included the SABC and the press, both of which eventually actively propagated the ideology of Afrikaner Nationalism. In what were essentially ethnic schools, Afrikaner children were subjected to powerful indoctrination and Thompson maintains that even the textbooks read like propaganda. The political ideology which created Apartheid was indeed an all pervasive discourse.

## *The Afrikaans language*

Language is a complex matrix of symbols through which groups express themselves, and is therefore taken as intimately tied to notions of group identity (Breakwell, 1983). Afrikaans is one of the basic constituents of Afrikaner Nationalism and Afrikaner identity (Webb & Kriel, 2000). In fact, Alan Paton once stated that ‘only a fool or philologist would try to say anything about Afrikaans without thinking of Afrikaner Nationalism’ (as cited in Webb & Kriel, 2000, p. 19). Afrikaans is traditionally seen as the ‘repository of Afrikaner heritage, Afrikaner creativity, Afrikaner soul, Afrikaner power...’ (Steyn, 2004a, p. 158).

The struggle to have Afrikaans recognised (*Die Taalstryd* or ‘Language struggle’) started with the arrival of the first British settlers in the Cape, who did their best to suppress Afrikaans (Webb & Kriel, 2000). The struggle for recognition of Afrikaans intensified after the second Anglo-Boer war (Webb & Kriel, 2000). Only in 1925 did Afrikaans gain the status of being an official language alongside English (Harrison, 1985). When the National Party won their first election in South Africa, Afrikaans became the language of power:

In 1948 the Afrikaans speaking (white) population gained political control.

Following this event, and directly as a result of it, the use and power of Afrikaans increased dramatically, with all government-controlled institutions gradually becoming almost wholly Afrikaans (the state administration, the radio and television, the education sector, the defence force, and semi-state institutions (Webb & Kriel, 2000, p. 22).



This process escalated to the point where Afrikaans was instituted as one of the languages of instruction in black secondary schools, which led to the 1976 Soweto uprising (Oakes, 1992; Webb & Kriel, 2000).

It is therefore believable that, for many South Africans, Afrikaans has always been the language of the oppressor (Breytenbach, 1984). Krog (2002) maintains that ‘it has been stated openly that Afrikaans is the price that Afrikaners will have to pay for Apartheid’ (p. 99). Today many Afrikaners are acutely aware that Afrikaans has ‘lost its privileged position of the past’ (Webb & Kriel, 2000, p. 23).

#### *The demise of Afrikaner Nationalism and its impact on Afrikaner identity*

The future of the new democratic government is premised on the demise of everything that Afrikaner Nationalism has always stood for. Afrikaners cannot escape the fact that the Apartheid system was put in place in their name. The Nationalist ideology that shaped the old South Africa, like all ethnocentric narratives, placed the Afrikaner in the centre. They were the most important population group: they were in charge (Steyn, 2004a, p. 154) [Emphasis in original].

Perhaps ‘Afrikaner’ has been a ‘disgraced category’ (Wicomb, 1998, p. 17) for a long time. Yet, it is important to note that the vast majority of Afrikaners were only confronted with this fact after the first democratic election in 1994 (or perhaps after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission). Van Zyl Slabbert (2000) asks the following questions:

And what now? Who will associate freely with the concept 'Afrikaner'? How will those who linked their Afrikaner identity to the control of political power participate in the process of giving new content to the word Afrikaner? (p. 79).

Steyn (2004a) maintains that Afrikaners are experiencing a crisis of identity. She points out that we can compare the current crisis for Afrikaner identity, to the earlier crisis that led to Afrikaner Nationalism. This time, however the crisis is accompanied by shame, guilt and disgrace (Steyn, 2004a).

Van Zyl Slabbert (2000) maintains that there is a general feeling of confusion and lack of direction amongst Afrikaners today. This profound existential crisis culminates in the simple question: 'Who are we?' (Steyn, 2004a, p. 153). This crisis of identity is intimately tied to the demise of Afrikaner Nationalism. Anderson (1990, as cited in Steyn, 2001) makes the following important point:

The collapse of a belief system can be like the end of the world. It can bring down not only the powerful but whole systems of societal roles and the concepts of personal identity that go with them. People can literally cease to know who they are (p. 155).

In what follows I draw extensively from the work of Melissa Steyn (Steyn, 2001, 2004a). The undeniable changes in the social hierarchy of South Africa not only resulted in confusion amongst Afrikaners, but also in a sense of loss. In fact, Steyn points out that 'For Afrikaners -

whatever the ethical issues may be – the end of the old South Africa cannot but be accompanied by feelings of loss’ (Steyn, 2004a, p. 150):

We can experience change as loss. Because it is: the old lies and ways of living, habitual, familiar, comfortable, fitting us like our skin, were ours (Pratt, 1984 as cited in Steyn, 2001, p. ix) [Emphasis in original].

Steyn (2001) identifies several distinct forms of loss:

*Loss of home:* This refers to the loss of cultural and psychological space. ‘Believing for centuries that they were feudal lords, they woke up to find that they had actually been squatters all along’ and Afrikaners now simply feel ‘out of place’ (Steyn, 2001, p. 156).

*Loss of autonomy and control:* In Apartheid South Africa white dependence on blacks was hidden by the unfair South African labour practices. Now it is common knowledge and undeniable. Acknowledging this interdependence means Afrikaners have lost their sense of self-sufficiency (Steyn, 2001).

*Loss of a sense of relevance:* This refers to the loss of a dominant position in South African society, or simply a loss of importance. This feeling of irrelevance reflects the extent to which Afrikaners were accustomed to power (Steyn, 2001).

*Loss of guaranteed legitimacy:* Whites had ‘legitimate’ reasons to be in South Africa, precisely because they were from European stock. They saw themselves as having contributed to the development of South Africa. This is not self-evident anymore. The *terms* of their legitimacy have changed (Steyn, 2001).

*Loss of honour, Loss of face:* Steyn sees this as the most difficult loss to deal with. The Truth and

Reconciliation Commission has allowed some of the oppressed to tell their stories. This made the issue of self-respect a very complex one for Afrikaners. There is a sense of having been ‘found out’ amongst Afrikaners (Steyn, 2001, p. 158).

However, my own previous research “‘*Hoe ek die hele storie sien...*’ *Present day narratives of Afrikaner identity*” (Verwey, 2005) revealed that young Afrikaners are more focussed on salvaging Afrikaner identity than on discussing the losses of transition. They do so in four ways. The first involves distancing oneself from the actions of the past. The second constructs sympathy (rather than hatred) for the other. The third involves renegotiating the place of Afrikaans in South African life and also in Afrikaner identity. The fourth involves negotiating the boundaries between the categories ‘Afrikaner’ and ‘African’ in order to renegotiate the claims and rights that Afrikaners have in South Africa as an ‘African’ country rather than an ‘Afrikaner’ country. In what follows, I will briefly outline the extent and findings of that project.

The objective was to investigate how Afrikaner identity was affected by their loss of dominance in South African society. The main question was whether their stories were still situated in the discourse of the past. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were analysed using Discourse Analysis. The main focus was on participants’ talk around the issue of Afrikaner identity as this emerged in four distinct discourses.

Firstly, the dominant discourse (‘*Remember, I only voted after Apartheid was over...*’) was constructed in the shape of an argument for the perceived lack of responsibility for Apartheid. This discourse emerged uniformly (and unsolicited) from all but one participant. The discourse

queries their repositioning and was structured as follows: Participants objected to Apartheid (*'Yes Apartheid was wrong...'*), but constructed arguments against their personal responsibility for it (*'But, I only voted after it was over'*). Participants were willing to acknowledge that they might have benefited 'indirectly' from Apartheid (*'Maybe I did benefit because my parents did...'*), before giving lengthy justifications for the 'unfairness' of affirmative action (*'But, affirmative action is not fair'*) (Verwey, 2005).

The second discourse (*'I sat next to him and my heart broke...'*) is one of authentic repositioning and tells one participants' story of re-humanising 'the other'. This discourse took the form of a narrative with a three part plot (*'The past', 'A change of heart'* and *'The present'*). This discourse first details a past perspective, where the black 'other' was negatively evaluated. Next it describes an event (a 'crisis' or a 'change in plot') which led to 'the other' being seen as truly human. This 'change of heart' created a shift which led to a new way of experiencing the other as a fellow human being, which necessitates a more positive engagement with black South Africans (Verwey, 2005).

The third discourse dealt with the importance of the Afrikaans language for Afrikaner identity (*'Afrikaans' as synonym for 'Afrikaner'*). The terms *'Afrikaner'* and *'Afrikaans'* were used indiscriminately by all participants. They would simply substitute one for the other, and it was apparent that these two terms were essentially viewed as synonymous. Not only did this discourse emerge unsolicited from the interviews, but it was in all instances one of the main criteria named when participants were asked to define the term 'Afrikaner'. The analysis revealed that participants are conscious of some degree of marginalisation (symbolised through

the marginalisation of Afrikaans). Yet, there is also some level of pragmatic acceptance ('we will just have to get used to it and make it work') (Verwey, 2005).

The fourth discourse concerned the Afrikaner/African distinction (*The ambiguity regarding the Afrikaner/African distinction*). One of the questions on the interview schedule was whether participants saw Afrikaners as Africans. Interestingly, all the participants answered in the same contradictory manner - *Yes* followed by *No*. Participants justified their 'yes' answers by simply stating their presence in Africa (some participants referred to being born in Africa). The 'no' answer, however, was extensively justified. Most participants used words like 'separate', 'isolated', 'removed' and 'apart', and this appeared to echo the discourse of Apartheid ideology. Participants' understanding of the Afrikaner/African distinction illustrates the extent to which Afrikaners are still constrained by the discourse of the past. This discourse does not allow them to see themselves as anything but 'apart' from Africa (Verwey, 2005).

The discourse around this distinction was analysed with the sole purpose of ascertaining whether Afrikaners were still operating within the discourse of Apartheid. It became clear that the distinction also points to the ways in which participants relate their identity as Afrikaners to their place in Africa and South Africa. The distinction points to issues of 'belonging' (for example, by rejecting the term 'settler' with the argument that they were born in South Africa). In addition, the Afrikaner/African distinction relates to participants' acceptance of Africa and all that it represents. These issues were not fully explored in the study and were flagged as questions for further research. It is this ambiguity, between laying claim to the category 'African' and at the same time rejecting connotations of 'African-ness', which has become the focus of the present

study. In what follows I will discuss the complexity of this distinction.

### *The Afrikaner/African distinction*

The Afrikaner/African distinction is a highly contested topic in the South African public domain:

I still don't know if I'm allowed to call myself African. I'd very much like to, but only if that doesn't piss anyone off. If I am an African, then that's super. If I'm not, but could be under certain circumstances, would somebody please tell me so that I can find out what I need to do to apply? And if I'm not, and never could be, then break it to me gently and I'll start the process of deciding whether I want to live as an expatriate in the land my ancestors have called home for eight generations (Eaton, 2005, p. 19).

Many prominent Afrikaner writers have engaged with the Afrikaner/African distinction. It should be noted that most of these writers have been labelled 'dissidents' at some point in their careers:

Just as I cannot change the colour of my skin, I cannot become an American, European or Australian. I would be an alien forever, like a polar bear in the Pretoria zoo. My soul is African. My skin colour is the only European thing about me ... African/Afrikaner. I am both. I call myself after the continent twice ... I am a native of this land, but unlike most other natives, I am pale (Du Preez, 2003, p. 5).

In *The true confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1984) Breyten Breytenbach argues that, despite the fact that 'Afrikaans is just the Afrikaans word for African' (p. 321), he is aware that this is a complex process. In *Down to my last skin*, Antjie Krog (2000) captures the emotionality of this distinction in poetry: 'I belong to that blinding black African heart' (p. 97).

While these Afrikaans writers feel that they belong in Africa, they appear to be aware of the contentious nature of the Afrikaner/African distinction. Although they do not offer any simple answers, they do point to this distinction as a space where Afrikaners can somehow integrate their identities with Africa.

This concludes the review of literature on Afrikaner identity as an ethnic/nationalist identity. The study of Afrikaner identity can also be located within the field of whiteness studies. In what follows I will review the study of whiteness on three levels, all of which pertain to Afrikaner identity.

### ***The study of whiteness***

#### *Global whiteness studies*

Whiteness has only recently been acknowledged as an ethnic category by scholars. 'Whiteness studies' is a relatively new field (Ware, 2001) and only started to emerge in the early 1990s (Steyn, 2004a). Hill (1997) summarises whiteness studies as a field that 'looks at whiteness critically' (p. 3). Across the literature on whiteness, there are three concepts in common: Firstly, whiteness as something that 'is socially and historically constructed' (Roediger, 1991, p. 6).



Following this line of argument, Ware (2001) points out that both 'white' and 'black' are historically produced in relation to one another. Secondly, whiteness as 'a distinct and relatively recent historical fiction' (Hill, 1997, p. 2). Thirdly, while 'Whiteness' is seen as the category that other categories are compared to, it is often not seen as an ethnic category itself. Hill (1997) illustrates this by looking at whiteness as 'The invisible norm'. Tatum (1997), in turn, refers to it as the 'unexamined norm'. She illustrates this point by relating that one of her exasperated (white) students exclaimed: 'I am not ethnic, I'm just normal!' (p. 93). Whiteness studies aim to expose the following:

The extent to which racial order imperceptibly functions around the comfort, convenience, affirmation, solidarity, psychological well-being, advantage, and advancement of whites, and that despite the way in which white people experience their social space as culturally neutral and individually determined, whiteness has definite cultural content (Steyn, 2004a, p. 144).

Whiteness is a racial category that offers privilege and the opportunity to maintain this privilege. As such, whiteness can be defined as:

'The production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage' (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 236). This definition is useful because it identifies whiteness as something that places white people in dominant positions and grants white people unfair privileges, while rendering these positions and privileges invisible to white

people (Green et al., 2007, p. 390).

Although there is an increasing tendency to study specific *varieties* of whiteness, there is also ‘a growing understanding that whiteness can only be properly understood when full account is taken of its global dimensions’ (Steyn, 2004a, p. 146). Steyn (2001) uses the concept of ‘the master narrative of whiteness’ to relate South African and Afrikaner whiteness to global whiteness. The formation of this master narrative evolved from Christianity through Eurocentrism to European Colonisation:

The Master Narrative justified and secured pride of place for people of European stock in relation to the people they encountered as they remodelled the rest of the world in their image (Steyn, 2001, p. 22).

### *South African whiteness*

In South Africa, whiteness is historically linked to privilege (Wetherell, 1996). This privilege manifested in both political power and economic advantage, which was reserved for white South Africans. While political power is no longer the privilege of white South Africans, economic privilege continues (Waetjen, 2006). Nyanto (2006) points out that despite the ‘de-racialisation of politics, economics has been slow in catching up’. The Employment Equity Commission, which forms part of the department of labour, reports that black representation at top management level has only reached 22,2% (Motloun, 2008, April 4). In addition, despite losing political power, white ideologies still shape social relations in South Africa (Green et al., 2007).

Green et al. (2007) have identified three ways in which the power and privilege of whiteness is produced and maintained within societies such as South Africa and Australia:

The first is *knowledge production*: White people have the power to define ‘knowledge’. In Apartheid South Africa the construction of a particular logic was used to give legitimacy to the dominance of a majority by a minority. White people had the power to construct particular categories and to decide who belonged to each. In post-Apartheid South Africa the widespread use of English in academia further strengthens the reproduction of whiteness, since it offers unfair privileges to mostly white people who have access to this language. The second is the use of *national identity and belonging*: In countries where white people hold greater power, they are in a position to include and exclude others from nationhood. In these white-dominated countries, whiteness is closely linked with the ‘ownership’ of a nation. This has essentially enabled white colonisers to name the ‘other’ as inferior. The final way in which the power and privilege is maintained is *anti-racism practice*: Racism is often seen as a question for black people, rather than white people. While anti-racism efforts by white people are seen as ‘extras’, efforts by nonwhites are expected, but also not considered meaningful. The issue of racism is left with black people, yet due to their domination of knowledge production, white people are still in a position to determine the relevance and meaning of race and racism (Green et al., 2007).

Green et al. (2007) have been acknowledged for applying international work on whiteness to the South African setting (Stevens, 2007). However, Green et al.’s work has been criticized for ignoring the way in which whiteness manifests itself differently across different contexts (Stevens, 2007), for not fully capturing ‘the dissimilarity in the texture of the experience of

whiteness in Australia and South Africa' (Steyn, 2007, p. 420). Their account has also been criticized for uncritically accepting white self-articulations (Stevens, 2007), and for its emphasis on white subjectivity, which itself draws attention away from many aspects of blackness (Ratele, 2007). Steyn highlights that:

South African whiteness has never had the quality of invisibility that is implied in the 'standard' whiteness literature, and in post-Apartheid South Africa white South Africans cannot assume the same privileges, with such ease, when state power is overtly committed to breaking down racial privilege (Steyn, 2007, p. 420).

Steyn herself has done the vast majority of empirical research on South African whiteness (Steyn, 2001, 2004a, 2004b) and in what follows I draw extensively from her work. In a study entitled *Whiteness just isn't what it used to be: White identity in a changing South Africa* Steyn (2001) points to South Africa as a valuable site for the study of whiteness:

The social revisions brought about by the political realignment of the different population groups in relation to each other are far-reaching, complex and multiple. Not least among these is the re-negotiating of identities. 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).

Steyn's analysis is a look at ordinary South Africans who are in the process of trying to make

sense of post-Apartheid South Africa. Steyn identifies five 'white narratives', which vary in the extent of their relationship with the master narrative of whiteness:

*Narrative One: Still Colonial after all these years:* Despite the changes in South Africa, some whites still tell the same story, as if the master narrative is still an appropriate way to orientate them. They believe that whites are still in a position to define themselves and the 'other'. They feel that their participation in South African society needs to take place in white terms for the good of black people. This narrative is the most fundamentalist of the five narratives. In this story neither the plot nor the characters have changed (Steyn, 2001).

*Narrative Two: This shouldn't happen to a white:* The people who tell this story inhabit a world of clear-cut dichotomies. They feel that the old colonial binaries have been illegitimately reversed. The new social structure is unreliable and their faith in white superiority is unshaken. They see the new environment in South Africa as the source of their problems. They are full of racial envy and experience what is happening in terms of reversal and victimisation. They believe that the new order is against them (Steyn, 2001).

*Narrative Three: Don't think white, it's all right:* Although these whites still regard whiteness as integral to their identity, they are more pragmatic about their new positions. They accept the fact that whiteness has been relativized, although most see this as marginalisation. They still draw from some aspects of the master narrative but realise that it cannot build a home in a country now organised around fundamentally different rules. The tellers of this story are working on accepting the present, but not without complaining. The tone tends to be (qualified) optimism.

They see whites as becoming a strand in the 'Rainbow' nation but believe that it is a strand that should be maintained with varying degrees of integrity (Steyn, 2001).

*Narrative Four: A whiter shade of pale:* This group is convinced that they are completely unracialised and reacts to racialized South African society by claiming personal innocence. This story disclaims any implication in whiteness and avoids any real reflection on it. Denial is the major factor. There are obvious self-serving reasons for whites to be colour-blind, now that the country has changed. This story is, above all, one of evasion (Steyn, 2001).

*Narrative Five: Under African skies (or white, but not quite):* This narrative is very different from the previous ones. It believes that whiteness and the way it served as a benefit in the past, actually belongs in the past. It does not use the old stories as templates for the future. It uses other discursive and cultural resources to replace the old white identity. To varying degrees this story is characterised by discarding old selves and taking some responsibility for transforming with the country. This narrative has three versions: *I just don't know what to do being white* articulates the difficulties experienced by whites who are convinced that what is happening is right and support the Africanisation of the country. Yet, they are unsure of how to negotiate their personal place within these changes. *I don't wanna be white no more* is an attempt to evade the pain of confronting whiteness, by appropriating blackness. They deal with white guilt by manipulating their identities, taking on blackness or by living a life of penance. The third version of this narrative is *Hybridization: That's the name of the game*. It encourages a greater identification with Africa without insisting that whites give up aspects of Europeaness (Steyn, 2001).

### *Afrikaner whiteness*

There is considerably less literature on South African whiteness than on global whiteness, and there is even less on *Afrikaner* whiteness. Melissa Steyn's (2004a) 'Rehabilitating a Whiteness Disgraced: *Afrikaner White Talk* in Post Apartheid South Africa' is the only empirical study on *Afrikaner* whiteness to date and is based on a discourse analysis of letters to the editor of *Rapport* (a national Afrikaans Sunday newspaper) written in 2001 (Steyn, 2004a). She differentiates *Afrikaner* whiteness in two ways: Firstly, as a 'subaltern whiteness' in that it has historically contended with the more powerful whiteness of the British Empire. Secondly, as a 'resistant' whiteness in that it had been historically 'rolled into ethnic/nationalist discourse' (Steyn, 2004a, p. 143). Steyn identified four *Afrikaner* 'anxieties':

*Afrikaner identity*: The dominant question (and the sub-text to almost all topics) in the letters were 'Who are we?' and Steyn further refined this question as 'Will we – our language, our religion, our identity – disappear?' (Steyn, 2004a, p. 153).

*Afrikaner centrality*: Steyn found almost a complete consensus in the letters that *Afrikaners* are struggling with 'a problem' (Steyn, 2004a, p. 154). This 'problem' is essentially the fact that *Afrikaners* have lost their status as the most important population group.

*Afrikaner 'Volkseie'*: This anxiety concerns the essences of 'Afrikanerness', which has traditionally been valued by *Afrikaner* mythology. The letters were filled with anxieties that these essential attributes 'would disappear, or be annihilated, swamped or eroded' (Steyn, 2004a, p. 158).

*Afrikaner unity*: *Afrikaner* unity was central to the construction of *Afrikaner* Nationalism. Steyn

points out that it is not surprising that ‘given the pervasive sense of being a group at risk’ this signifier of Afrikaner identity is now being ‘reworked’ (Steyn, 2004a, p. 160).

Steyn found that there is a difference in the ‘intensity of the discursive work’ of Afrikaners, in comparison to the more ‘restrained’ work of English speaking South Africans (Steyn, 2004a, p. 162). This can be attributed to the ‘difference in their relation to the international centres of power’ and their different relation to the master narrative of whiteness (Steyn, 2004a, p. 162). Steyn concludes that, in practice, the two types of discursive work serve different functions:

For English South Africans *white talk* in many ways serve a maintenance function.

Afrikaans *white talk*, by contrast, is engaged in a much more active and aggressive constitutive role (Steyn, 2004a, p. 162).

Steyn’s framework is useful in that it details the different factors which constitute the crisis for Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. In addition, it points to the intensity of the discursive work being undertaken by Afrikaners today which has direct relevance to the present study.

### ***The relevance of Afrikaner identity and whiteness to the present study***

The literature exploring Afrikaner identity will be applied to the exploration of post-Apartheid Afrikaner identity in this study in the following ways: Afrikaner identity, like all ethnic identities, is something which is *perpetually* under construction. Afrikaner Nationalism was



instrumental in constructing Afrikaner identity as the most powerful ethnic identity in Apartheid South Africa. The use of Afrikaner cultural and historical symbols (including the Afrikaans language) formed a very important part of this construction. Afrikaner Nationalism constructed and maintained Afrikaner identity, as well as the ideology of Apartheid. This 'version' of Afrikaner identity was then maintained for many years by a self-referential world in which everything pointed back towards the importance of Afrikaner identity. It is evident how difficult it is to separate Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and Afrikaner identity. Since post-Apartheid South Africa is essentially post-Afrikaner Nationalism South Africa, this cannot but have implications for Afrikaner identity. Afrikaners are arguably dealing with a collective identity crisis. One way to look critically at this crisis of Afrikaner identity is within the context of whiteness studies. Afrikaner identity shares much with the 'Master Narrative' of global whiteness (Steyn, 2001). Yet, as a *South African* whiteness, it reproduces power and privilege in different ways to global whiteness. *Afrikaner* whiteness, in turn, can be differentiated from South African whiteness in that it is intimately tied to the ethnic discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism. Afrikaner whiteness also differs in that it is a 'subaltern' whiteness which implies that, even as a powerful category, it is involved in its own struggle with the more powerful global whiteness (Steyn, 2004a). This literature review has detailed some of the factors relevant to the construction of Afrikaner identity, as it was consolidated by Afrikaner Nationalism and maintained in Apartheid South Africa. The question remains, however: To which extent are these factors operating in the post-Apartheid construction of Afrikaner identity?

## Methodology

### *Theoretical perspective*

‘When people talk to each other, the world gets constructed...’ (Burr, 1995, p. 49).

Social Constructionism is rooted in the idea that ‘reality’ is socially constructed. It stands in direct contrast to empiricism and positivism, which maintain that there is an observable and stable external reality, which can be studied (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

At an ontological level Social Constructionism demands a radical reconceptualisation of the way in which we have understood language to operate. Social Constructionism resists the common view of language as merely descriptive, neutral and reflective, and sets out to explore the ways in which language may be seen as constructive, active and dynamic. Most simply, constructionists explore the ways in which language is actively involved in the construction of social reality (Tuffin, 2005, p. 67).

Potter (1996a, as cited in Tuffin, 2005) offers two alternative metaphors to understanding the purpose of language: When language is regarded as a ‘mirror’, it is assumed to reflect objective reality. When it is regarded as a ‘building site’, it holds many creative possibilities. The underlying assumption is that language does not simply *reflect* reality, but actively *constructs* it.

If then, the reality that is studied is made up of ‘a fluid and variable set of social constructions’, what is needed is ‘a suspicious and politicised epistemological stance’ (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). The epistemological dimension of Social Constructionism aims to *deconstruct* the specific version of reality that is being researched. The aim is not to decide whether this particular construction is *true* or *untrue*, but to investigate *what is being achieved*, by constructing it in this particular way (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999; Parker, 1992).

‘Discursive’ social psychologists claim that psychological features and experiences, like ‘identity’, are constructed through social interaction, and in order to understand these constructions we need to examine ‘in particular the way that language is used in practice by participants’ (Billig, 1997, p. 38).

In the present study I applied the lens of social constructionism and, in particular, discursive psychology, to the ‘ongoing, self-conscious, and contested discursive activity’ (Steyn, 2004a, p. 149) of constructing Afrikaner identity in talk.

### *Participants*

Sampling was ‘purposive’ in that it aimed to recruit ‘typical’ participants (Maxwell, 1996). Previous research exploring the self-identified conceptualisation of white ‘Afrikaners’ suggests that the term refers to a white, Afrikaans-speaking South African (Verwey, 2005). This categorisation is clearly circular (and is itself a contested one), and my aim here is not to declare it valid or otherwise. However, it is *white* Afrikaners who are of interest because they are most

likely to be dealing with the issue of renegotiating identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The town of Bloemfontein (the capital of the Free State) was selected since the vast majority of its white inhabitants are Afrikaners. Although the town is by no means a homogenous Afrikaner community, the dominant white culture in Bloemfontein is Afrikaner culture. In addition, the Free State was one of the firmest bastions of Afrikaner power under Apartheid. It was hoped that the identity struggles of Afrikaners living in post-Apartheid Bloemfontein would therefore deliver rich data.

Participants *within* this community were selected using convenience sampling. The sampling was ‘convenient’ since I have acquaintances in Bloemfontein who were able to facilitate contact with participants. To facilitate the snowballing approach, and since only one week was allocated for data collection in Bloemfontein, interview sessions were convened as social events between each set of acquaintances at which individual interviews took place away from the general group. Although each groups’ conversations around the braai are likely to have been relevant to the topic, these are not on record and were not part of the data collection process. For practical purposes, four acquaintances were asked to each facilitate contact with four participants (the acquaintances themselves were not interviewed). One acquaintance facilitated contact with only three participants, which brought the total to fifteen participants. The only criterion for selection was that the participants considered themselves to be Afrikaners, and were accepted as such by the acquaintances that facilitated contact. All participants were middle class Afrikaans speakers who live in suburban settings. Five women between 22 and 31 years old, and 10 men ranging from 27 to 71 years agreed to participate in individual interviews (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Participant Demographics**

	<b>Age (yrs)</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
<b>Female</b>	31	Personal assistant
	29	Restaurant manager
	25	Guidance counsellor
	22	Student
<b>Male</b>	71	Retired government employee
	64	Retired businessman
	55	Farmer
	34	Operations manager
	34	Advertising consultant
	32	Bar manager
	32	Carpenter
	30	Hairdresser
	30	Lawyer
	28	Disc Jockey
	27	Plumber

### *Data collection*

Fontana and Frey (2000) maintain that ‘interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which to understand our fellow human beings’ (p. 645). Data collection took place on four consecutive evenings in Bloemfontein. On each evening, one group of participants met at the home of the acquaintance that facilitated contact. Participants were then interviewed individually (in private) and the interviews were digitally recorded. Each group consisted of members who were familiar with each other. On all four occasions the evenings turned into unplanned social gatherings. The ‘hosts’ soon realised that the interview process would take some time and proceeded to either prepare a meal or a braai for the participants. This had the

positive effect of putting participants at ease before their individual interviews. These were very much typical Afrikaner gatherings and many participants remarked that, as a result, they found their individual interview very non-threatening, contrary to their expectations. Participants expressed themselves in true modern day Afrikaans with smatterings of English, profanities and racial slurs included.

Interviews were conducted *around* the topic of the Afrikaner/African distinction. Interviews were semi-structured in order to allow participants to raise issues that were not in the schedule (Silvermann, 2001). The interview schedule consisted of only three ‘structured’ questions, which were posed to all participants, namely:

1. How would you define an Afrikaner?
2. How would you define an African?
3. What do you make of the fact that ‘Afrikaner’ is the Afrikaans word for ‘African’?

The questions were purposefully open-ended to further the natural emergence of their narratives (Silvermann, 1993). Although these questions served to collect usable data, they also served to ‘introduce’ the research topic. The rest of the interview was unstructured and allowed participants to raise issues which *they* felt were pertinent. Unstructured interviews generally allow for a greater breadth of data than structured interviews and attempt to ‘understand the complex behaviour of members of a society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of enquiry’ (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 653).

### *Ethical concerns*

This study collected sensitive (and potentially discrediting) talk from participants. This necessitates a reflection on some of the ethical concerns. In order to address these concerns, participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). They were also given the opportunity to ask questions or raise any concerns they might have. Participants were given a copy of said form (to keep) which included contact details for me, as well as the supervisor of this study. The informed consent form explained the following:

1. The purpose of this study.
2. The fact that the interviews will be recorded, transcribed and used in research.
3. The voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw from the process at any time without negative consequences.
4. The fact that their identities will be strictly protected.

It is noteworthy that none of the participants were concerned about confidentiality (which was guaranteed regardless). In fact, many participants remarked that they welcomed the chance to freely express their views. Participants also expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to express these views ‘on record’.

### *Language and translation*

It is almost impossible to separate the Afrikaner people from the Afrikaans language. Afrikaners themselves often interchange ‘Afrikaner’ with ‘Afrikaans’ (which can be translated as ‘Afrikaans

speaking’) (Verwey, 2005). Therefore, I conducted and transcribed all interviews in Afrikaans (see transcription conventions in Appendix C). I also carried out all further analysis in Afrikaans. The goal was to retain as much of the original meaning as possible. I translated the quotes used to illustrate the findings only at the point of writing up the final report. My aim in translation was to convey the essence of, as well as the manner in which, participants expressed themselves. Participants expressed themselves in informal Afrikaans and the extracts were therefore translated into informal English. Unfortunately, it is unavoidable that any translation implies an added layer of interpretation. To compensate for this, the translated extracts are presented alongside the original Afrikaans. This allows the reader to see the data in its original form and the opportunity to verify the quality of translation.

### ***Data analysis***

Of course, if our data are transcripts of audiotapes, then we come face to face with how talk organises the world (Silvermann, 2000, p. 821).

#### *Immersion in the data*

Immersion in the data is a vital first step in qualitative research. This process started during my transcription of the interviews. Secondly, I listened to all interviews once, without making any notes. Thirdly, I read all transcripts once, again without making any notes. Finally, I listened to the interviews while at the same time following the text on the transcripts. During this last step I



made short notes for each transcript. The purpose of this last step was simply to identify pieces of the text that seemed interesting, without trying to see communalities, differences or patterns across interviews. These 15 sets of notes were then laid out and viewed as a whole. The next step was, what is known as, ‘the interocular percussion test – which is where you wait for patterns to hit you between the eyes’ (Ryan & Bernard, 2005).

### *Analysis*

It began to emerge that very few aspects of Afrikaner identity could be taken for granted or stated as simple facts. Instead, participants had to work hard to justify their perspectives and to actively convince me of the reasonableness of their discursive constructions. Essentially, the general pattern that emerged was one of argument. I decided to analyse their interviews using a rhetorical approach to language, as detailed by Billig (1996). He maintains that ‘many psychological issues will be illuminated if we pay attention to the argumentative dimensions of social life’ (Billig, 1996, p. 2). Billig’s ‘Rhetorical Psychology’ entails much more than just a method of analysing arguments per se:

Recent work on rhetoric by Michael Billig (1987) has maintained that rhetoric should not be confined to obviously argumentative or explicitly persuasive communication. Rather, rhetoric should be seen as a pervasive feature of the way people interact and arrive at understanding (Potter, 1996, p. 106).

Billig (1996) maintains that the classical theories of rhetoric have something to offer modern psychological theories. He maintains that modern psychology has lost the ‘intimate connection

between arguing and thinking' (p. 32):

At the core of this approach lies the connection between arguing and thinking. In the rhetorical approach, the thinker is seen as debater, engaged in argument silently with the self, or more noisily with others (Billig, 1991, p. 31).

The nature of the general argument, made by these participants, will be detailed in the analysis and discussion. What follows is an account of the methods I used to arrive at the main argument. On a practical level, I was looking for instances of the following:

#### *Arguments 'against'*

Billig (1996) maintains that in order to understand an argument we should not ask 'What is this about?' but rather 'What is this attacking?' (p. 122). Focussing on what participants were arguing *against* allowed me to get a clearer picture of what they were (implicitly) arguing *for*.

#### *Objections against their own arguments*

When participants make an objection against their own argument, they prevent anyone else from doing so. This is a strategy that causes arguments to appear stronger than they really are (Billig, 1996).

#### *Stances in public debate*

Billig (1996) maintains that attitudes are not 'internal structures of meaning' but are in fact 'stances in public controversy' (p. 2). It follows that whenever participants stated that they are

merely taking up a position in a matter of public debate, they are in fact revealing much more.

*'Common sense' and contrary themes*

Billig (1997) states that ideology is 'the common sense of a society' because it 'makes the ways of that society seem natural' (p. 48):

It is the nature of common sense that it contains contrary themes - for example there are maxims praising both caution and risk taking. In discussion, one can hear people jostling with the contrary themes of common sense. This is particularly true when the topics are explicitly ideological (Billig, 1997, p. 49).

One distinctive aspect of rhetoric is that it can argue both sides of a case. Contrary statements can be made to appear reasonable and justified in an argumentative context (Billig, 1996). This feature can be used to investigate the ideological underpinnings of participants' language by looking at what they consider 'common sense'.

*Justifying one's own position*

This is an essential element of rhetoric. I looked for instances where participants not only stated their position, but spent considerable time justifying it. Much can be learnt from deconstructing the *way* in which someone justifies their position. Unpacking a particular construction can point to its intended effect on the discursive fabric. This deconstruction is best done *critically*: It is important to understand why a participant would justify a certain position in a *particular* way, when there are many other ways in which they can justify the same position.

### *Criticising the opposite position*

By criticising the opposite position, participants are in effect arguing for their own position. This is another well known element of rhetoric and has the function of making one's own position appear more reasonable.

### *On reflexivity*

'To see things from no point of view is not even theoretically possible'

(Fernández-Armesto, 1997, p. 228).

It is essential that as researcher, I reflexively consider my own position within this study. I am a member of the same cultural group as participants and I am, in fact, 'part of what I study' (Steyn, 2001, p. xxxv). I share most demographic variables, a similar upbringing and a language with participants. Steyn (2001) points to the inherent difficulties in the 'intersectional, insider-outsider nature of researching one's "own" group' (p. xxxv). As insider, I gained privileged access and my interest in the views of participants was never questioned. It is assumed that this led to better data than would have been collected by a member of another cultural group. Yet, my insider status also means that I am implicated in the same discourses. This requires greater self-reflexivity to prevent what Geertz (1983) calls 'an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a witch' (Steyn, 2001, p. xxxvi).

A lack of reflexivity can be a threat to the validity of this study in that I, as researcher, might have selected data to fit my 'existing theories or preconceptions' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 90). It is

therefore of the utmost importance that I am aware of my own preconceptions of the Afrikaner/African distinction. The original title of the study (before data collection) was to be *'But Afrikaner is the Afrikaans word for African': Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa*, following a quote from Afrikaans writer Breyten Breytenbach (Breytenbach, 1984, p. 321). This quote reflects my personal views on the Afrikaner/African distinction. Simply put, I believe that an acceptance of Africa (and their own 'Africaness') is the only way for Afrikaners to reinterpret their identity, post-Apartheid, in a meaningful way. This was my own personal view on commencement of the interview process and has remained my view throughout this study. This, in turn, reflects the kind of constructions which I would have preferred to find. However, this study is not intended to analyse or justify my personal views. The fact that the results indicate almost the exact opposite of this 'acceptance' required great self-reflexivity from me as the researcher. Throughout every stage of this process I reflected on the relationship between my own view and those of participants and took the utmost care to remain true to *participants'* constructions of the Afrikaner/African distinction.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### ***Introduction***

In the first part of the analysis and discussion section I will discuss participants' two dominant orientations towards the term African. These two orientations are seemingly incongruent, yet are maintained simultaneously. Participants maintain that they are in fact entitled to be in Africa, while at the same time arguing for a definite separation from Africa. I will first discuss the possible implications of the fact that these orientations appear incongruent. Next, I will discuss the orientations separately and look at different ways in which participants argue for both.

In the second part of this section, I will discuss the central argument which emerged from the data. The argument as a whole can be seen as one *against* acceptance of Africa. Participants appear to be jettisoning traditional aspects of Afrikaner identity which, although serving to identify Afrikaners, are of no benefit in post-Apartheid South Africa. Yet, participants work hard to retain those parts of their identity that intersect with whiteness more generally, since whiteness (free from the negative residues of Afrikaner identity) still affords access to privilege in South Africa. However, while participants condemn Apartheid, they are in fact 'recycling' the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism and Apartheid. This argument then culminates in the two options that these Afrikaners have constructed. The first option is constructed as one of adapting under duress. The second construction is one that makes an argument for emigration as the only sane option.

*'I have a right to be here... but we don't belong here...': Entitlement vs. Separation as the two dominant orientations*

Participants engaged with the Afrikaner /African distinction by positioning themselves in relation to the category 'African' in two ways. This emerged at first during the interview process itself, and was later confirmed during analysis. Although these two orientations appear incongruent, they were held simultaneously by all participants. These orientations need to be introduced at this point, since they formed a thread which ran through all subsequent analysis. I will further substantiate this analysis at various points throughout this discussion.

Extract 1: English translation

R: 'How do you see... Afrikaners' relationship with Africa... with the continent?

P: Let me tell you... Africa... is for the Africans... We don't belong here...

(...)

R: Um, we were talking about Africa just now and you told me we um... we are not really part of Africa...

P: But the whites are not.

R: Yes. But look we are in the continent after all.

P: Yes.

R: So how... how-how do you reconcile those two... those two points?

P: I am a white... I am... an African ...

R: Mm.

P: ...of the... from the white African tribe.

R: Yes. So there's a... there's a... on the one hand you feel yes, you are an African, you sort of have a right to be in Africa?

P: Naturally.

R: But on the other hand also, there is...

P: We should, we should never have been here.' (Male, 55 yrs)

*Extract 1: Original Afrikaans*

R: Hoe sien Oom ... Afrikaners se verhouding met Afrika ... met die kontinent?

P: Kom ek sê vir jou... Africa... is for the Africans... Ons hoort nie hier nie...

(...)

R: Um, ons het netnou gepraat oor Afrika en Oom het vir my gesê ons um ... ons is nie rêrig deel van Afrika nie...

P: Maar die blankes is nie.

R: Ja. Maar kyk ons is tog in die kontinent.

P: Ja.

R: So hoe ... hoe-hoe vereenselwig Oom daai twee ... daai twee punte?

P: Ek is 'n white... ek is ... an African ...

R: Mm.

P: ...of the ... van die wit Afrika stam.

R: Ja. So daar's 'n, daar's 'n ... aan die eenkant voel Oom ja, Oom is 'n African, het Oom soort van 'n reg om in Afrika te wees?

P: Natuurlik.

R: Maar aan die anderkant ook, daar is...

P: Moes ons, moes ons nooit hier gewees het nie. (Male, 55 yrs)

What follows is a summary of data to be reported below: This quote illustrates how this particular participant claims the category of African for himself, while at the same time believing that he should never have been in Africa. What is more, he holds these two incongruent views 'naturally'. The dominant orientation which emerges from all 15 interviews is one of *separation* from Africa. Yet, at the same time, there is a strong sense that these Afrikaners feel that they are in fact *entitled* to be in Africa (this also emerges from all 15 interviews). One of the themes



identified in my previous research was this ambiguity regarding the Afrikaner/African distinction (Verwey, 2005). Subsequently, one of the aims of the present study was to interrogate this ambiguity further. As will be illustrated below, it becomes very clear that participants seem almost unaware that they are simultaneously holding two contradictory positions. Participants would argue for their entitlement to the term 'African', just as strongly, as for their separation from everything that this term represents. Moreover, they do so as if explaining something that is actually quite obvious and, in fact, 'common sense'. As discussed above, Billig (1997) maintains that ideology is 'the common sense of a society' because it 'makes the ways of that society seem natural' (p. 48). It follows then, that when participants hold these two incongruent orientations so 'naturally', that they are in fact giving indications of an underlying ideology. The ideology they are, in effect, describing is one of separation with entitlement. This bears a close resemblance to the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism, which of course gave rise to the ideology of Apartheid. Now, H. F. Verwoerd (as cited in Ballard, 2004, p. 54) described the effects of Apartheid as creating a 'piece of Europe on the tip of the African continent'. Afrikaners are acutely aware that Apartheid and the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism have both been discredited, and these participants can no longer use it to justify their separate existence within South Africa. In what follows I will look more closely at *how* they now argue for this ideology, since they can no longer simply base it on the legitimacy of Afrikaner Nationalism. I will first discuss the orientation which deals with entitlement, followed by the one that deals with separation. At the onset I would like to draw attention to the fact that, while participants engage in a large amount of discursive work to orientate Afrikaner identity as separate from Africa, they use only a single justification in orienting Afrikaner identity within the category 'African'.

*Entitlement: 'We have a right to be here...'*

All participants express the belief that they are entitled to live in Africa. Participants share a sense of, for lack of a better term, 'entitlement' to the category 'African'. Participants give the impression that they are not trying to convince me of a contestable view, but are merely stating 'the fact' of their entitlement. They orientate Afrikaner identity within the category 'African' using birthright as the only justification.

*'Because I was born here...': Entitlement through birth*

Extract 2: English translation

'I was born here. I was born in South Africa, from Africa and that is why I see myself as an African.'

**(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 2: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek is gebore hier. Ek is gebore in Suid-Afrika, van Afrika en dis hoekom ek myself sien as 'n*

*Afrikaan. (Male, 34 yrs)*

Participants do not hesitate to state that they have a right to live in Africa simply by virtue of being born in Africa. They use this 'right of birth' to claim the title 'African' in no uncertain terms. If we consider this as a means to justify their argument of entitlement, it appears to be a strong argument. It is the kind of 'legality' that cannot be faulted. It is likely that this claim is so often used *because* it appears so self-evident.

Extract 3: English translation

‘Well, if you watch TV then you always hear ‘African-American’... but then we are all African, because we were born in Africa.’ **(Male, 27 yrs)**

*Extract 3: Original Afrikaans*

*Wel, as jy TV kyk dan hoor jy altyd ‘African-American’... maar ons is dan almal African, want ons is in Afrika gebore. (Male, 27 yrs)*

Extract 4: English translation

P: ‘Well I come from this country. I was born here and I have just as much right to this country as anybody else has.

R: Mm.

P: So in that way I feel that I am definitely an African.’ **(Female, 25 yrs)**

*Extract 4: Original Afrikaans*

*P: Wel ek kom van die land af. Ek was hier gebore en ek het net so veel reg op die land soos wat enigiemand anders het.*

*C: Mm.*

*P: So op daai manier voel ek definitief ek is ’n African. (Female, 25 yrs)*

The participant quoted above makes the comparison of her own right to the term African with the rights of others to the same term. She asserts her ‘right’ to be African, but does not state her *desire* to be African. This is the same for all participants. No participants express a desire, a wish, or even a need to be African. It is as if participants simply want to claim the category African, without any desire to *be* ‘African’. The sense of entitlement expressed here does not point to any real acceptance of the contents of that category as it pertains to identity.

*Separation: 'We don't belong here...'*

Extract 7: English translation

R: 'Do you feel, do you feel that you belong in Africa?

P: Um... I have. You know I won't be able to answer that because I have never been there.' **(Female, 22 yrs)**

*Extract 7: Original Afrikaans*

R: *Voel jy, jy behoort in Afrika?*

P: *Um ... ek het. Weet jy ek sal ek, ek kan dit nie antwoord nie want ek was nog nie daar nie.*

**(Female, 22 yrs)**

Ironically, the participant quoted above lives in a country that is, in fact, an African country. This quote is a good illustration of how *real* her sense of separation from Africa is. It is so real that she maintains that she has never even been to Africa, despite the fact that she has lived in Africa all her life. Along with their very certain sense of entitlement to the term 'African', all participants see themselves as unequivocally separate from Africa. These Afrikaners argue for a separate existence. This bears a striking resemblance to the discourse of Apartheid. This time, however, it is not merely an argument for the separation of races within South Africa, but is extended as an argument for South Africa (and by implication Afrikaners) as separate from Africa and all that it represents.

Extract 8: English translation

P: 'We were raised as if SA has a different identity from Africa, but we are still Africans.

R: How was that dividing line drawn between South Africans and Africans?

P: I don't think that a dividing line was really drawn, it's just that I... grew up in a bubble. In the bubble that I grew up in I was an... Afrikaner. Do you understand? In that bubble I was labelled as an

Afrikaner... so I grew up in that bubble.’ (Male, 32 yrs)

*Extract 8: Original Afrikaans*

*P: Ons is grootgemaak asof SA 'n ander identiteit het as Afrika, maar ons is nogsteeds Africans.*

*R: Hoe is daai skeidslyn getref tussen Suid Afrikaners en Africans?*

*P: Ek dink nie daar was rerig 'n groot skeidslyn getref nie, ek het net..... in 'n bubbel grootgeword. In die bubbel waarin ek grootgeword het was ek 'n.... boertjie. Verstaan jy? In daai bubbel was ek gelabel as 'n boertjie.... so ek het in daai bubbel grootgeword. (Male, 32 yrs)*

The participant quoted above alludes to the idea that Afrikaners were ‘taught’ their identity in isolation from Africa. The ‘bubble’ that he describes resembles the ‘self-referential Afrikaner ideological world’ (Hyslop, 2000, p. 5) that most Afrikaners were raised in. He does not feel that a ‘dividing line was really drawn’ between himself and Africa. Instead, he appears to describe a sense of isolation from Africa, which was created by being raised in ‘the bubble’ of Afrikaner identity. I will now discuss the different ways in which participants argue for their separation from Africa.

*‘Africa starts just North of us...’: A geographical separation*

Extract 9: English translation

‘At the end of the day I don’t actually even see South Africa as part of Africa. That’s how I see it. So I don’t think that South Africa is in Africa... Africa probably starts just, just north of us.’ (Male, 34 yrs)

*Extract 9: Original Afrikaans*

*Op die ou end sien ek eintlik nie eers Suid-Afrika as deel van Afrika nie. Dis hoe ek dit sien.*

*So ek dink nie Suid Afrika is in Afrika nie... Afrika begin seker net so, net so Noord van ons. (Male, 34 yrs)*

yrs)

Extract 10: English translation

R: 'There's a, you don't really see Afrikaners as part of Africa?

P: No, not at all... because.... understand, for me it's very geographical, let's put it that way...

R: Yes.

P: It's geographical.

R: Where does Africa start?

P: For me Africa is past... the nine provinces we have. Then it's Kenya... and so forth. So that's Africa and South Africa. Don't miss the South before South Africa...' (**Female, 22 yrs**)

*Extract 10: Original Afrikaans*

R: *Daar's 'n, jy sien Afrikaners nie rêrig as deel van Afrika nie?*

P: *Nee, glad nie ... Want... verstaan vir my is dit baie geografies, kom ons stel dit so...*

R: *Yes.*

P: *Dis geografies.*

R: *Waar begin Afrika?*

P: *Vir my is Afrika verby ... die nege provinsies wat ons het. Dis dan Kenya...en so aan. So dis Afrika en Suid Afrika. Moenie die Suid voor Suid Afrika miss nie... (Female, 22 yrs)*

These participants describe a very definite boundary between Africa and South Africa. South Africa is clearly understood as 'separate' as opposed to 'in' Africa. This is a decidedly unambiguous distinction. The participant quoted above points to the importance of the 'South' before 'South Africa'. Ironically, she is using a *geographical* distinction despite the fact that, *geographically*, South Africa is indeed *in* Africa. This appears to indicate that, despite evidence to the contrary, they view themselves to be in a place which is completely separate from Africa.

*'Africa is black...': Separation through race*

Extract 11: English translation

R: 'What comes to mind when I say African?'

P: 'Somebody who is black and speaks a black language.' **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 11: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Wat kom in jou gedagtes op as ek se 'African'?*

*P: Iemand wat swart is en 'n swart taal praat. (Male, 34 yrs)*

As will be illustrated from the data in the section that deals with Afrikaner identity as white identity, the first word that all participants use to define Afrikaners is 'white'. By the same token, the first word that all participants use to describe Africans is 'black'. Again, there is a very clear distinction between these two terms. Participants describe these two terms as mutually exclusive. They work hard to maintain ideological separation from Africa as it relates to blackness.

Extract 12: English translation

R: 'So, what do you think about the distinction between Afrikaner and African?'

P: Okay, I think there is a bit... African to me is more... Africa.

R: Yes.

P: Okay.

R: Okay, what do you mean with that, because we are in Africa?

P: But, yes I struggle to see myself as African. I see myself as Afrikaner.

R: Yes, okay now...

P: And so, and why not, you probably want to know?

R: Okay.

P: Probably because I'm white...' **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 12: Original Afrikaans*

*R: So, wat dink jy van die distinsie tussen Afrikaner and African?*

*P: Okay, ek dink daar is bietjie... African is vir my meer ... Afrika.*

*R: Ja.*

*P: Okay.*

*R: Okay, wat bedoel jy met dit, want ons is in Africa?*

*P: Maar, ja ek sukkel om myself as Afrikaan te sien. Ek sien myself as Afrikaner.*

*R: Ja. Okay nou...*

*P: En so, en hoekom nie, wil jy seker weet?*

*R: Okay.*

*P: Seker maar omdat ek wit is ... (Male, 34 yrs)*

Some participants indicate that ‘historically’ whites have *never* been part of this continent. This distinction is, quite simply, based on race:

*Extract 13: English translation*

‘Actually I am a European who was imported from the other side so that is why I don’t see myself as African. I am ethnically... not really part of the continent. That’s, that’s why I feel like that. I see an African as a black... man who was created in Africa or whatever, grew up. That’s how I see African. And it’s European, African... and Asian. I think that is how I draw the distinction.’ **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 13: Original Afrikaans*

*Eintlik is ek ‘n Europeer wat ingevoer is van anderkant af so dis hoekom ek myself nie as Afrikaan sien nie. Ek is etnies ... eintlik nie deel van die Kontinent nie. Dis, dis hoekom ek so voel. ‘n Afrikaan sien ek as ‘n swart ... man wat in Afrika geskep is of whatever, grootgeraak het. Dis hoe ek Afrikaan sien. En dis European, African .... en Asian. Ek dink dis hoe ek die onderskeid tref. (Male, 34 yrs)*

The construction of ‘Africa’ as synonymous with ‘black’ was a strong and recurring theme in all



the interviews. However, the consequence of this argument is the notion that Africa is for Africans, and Afrikaners are excluded from this category based on their race.

*'They kill each other and murder and drink and...': Separation through othering*

The next extract illustrates how this participant answers a question relating to Africa by discussing stereotypes of Africans. This indicates that, in orientating himself as separate from the category 'African', he describes the contents of that category as it relates to the identity of African people:

Extract 14: English translation

R: 'What else can you link, to Africa?'

P: Doesn't speak proper English, is not very um... business orientated... in the workplace and that and the decisions they make and that... um the wasting of money these days... um, doesn't feel a lot for another human being... um they kill each other and murder and drink and fight, you know. Drinking and fighting with each other and... I know there are many white people who also do that, but I feel that with them it's a lot more. With whites it's the minority, with them it's the majority. So yes, my connotations with African are negative.' **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 14: Original Afrikaans*

R: *Watter ander goed kan jy ook daaraan koppel, aan Afrika?*

P: *Praat nie ordentelik engels nie, is nie baie... um besigheids geoorienteerd nie... in die werksplek en so en besluite wat hulle maak en so... um deesdae se vermosrsing van geld... um, voel min vir 'n mens.... Um hulle sal mekaar doodmaak en moor en drink en slaan, jy weet. Drink en mekaar slaan en...ek weet daar is baie witmense wat dit ook doen, maar ek voel by hulle is dit baie meer. By witmense is dit die minderheid, by hulle is dit die meerderheid. So ja, die konnotasie wat ek aan African het is negatief.* **(Male, 34 yrs)**

Arising from literary theory, the term ‘the other’ conveys the idea that groups create their identity by defining themselves as different from other cultures (Holloway, Kane, Roos, & Titlestad, 1999). In turn, Miles (1989, as cited in Foster, 1991) defines a racist ideology as one that contains ‘a representation of the ‘other’ in terms of negatively evaluative content’ (p. 203). Ballard (2004), summarizes ‘othering’ as ‘a key conceptual process in which inferior qualities are projected onto, and seen as, the property of racialized others’ (p. 52). Despite his efforts to say so in politically correct terms, the participant above views Africans as uneducated, wasteful, uncaring and aggressive.

While some participants blatantly describe Africans in negative terms, others merely emphasise that they view themselves as ‘different’ from Africans. Africa is the place of the strange ‘other’, with which it is simply unthinkable to identify:

Extract 15: English translation

‘Because what happens in Africa is so far removed from my own life that I don’t... I don’t feel affiliated with those. You understand, I can’t call myself African because... the culture and the, the way of doing things... the religions... they are things that I don’t know. It is strange to me! Totally strange. How can I call myself such a thing when I am not like that at all?’ **(Female, 25 yrs)**

*Extract 15: Original Afrikaans*

*Want dit wat in Afrika gebeur is so far removed from my own life dat ek nie ... I don’t feel affiliated with those. Verstaan jy, ek kan nie myself African noem nie want ... die kultuur en die, die manier van dinge doen ... die gelowe ... dit is goed wat ek nie ken nie. Dit is vir my vreemd! Heeltemal vreemd.*

*Hoe kan ek myself so iets noem as ek gladnie so is nie? (Female, 25 yrs)*

Africans are not only seen as ‘the other’ because they hold negative (or merely different)

characteristics, but also because they are defined as ‘people who suffer’:

Extract 16: English translation

‘It’s, it’s... I see Africans as people who live in poorer areas, people who suffer...’ **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 16: Original Afrikaans*

*Dis, dis... ek sien Africans as mense wat in arme dele bly, as mense wat sukkel... (Male, 34 yrs)*

‘Africa’ then becomes a place of suffering. This appears to be another way for participants to separate themselves from ‘the other’:

Extract 17: English translation

R: ‘How do you see Africa?’

P: When I think of Africa I am sad, really, because there is so much poverty, there is a lot, and lots of little things... And, and there is war, I mean... understand, and I find it terrible! And that type of thing makes me, it makes me, it presses on my heart and then I think what if this should happen in South Africa? And to me it’s... to me Africa is dark. You know that idea of Utopia?

R: Yes...

P: To me Africa is a reverse Utopia...’ **(Female, 22 yrs)**

*Extract 17: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Hoe sien jy Africa?*

*P: As ek aan Afrika dink dan is ek hartseer, regtig, want daar’s baie armoede, daar’s baie, nog baie klein goedjies .... En, en daar’s oorlog ek meen... verstaan, en dis vir my verskriklik! En sulke tipe van goed maak vir my, dit maak my, dit druk my hart en dan dink ek, sê nou maar dit moet in Suid-Afrika gebeur. En dit is vir my... vir my is Afrika donker. Jy weet daai idiee van Utopia?*

*R: Ja...*

*P: Vir my is Afrika soos ‘n reverse Utopia... (Female, 22 yrs)*

This participant sees 'Africa' as 'a reverse Utopia' or in other words 'the place where things go wrong' as indicated by 'poverty', 'war' and 'suffering'. While a previous section (*'Africa is black...': Separation through race*) described separation decidedly based on race, this strategy seems to be an example of "separation de-'racialized'" (Ballard, 2004, p. 55). While participants address separation through race very briefly ('Africans are black and Afrikaners are white'), participants spend *considerably* more time on describing the other (more acceptable) ways in which they see themselves as separate from Africans:

Extract 18: English translation

R: 'In other words what you are saying is that you don't really feel part of the continent...

P: But I don't really want to be part of the continent.

R: Yes, and why not?

P: Because look what happens in the continent.

R: Okay.

P: Look, there are things that are good... okay sure. But in almost every country in, in Africa there is war.

R: Mm

P: And brutality and... I don't want to be part of it.' (**Female, 25 yrs**)

*Extract 18: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Met ander woorde wat jy sê is jy voel nie rêrig deel van die kontinent nie...*

*P: Maar ek wil nie rêrig deel wees van die kontinent nie.*

*R: Yes, en hoekom nie?*

*P: Want kyk wat in die Continent gebeur.*

*R: Okay.*

*P: Kyk, daar's dinge wat goed is...okay sure. Maar in omtrent elke land van, van Afrika is daar oorlog.*

*C: Mm.*

*P: En brutality en ... ek wil nie deel wees daarvan nie. (Female, 25 yrs)*

This participant elsewhere states that she ‘doesn’t want to be separate from Africans because they are black’, but because of ‘what they *do*’. In the above she maintains that her separation from Africa is based on ‘what happens there’. While ‘othering’ is essentially about projecting negative qualities on someone of a different race, it appears that participants employ it as a way of separating themselves, without *mentioning* race.

In summary, participants orientate themselves in almost direct opposition to the category African in different ways. Yet, at times they also orientate themselves as firmly *within* this category. It appears that participants are almost unaware that they are simultaneously holding two contradictory positions. These two orientations, when seen in relation to each other, bear a close resemblance to the ‘separate but equal’ discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism which emphasised racial superiority and separation, whilst maintaining that people of different race groups were nevertheless treated ‘fairly’ according to the specific qualities and characteristics of their group.

However, participants do significantly less discursive work in claiming their entitlement to the term ‘African’ than they do in separating themselves from everything which that category represents. Also, participants appear to claim their entitlement to the *category* African, while rejecting the *contents* of that category as it relates to black people. Participants give the impression of claiming the ‘classification’ African, while rejecting the ‘identity’ of Africans.

Although these orientations were discussed separately, they can be seen to operate *within* various parts of the central argument. The next section of the analysis and discussion deconstructs the

participants' central argument as one against acceptance of Africa.

***'Either that, or you emigrate...': A six part argument against acceptance of Africa***

The central argument that emerges from the data is one *against* acceptance of Africa and unfolds in six parts. Billig maintains that if you want to understand what people are arguing *for*, then you need to look at what they are arguing *against*. The central argument can therefore be seen as an argument for an existence separate from Africa and Africans. This is, in essence, an ideological position and echoes Apartheid ideology. Billig (1997) describes ideology as the 'common sense' of a society. The way in which this argument is presented certainly has the feel of 'common sense' in the way these participants hold their views to be self-evident. In what follows I will briefly outline this argument before presenting each of the six parts in greater detail.

Participants appear to jettison those aspects of Afrikaner identity which are not useful anymore. In addition, these aspects appear to be those which make them easily identifiable as Afrikaners. While participants appear to see the jettisoned aspects of identity as liabilities, whiteness still affords access to privilege in post-Apartheid South Africa and participants are keeping whiteness as central to their identity.

Participants condemn Apartheid in no uncertain terms, yet they are in fact 'recycling' the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism and Apartheid. They are aware that they are living in a country that is 'redefining itself as African' (Steyn, 2004a), however, they perceive the 'Africanisation' of South Africa as decidedly negative and refer to the many problems in Africa

as ‘evidence’. In essence, participants make the same claims regarding the inferiority of blacks that Apartheid discourse has always made. Some participants no longer argue for a separate existence from black South Africans based on race. They do, however, argue for a separation based on the *actions* of Africans. This appears to be an example of separation ‘de-racialized’ (Ballard, 2004). Afrikaner Nationalism has always utilised fears around ‘engulfment’ in the often-used term ‘Die Swart Gevaar’ (‘The Black Threat’). This form of ‘cataclysmic thinking’ was used often to justify many of the Apartheid regime’s oppressive measures and this discourse has survived almost intact.

The central argument then culminates in the two options that participants have constructed. The first option is constructed as one of adapting to post-Apartheid South Africa. However, these arguments focus on adapting under duress and do not offer any detail on what adaptation requires. These arguments concern attempts at ‘fitting in’ by finding a space for Afrikaners, but mostly convey the notion of change under pressure. Participants believe they are being ‘forced’ to adapt and ‘forced’ to accept the changes in South African society. While the process of adapting is clearly seen as unwanted, there are also elements of pragmatism. Participants believe that adaptation is necessary for survival. Interestingly, some participants accept that they need to raise their children with different values than themselves, in order for them to live in post-Apartheid South Africa. This is discussed as a possible site for authentic change and acceptance of Africa. Participants, who did not construct adaptation as an option, make strong arguments for disinvestment in South Africa. These participants construct immigration as the only sane option open to Afrikaners.

***PART 1 ‘You can find yourself in shitstreet by calling yourself an Afrikaner today...’: Aspects of Afrikaner identity jettisoned***

Extract 19: English translation

‘You know, you can find yourself in shitstreet by calling yourself an Afrikaner today.’ **(Male, 27 yrs)**

*Extract 19: Original Afrikaans*

*Jy weet, jy kan jousef vandag in kakstraat vind deur jousef ‘n Afrikaner te noem. (Male, 27 yrs)*

The above quote gives the impression that this participant’s identity, as Afrikaner, has become a liability to him. Note that the liability is not *being* an Afrikaner, but *calling yourself* an Afrikaner.

Extract 20: English translation

‘Um... so that is how it fits into my life ... I uh, prefer not to tell people that I am Afrikaans.’

**(Female, 25 yrs)**

*Extract 20: Original Afrikaans*

*Um ... so dit is hoe dit in my lewe inpas ... Ek uh, verkies nie om vir mense te vertel dat ek Afrikaans is nie. (Female, 25 yrs)*

Participants speak about avoiding revealing their identity as Afrikaners in general interaction with others. This is a sentiment shared by many participants, to varying degrees. This section shows how they actively distance themselves from many stereotypical aspects of Afrikaner identity like conservative dress, culture, language, history and overt racism. In what follows I look more closely at *what exactly* they are discarding. The communality between these different aspects appears to be their lack of usefulness. The aspects they are discarding are not only



useless in the present time, but are in fact a liability. The ‘things’ they are discarding can only help to identify them as Afrikaners, while not being of any benefit. Participants give the impression that the aspects they describe simply weigh them down in post-Apartheid South Africa. I believe that ‘jettison’ is more accurate a description than ‘discard’ or distance:

**Jettison** /v/ **1** to throw or drop unnecessary goods or fuel from a ship, an aircraft, a spacecraft etc. **2** to abandon or reject something that is not wanted (Hornsby, 1995).

*‘Brandy & Coke & Long socks...’: Ridiculing Afrikaner Stereotypes*

In response to the question ‘How would you define an Afrikaner?’ many participants refer to this, almost archetypal, image of the conservative Afrikaner:

Extract 21: English translation

‘And my family don’t wear long socks and short pants (laughing) you know, I mean... so um... in that way I feel well, it’s just, it’s not who me and my family are.’ **(Female, 25 yrs)**

*Extract 21: Original Afrikaans*

*En my familie dra nie lang kouse en kort broekies nie (laughing) jy weet, ek bedoel... so um ... op so 'n manier voel ek wel... dis net, dis nie wie ek en my familie is nie. (Female, 25 yrs)*

Extract 22: English translation

‘Then you get the heavy Afrikaner boer type with his socks and his comb in his socks (laughing)... so that type of thing...’ **(Female, 22 yrs)**

*Extract 22: Original Afrikaans*

*Dan kry jy die heavy Afrikaner boer tipe met sy sokkies en sy kam in sy sokkies (laughing)... so daai*

*tipe goed... (Female, 22 yrs)*

This description is, without fail, followed by laughter and a statement indicating that this is not a description of themselves. While this is not an argument, it bears resemblance to the ‘straw man’ argument used in philosophy. In a straw man argument one sets up your opponent’s argument in its weakest possible form, in order to destroy it easily (Blackburn, 2005). This particular description dates from the 1970s and 80s when the many Afrikaner men wore ‘safari suits’ and matching long socks (combs were often carried inside the socks) (Hopkins, 2003). It is as if participants set up this outdated image of an Afrikaner, in order to prove that they are different. It appears they are distancing themselves from the Afrikaner of yesterday.

While the first aspect which participants appear to jettison is a highly visible Afrikaner stereotype, the second is more symbolic. The next section deals with the way parts of Afrikaner history have been used in the formation of Afrikaner Nationalism, which leads to it being a definite liability for participants.

*‘The Voortekkers and that shit...’: A history discarded*

The Voortekkers are not merely a part of Afrikaner history, they were also one of *the* prominent symbols used to mobilise Afrikaner Nationalism, when the National party came into power in 1948 (Steyn, 2001).

Extract 23: English translation

‘You know, The Voortekkers and that shit... good for them (laughs), good for them, but that’s old

news now...’ (**Male, 32 yrs**)

*Extract 23: Original Afrikaans*

*Jy weet, die Voortrekkers en daai kak.... good for them (laughs), good for them, maar dis nou ou nuus.... (Male, 32 yrs)*

This participant discards the history of the Voortrekkers by calling it ‘that shit’ and ‘old news’. By jettisoning ‘The Voortrekkers’, he also lets go of the bit of Afrikaner nationalist discourse which they represent. It can be argued that he is jettisoning Afrikaner Nationalism as something that is not useful in post Apartheid South Africa. Not only is Afrikaner Nationalism not useful, but it is something that is intimately tied to Apartheid (in part three I will discuss the more straightforward rejection of Apartheid by participants).

The discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism was actively propagated by the state machinery in Apartheid South Africa and Afrikaner children were subjected to powerful indoctrination at school (Thompson, 1985). The following participant recalls being taught the story of the Voortrekkers, but maintains that it is forgotten:

Extract 24: English translation

‘Because to me it’s... sort of... who cares? Because everything that happened in the, in the past... to bring South Africa to where it is now, the good, the bad... everything that happened, is forgotten... I mean I can’t even remember anymore. I can’t even remember the story of The Voortrekkers anymore. I can, I learnt it, but I can’t remember it. For me it’s... and... go and ask someone to tell you about it, I can guarantee you (laugh) they won’t be able to remember either, nobody in my generation.’ (**Female, 22 yrs**)

*Extract 24: Original Afrikaans*

*Want dis vir my so ... so half... wie gee om? Want alles wat in die, in die verlede gebeur het ... om*

*Suid-Afrika te bring tot waar dit nou is, die goed, die sleg ... alles wat gebeur het, is vergete...*  
*Ek meen ek kan nie eers meer onthou. Ek kan nie eers Die Voortrekkers se storie meer onthou nie.*  
*Ek kan, ek het dit geleer, maar ek kan dit nie onthou nie. Dit is vir my ... en ... gaan vra nou vir*  
*iemand om jou daarvan te vertel, ek kan jou waarborg (lag) hulle gaan ook nie kan onthou nie,*  
*niemand in my generasie nie. (Female, 22 yrs)*

She also argues that no one from ‘her generation’ is able to remember this story. It appears that this participant constructs the past in morally neutral ways, while at the same time making it irrelevant to post-Apartheid South Africa. If they are indeed aware of the link between their history, Afrikaner Nationalism and Apartheid, then it would make sense for participants to jettison those parts in post-Apartheid South Africa.

While Afrikaners might have a choice as to whether they hold on to parts of their history, the next aspect I discuss is one that is intimately tied to Afrikaner identity. The Afrikaans language is something that serves to identify Afrikaners *as* Afrikaners, perhaps more than any other aspect of identity.

*‘It’s a communication tool man...’: Downplaying the importance of Afrikaans*

Although downplaying the importance of Afrikaans might appear to be a very reasonable view, it should be further interrogated for the following reasons: Firstly, Afrikaners often use ‘Afrikaans’ as a synonym for ‘Afrikaner’ (Verwey, 2005), which points to the centrality of the language to Afrikaner identity. Secondly, ‘Afrikaans speaking’ follows ‘white’ as one of the two main criteria for being an Afrikaner (this is the case for almost all participants in the present study and

will be discussed in more detail in the section dealing with whiteness in relation to Afrikaner identity).

Extract 25: English translation

‘I, I am not one of those people who want to *fight* for Afrikaans... It is only the language I speak... I, I... it’s a communication tool man...’ **(Male, 32 yrs)**

*Extract 25: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek, ek is nie een van daai mense wat wil veg vir Afrikaans nie... dis maar net die taal wat ek praat... ek, ek... dis ‘n communication tool man... (Male, 32 yrs)*

Afrikaans is much more than ‘a communication tool’ for Afrikaners and has always been intimately tied to the very core of Afrikaner identity (and thus Afrikaner Nationalism). The following participant also denies the importance of Afrikaans:

Extract 26: English translation

R: How important is being an Afrikaner to you?

P: ‘No it’s, for me it’s not an issue whether I am an Afrikaner or not, whether you are an Afrikaner or English... it’s not about the language, for me it’s more about the personality.

R: You haven’t got that... you don’t feel better about yourself because you are an Afrikaner?

P: No, I feel better if I’m perhaps a better person than certain people. It’s, It’s like I’m saying, It’s more important than the whole language issue.’ **(Male, 28 yrs)**

*Extract 26: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Hoe belangrik is dit vir jou om ‘n Afrikaner te wees?*

*P: Nee dis, dis vir my nie ‘n issue of ek ‘n Afrikaner is of nie, of jy Afrikaner is of Engels... dit gaan nie oor jou taal nie, dit gaan vir my meer oor die persoonlikheid.*

*R: Jy het nie daai... jy voel nie beter oor jouself omdat jy ‘n Afrikaner is nie?*

*P: Nee. Ek voel beter as ek dalk ‘n nicer mens is as sekere mense. Dis, dit is soos ek sê dit is vir my*

*belangriker as die hele taal issue. (Male, 28 yrs)*

It should first be noted that the above participant answers a question which pertains to his ethnic identity as Afrikaner by referring to the Afrikaans language. The way in which these participants downplay the importance of Afrikaans should be seen in the context of the long struggle for the recognition of Afrikaans as a language in South Africa. This struggle is referred to as ‘Die Taalstryd’ or ‘The Language Struggle’ and forms a prominent part of Afrikaner cultural history (Giliomee, 2003; Harrison, 1985). The prominent notion of ‘fighting’ for Afrikaans is in stark contrast to the following participant’s appeal to equality of languages:

Extract 27: English translation

‘Like I’m saying, one must try and get a balance in South Africa where you say, okay, Afrikaans is just as, just as important as South Sotho or, or English.’ **(Male, 28 yrs)**

*Extract 27: Original Afrikaans*

*Soos ek sê, mens moet probeer net ’n balance kry in Suid-Afrika waar jy sê, okay, Afrikaans is net so, net so belangrik soos Suid Sotho of, of Engels. (Male, 28 yrs)*

We should bear in mind that, in Apartheid South Africa, attempts were made to teach even Southern-Sotho speaking people in Afrikaans and ‘equality of languages’ was barely extended to English. While South Africa had two official languages, it is common knowledge that from 1948 the South African civil service was dominated by Afrikaans. Despite the fact that much of the struggle for Afrikaans was waged ‘against’ English, the following participants describe the use of English almost as camouflage:

Extract 28: English translation

R: ‘Do you ever feel weird when you are in a group, or in company... and you are the only Afrikaner

there?

P: No, it's easy for me to switch say if everybody is English, and to speak English and... to fit in.'

**(Female, 31 yrs)**

*Extract 28: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Voel jy ooit weird as jy's in 'n groep is, of in geselskap is...en jy's die enigste Afrikaner daar?*

*P: Nee, dis vir my maklik om oor te slaan sê nou maar almal is Engels, en Engels te praat en ...in te*

*pas. (Female, 31 yrs)*

Note that this participant does not deny the fact that she might be self conscious about being an Afrikaner. She essentially argues that being an Afrikaner is not problematic because she can very easily jettison her language, which would then make her less conspicuous as an Afrikaner (i.e. 'fit in'). The following participant gives a good account of how to avoid negative attention towards Afrikaners:

Extract 29: English translation

R: 'The fact that you are an Afrikaner. Do you ever get a bit of an um... a type of a self-consciousness about it or, are you aware of it?

P: Ah no, because I can speak English so well. So I don't feel like that. You see the big thing, the big thing for me is, I can speak English properly. You know, it is my language of choice and it is the language of, sort of the working world. So because I have that, then I don't feel that I am... not that disadvantaged.' **(Female, 25 yrs)**

*Extract 29: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Die feit dat jy 'n Afrikaner is. Kry jy ooit so 'n bietjie van 'n um ... tipe van 'n selfbewustheid daarvoor of, is jy bewus daarvan?*

*P: Ah nee, omdat ek so goed kan Engels praat. So ek voel nie so nie. Jy sien die groot, die groot ding vir my is, is ek kan behoorlik Engels praat. Jy weet, dit is my 'It's my language of choice' en dit is die language van, soort van 'the working world'. So omdat ek dit het, dan voel ek nie ek is .... so*

*disadvantaged nie. (Female, 25 yrs)*

She describes ‘choosing’ English since it is the language of ‘the working world’. This ‘working world’ can be seen as referring to present day South African society. She appears to jettison Afrikaans as something that will place her at a disadvantage in the South Africa of today.

Participants are aware that Afrikaners are often taken to be racist. In the next section I discuss the ways in which these Afrikaners appear to deal with this common perception by actively rejecting overt racism.

*‘Look, there are many people who don’t like it...’: Rejecting overt racism*

Extract 30: English translation

‘Look, there are many people who don’t like it when those around them make racist comments...’

**(Male, 27 yrs)**

*Extract 30: Original Afrikaans*

*Kyk, daar is baie mense wat nie daarvan hou as mense rondom hulle rassistiese aanmerkings maak nie.... (Male, 27 yrs)*

Extract 31: English translation

‘Look, I watch what I say. Often at work there will be joke that I heard... which is maybe a little bit racist, but it’s not that bad... but because I know that they might take it the wrong way, then I don’t do it. I am very aware of not saying anything in front of people of a different colour which might offend them... but yes, when I get home I swear and I say that type of thing.’ **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 31: Original Afrikaans*

*Kyk, ek watch wat ek se. Baie keer by die werk dan is daar ‘n joke wat ek gehoor het... wat miskien so*



*bietjie rassisties, maar dis nie erg nie... maar omdat ek weet hulle kan dit miskien verkeerd opvat, doen ek dit nie Ek is baie opletterend daarop om nie voor anderskleuriges enige iets te se wat hulle kan afronteer nie... maar nou ja, as ek huis toe gaan vloek ek en ek se daai tipe goed. (Male, 34 yrs)*

These participants describe ‘racist comments’ and ‘racist jokes’ as something that people ‘don’t like’ or ‘might take the wrong way’. They are not rejecting racism as such, but they are rejecting racist utterances as things that belong in the private domain or ‘home’. Participants describe how they ‘watch what they say’ to people of different races. The following is a more extreme example:

Extract 32: English translation

‘Look, don’t tell a kaffir he’s a kaffir... he’s a human being man...’ (Male, 32 yrs)

*Extract 32: Original Afrikaans*

*Kyk, moenie vir ‘n kaffer se hy’s ‘n kaffer nie... hy’s ‘n human being man... (Male, 32 yrs)*

This participant maintains that one shouldn’t call a black man by a derogatory term to his face (or in public), implying that it is dehumanising. Yet, he uses the exact same term to refer to the black man in question and clearly demonstrates that he still views it as the proper term to use. A possible explanation is that the participant felt that it was safe to do so, since he was speaking to a fellow Afrikaner. The following quote also deals with derogatory terms (together with racist violence), but this participant views it as something that is part of the ‘old Afrikaner’ and something that does not form part of his identity:

Extract 33: English translation

‘Um... there is... some Afrikaners that are still old Afrikaners that still swear and shout and it’s ‘kaffir’ and ‘meid’ and... you know they still go out in the evenings and go look for them to ‘bliksem’ them

and that type of thing, they are still out there.’ **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 33: Original Afrikaans*

*Um... daar is... party Afrikaners wat nog ou Afrikaners is wat nog vloek en skreeu en dis ‘kaffer’ en ‘meid’ en... jy weet hulle gaan soek hulle in die aande om te bliksem en daai tipe goed, daar is nog van hulle. **(Male, 34 yrs)***

The above quote deals with ‘shouting’, ‘swearing’ and ‘going out’, all of which are public acts of ‘those Afrikaners’. However, this is the same participant who earlier stated that ‘when he goes home’ he ‘swears’ and ‘says things’ himself. The following participant also refers to racist violence as something that shouldn’t be used to ‘categorise’ him. He uses racist violence in conjunction with the image of the stereotypical ‘brandy drinking’ Afrikaner:

Extract 34: English translation

‘You know, don’t be an asshole that drives around in your bakkie on weekends assaulting people just because they are black. Nicely ‘poes’ drunk, full of brandy, hate kaffirs and... driving around beating people. I am sorry, I am better than that. So I won’t let myself be categorised like that.’ **(Male, 27 yrs)**

*Extract 34: Original Afrikaans*

*Jy weet, moenie ‘n poephol wees wat oor naweke in jou bakkie rondry en mense aanrand net omdat hulle swart is nie. Lekker poesdronk, vol brandewyn, haat kaffers en... ry rond en slaan mense. Ek is jammer, ek is beter as dit. So ek laat myself nie as dit kategoriseer nie. **(Male, 27 yrs)***

He maintains that he is ‘better than’ the stereotype he is condemning. Yet, while he is condemning violence against black people (in public), he still uses a derogatory term in his condemnation of racist violence (in private). Also, although he is condemning this particular version of overt racism, he elsewhere stated that ‘I am not saying that you shouldn’t hate kaffirs’ and thus condoned covert racism. The following participant illustrates her awareness of the

## social unacceptability of overt racism:

Extract 35: English translation

P: 'I don't know. I... I don't know whether we are scared South Africans or whether we were raised scared. You are not allowed to use certain words. You are... You have a certain... way that you have to behave and that's what you transfer to your children.

R: Yes.

P: And I think that's where it comes from. They are taught this way. But we were taught differently, but I mean I didn't... I can't behave the way that my parents behaved....

R: Yes.

P: ...in the old days, behave that way now because it's not socially acceptable.... but we...uh, we don't behave the way our parents behaved.

R: What would you say those differences are? Between your parents and you, what is the difference?

P: Uh! I... I don't know. The way in which my, my parents behaved towards... say for the sake of argument black people.

R: Ja.

P: Was... they were apart. They were not allowed to mix. It was, I mean there was name calling and things were said which, like I said are not, acceptable anymore. For which you can now go and sit in jail. Um... you just didn't mix. It was not... acceptable.' **(Female, 31 yrs)**

*Extract 35: Original Afrikaans*

*P: Ek weet nie. Ek ... ek weet nie of ons bang Suid-Afrikaners is nie of ons bang grootgemaak is nie. Jy mag nie seker woorde gebruik nie. Jy mag ... jy het 'n sekere ... manier wat jy moet optree en dis wat jy aan jou kinders oordra.*

*R: Ja.*

*P: En ek dink dis waar dit vandaan kom. Hulle word so geleer. Maar ons is anders geleer, maar ek meen ek het nie .... ek kan nie optree soos my ouers opgetree het...*

*R: Ja.*

*P: ... in die ou dae, nou optree want dis nie sosiaal aanvaarbaar nie.... maar ons... uh, ons tree nie op*

*soos ons ouers opgetree het nie.*

*R: Wat sê jy is daai verskille? Tussen jou ouers en jou, wat is die verskil?*

*P: Uh! E ... ek weet nie. Die manier wat my, my ouers teenoor ... sê maar vir argumentsonthalwe swart mense opgetree het.*

*R: Ja.*

*P: Was ... hulle was apart. Hulle mag nie gemeng het nie. Dit was, ek meen daar's name genoem en dinge gesê wat, wat nie meer soos ek gesê het, aanvaarbaar is nie. Waarvoor jy nou in die tronk kan gaan sit nie. Um ... jy het net nie gemeng nie. Dit was nie ... aanvaarbaar nie. (Female, 31 yrs)*

She describes how overt racism ('name calling' and the 'old ways of behaving towards black people') is not socially acceptable anymore. She also draws a distinction between the acceptability of overt racism in her parents' generation, her own, and her children's (I will discuss this awareness of the next generation of Afrikaners in more detail later).

The above collection of examples demonstrate how participants appear to jettison overt racism in an attempt to make Afrikaner identity more acceptable in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Ironically, many do so using racist terminology. The following section will detail the devaluation of Afrikaner culture. Again, participants appear to be aware that Afrikaner culture has links to Afrikaner Nationalism and is thus of no use in post-Apartheid South Africa.

### *'I am not a big culture guy...': The devaluation of Afrikaner culture*

Extract 36: English translation

'My life is not about... where I came from, it is about where I am going... culture is important, but I am not a big culture guy...' (Male, 32 yrs)

*Extract 36: Original Afrikaans*

*My lewe gaan nie oor... waar ek vandaan kom nie, dit gaan oor waarnatoe ek gaan...culture is belangrik, maar ek is nie 'n groot ou vir culture nie... (Male, 32 yrs)*

As mentioned above, Afrikaner cultural symbols were actively employed by Afrikaner Nationalism as it constructed Afrikaner identity (Steyn, 2001). It might be this centrality of cultural symbols that the above participant refers to when he calls culture 'important'. However, this participant makes it very clear that his culture is something that belongs in the past ('where I come from'). Afrikaner culture might be 'important', but it is not very important to *him*. By maintaining that 'where he is going' is more important, he essentially jettisons Afrikaner culture as something that is not personally useful and which might keep him from having a future in post-Apartheid South Africa. The following participant goes further by actively criticizing Afrikaner culture:

Extract 37: English translation

R: 'So there is a part of you, of your traditional culture that has been handed to you .... from your ancestors, which has been sort of discredited...

P: Yes.

R: Which sort of..

P: It, it, it, it offends me. That's al... that's all that our culture is made of. That's all, our culture is racism... We have no culture at all.' (Male, 34 yrs)

*Extract 37: Original Afrikaans*

*R: So daar's 'n deel van jou, van die tradisionele kultuur wat jou oorgehandig is .... van jou voorgeslagte, wat vir jou half gediskrediteer is...*

*P: Ja.*

*R: Wat jou half...*

*P: Dit,dit,dit, dit gee my afstoot. Dis al... dis al waarvan ons kultuur gemaak is. Dis al, ons kultuur is rassisme... Ons het gladnie kultuur nie. (Male, 34 yrs)*

He states that Afrikaner culture is synonymous with racism. Since racism offends him, he finds his culture offensive. This participant discards his culture to such an extent that he is left with ‘no culture’. He later describes this ‘lack of culture’ in more detail:

Extract 38: English translation

P: ‘Traditional dress, all that type of thing. We don’t have it.

R: Mm.

P: We don’t have, our khakhi outfits are not traditional outfits, it’s only a .... crock of shit, understand?

It’s not... we don’t have... bonnets and that. You understand? It’s not our outfits. We don’t have outfits.’ **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 38: Original Afrikaans*

*P: Tradisionele klere, al daai tipe ding. Ons het dit nie.*

*R: Mm.*

*P: Ons het nie, ons khakhi klere is nie tradisionele klere nie, dis maar net ... ‘n pot vol stront, verstaan? Dis nie... ons het nie... Kappies en daai. Verstaan jy? Dis nie ons klere nie. Ons het nie klere nie. (Male, 34 yrs)*

The following participant describes the ways of the ‘old Afrikaners’ by referring to the stereotypical Afrikaner farmer. He describes ‘life on the farm’ at length and emphasises the slow pace of that life. He then continues to criticise those Afrikaners who still cling to that way of living:

Extract 39: English translation

P: ‘Yes they have. They definitely got stuck.

R: Why don't you live your life according to those rules?

P: My life is too fast for that man. That's how it is. Today's life is just faster.' (**Male, 27 yrs**)

*Extract 39: Original Afrikaans*

*P: Ja hulle het. Hulle het definitief vasgehak.*

*R: Hoekom lewe jy nie jou lewe volgens daai reels nie?*

*P: My lewe is te vinnig vir dit man. Dit is nou maar hoe dit is. Vandag se lewe is net vinniger. (**Male, 27 yrs**)*

This participant constructs the life of the stereotypical Afrikaner farmer as something which stands in sharp contrast to his own life. He maintains that 'today's life is just faster'. In essence, he presents Afrikaner culture as outdated. His future orientation, and the emphasis of the 'fastness' of modern life, seem to be important ways of jettisoning the 'ox-wagon identity' he describes.

I hope to have shown in part one how these participants appear to discard the more visible aspects of Afrikaner identity under Apartheid like history, language, overt racism and culture. The communality between these different aspects appears to be their lack of usefulness demonstrated, for example, by the strong sense that anything that will make them easily identifiable as Afrikaners is a problem. It appears that, to some extent, these participants view their very identity as Afrikaners as a liability in post-Apartheid South Africa.

While participants discard certain (no longer useful) aspects of their identity in part one, the next part of the central argument shows how they keep the most useful aspect of their identity. Part two shows how whiteness is still a central part of Afrikaner identity, with all the benefits that this entails.

## ***PART 2 ‘An Afrikaner is, first of all, white...’: Keeping White identity***

Whiteness is not simply about ‘race’, but is essentially about power and privilege. In post-Apartheid South Africa, as in Apartheid South Africa ‘for most, if not all, South Africans race remains a primary constituent of identity’ (Distiller & Steyn, 2004, p. 7). Part two shows how, despite discarding many aspects of their ethnic identity, these Afrikaners keep the part of their identity that consists of whiteness. In what follows I will first show how whiteness is, indeed, still seen as central to Afrikaner identity.

*‘It’s a white person...’: Afrikaner identity as white identity.*

Extract 40: English translation

R: ‘How would you define an Afrikaner?’

P: An Afrikaner is a white person who speaks Afrikaans. Short and sweet.’ (**Male, 34 yrs**)

*Extract 40: Original Afrikaans*

R: Hoe sal jy ‘n Afrikaner definieer?’

P: ‘n Afrikaner is ‘n witmens wat Afrikaans praat. Kort en kragtig. (**Male, 34 yrs**)

Extract 41: English translation

P: ‘It’s a, it’s a... white person who lives in... Africa.

R: Yes.

P: ...and speaks Afrikaans.’ (**Male, 55 yrs**)

*Extract 41: Original Afrikaans*

P: Dis ‘n, dis ‘n... blanke persoon wat in ... Afrika woon.

R: Ja.



P: ...en Afrikaans praat. (**Male, 55 yrs**)

Extract 42: English translation

P: 'It's a white person... Christian orientation... and he speaks Afrikaans.' (**Male, 71 yrs**)

Extract 42: Original Afrikaans

P: Dis 'n blanke persoon... Christelik georiënteerd... en hy praat Afrikaans. (**Male, 71 yrs**)

Apartheid South Africa was a society, literally, organised according to race. White South Africans were located at the privileged end of this social organisation. It is hardly surprising that these participants, in no uncertain terms, maintain the whiteness inherent in their identity as Afrikaners. In fact, it appears that they experience whiteness as a *central* part of their identity as Afrikaners. By holding on to whiteness they are holding on to power and privilege. While they are prepared to jettison parts of their history, language and culture, they are not letting go of their whiteness.

Participants not only protect their own whiteness, but the next section will show that they are more aware of sharing whiteness with English speaking South Africans.

*'Probably because we are whites...': The shared whiteness of Afrikaners and English speakers*

Extract 43: English translation

R: 'Do you feel that Afrikaners are starting to accept Africa more?

P: Yees... uhh (big sigh) No! I, I, I personally feel that Afrikaners and English have moved closer together...

R: Mm.

P: Uh after ninety four.

R: Mm-mm.

P: Uh, probably because it's whites. You know.' **(Male, 64 yrs)**

*Extract 43: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Voel jy dat Afrikaners begin om Afrika meer te aanvaar?*

*P: Jaaa... uhh (groot sug) Nee! Ek, ek ek, ek persoonlik voel die Afrikaners en die Engelse het nader aan mekaar beweeg...*

*R: Mm.*

*P: Uh na vier en negentig.*

*R: Mm-mm.*

*P: Uh, seker maar omdat dit blankes is. Jy weet. (Male, 64 yrs)*

This participant replies to the question, aimed at gauging Afrikaners' acceptance of Africa, by indicating that Afrikaners and English speakers have moved closer together 'after ninety four'. Although South African whites still maintain many forms of power in South Africa, 1994 is seen as the 'official' year in which political power was lost. He is essentially saying that, after losing political power, Afrikaners haven't moved closer to Africans (whom he previously defined as 'black') but closer to English speakers ('because they are whites'). Steyn (2004b), maintains that this 'psychological path is well known; the tropes that bind English and Afrikaans into a common front of privileged 'whites' are well rehearsed' (p. 76). The following participant describes his feelings of being marginalised as an Afrikaner, yet he emphasises that the marginalisation he perceives is aimed 'especially against the white man':

Extract 44: English translation

'Probably because it's now sort of... it feels as if it's sort of against us, against Afrikaners now and so on and especially against the white man and so yes... so it was never really that I am aware that I, you

know, that I am a white Afrikaner in this country, because it was never really necessary, but these days it's more and more. So yes it makes one more aware of it these days.' **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 44: Original Afrikaans*

*Seker omdat dit nou half...dit voel dis teen ons nou half, teen Afrikaners nou en so aan en veral teen die witman en so ja... so dit was nooit rerig dat ek is daarop gesteld dat ek, jy weet, dat ek is 'n wit Afrikaner in hierdie land nie, want dit was nooit rerig nodig gewees nie, maar deesdae is dit al hoe meer. So ja dit maak 'n mens baie meer gesteld daarop deesdae. (Male, 34 yrs)*

With regard to feelings of marginalisation, this participant appears to find his whiteness more pertinent than his 'Afrikanerness'. The 'us' which is marginalised now refers 'especially' to whites. Although he states that he is now more conscious of his identity as an 'Afrikaner', he now qualifies it as 'white' Afrikaner. The following participant makes essentially the same point:

Extract 45: English translation

R: 'And you feel that it's things like these which uh... do you think it's, it's specifically aimed at Afrikaners?

P: It is actually aimed at the whites...

R: Yes.

P: ...in the country. I don't care whether... it is Helen Suzmann's children or whoever's children.

R: Mm. Mm.

P: It is aimed, simply at the white Afrikaners, um... South Africans.' **(Male, 55 yrs)**

*Extract 45: Original Afrikaans*

*R: En Oom voel dus sulke dinge wat ... uh ... dink Oom dis, dis spesifiek gemik op die Afrikaners?*

*P: Dit is maar gemik op die blankes...*

*R: Ja.*

*P: ... in die land. Ek gee nie om... of dit Helen Suzmann se kinders of wie se kinders nie.*

*R: Mm.Mm.*

*P: Dit is gemik, plein weg op die blanke Afrikaners, um... Suid-Afrikaners. (Male, 55 yrs)*

He makes it clear that the marginalisation he perceives is ‘actually aimed at whites’. Although he also mentions ‘white Afrikaners’, he rectifies this statement by exchanging ‘Afrikaners’ for ‘South Africans’, thus including English speakers.

Not only do these participants hold on to their whiteness, they appear to be much more conscious of sharing this whiteness with English speakers. This common whiteness might even have become more important than their ethnic identity as Afrikaners. The way they keep whiteness central to their identity, stands in contrast to the way they jettison other aspects like language, culture and history. However, race, language, culture and history are *all* aspects that are intimately tied to constructions of identity. Why are they jettisoning some and keeping others? It appears that the difference lies in ‘usefulness’. While language, history and culture are part of Afrikaner identity, they are not useful in post-Apartheid South Africa. Whiteness, on the other hand, still affords access to power and privilege. However, there is an alternative explanation that should be considered: Whiteness is not something which *can* be jettisoned so easily, since it is literally ‘written’ on the skin.

The next part of the central argument deals with the condemnation of Apartheid. This condemnation of Apartheid has become almost obligatory for Afrikaners. After the very public Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it has become very difficult for Afrikaners to deny what was done ‘in their name’ (Steyn, 2004a, p. 154). Part three shows how they are, in effect, making an objection against their own position, which pre-empts criticism from others.

### ***PART 3 'A terrible atrocity...': Rejecting Apartheid***

Extract 46: English translation

'Look... Apartheid was wrong... it was an atrocity.' (Male, 32 yrs)

*Extract 46: Original Afrikaans*

*Kyk... Apartheid was verkeerd... dit was 'n atrocity. (Male, 32 yrs)*

Extract 47: English translation

'Apartheid was the biggest injustice ever... it should never have happened.' (Male, 55 yrs)

*Extract 47: Original Afrikaans*

*Apartheid was die grootste onreg ooit... dit moes nooit gebeur het nie. (Male, 55 yrs)*

Extract 48: English translation

'We oppressed the blacks during Apartheid... we wronged them.' (Male, 34 yrs)

*Extract 48: Original Afrikaans*

*Ons het die swartes onderdruk in Apartheid... ons het verkeerd gedoen aan hulle. (Male, 34 yrs)*

Some of the participants reject Apartheid outright. They do so, however, in the shortest possible way. Participants give no thorough condemnation of Apartheid, or its effects. This condemnation of Apartheid was also noted in my previous study, where it formed part of an argument against affirmative action ('Yes, Apartheid was wrong... But, affirmative action is not fair') (Verwey, 2005). The objection against Apartheid stands in contrast to the next part of the central argument. The contrast lies in the way they explicitly reject Apartheid, before 'validating' the discourse which spawned it. The different ways in which participants 'recycle' Apartheid discourse will be the focus of the next part of the central argument.

#### *PART 4 'They are swallowing us...': Recycling Apartheid discourse*

Afrikaner identity was consolidated during the mobilisation of Afrikaner Nationalism. The discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism, in turn, formed the ideological underpinnings of Apartheid South Africa. Since *post*-Apartheid South Africa is based on 'the demise of everything that Afrikaner Nationalism has always stood for' (Steyn, 2004a, p. 154), what are the implications for Afrikaner identity? As illustrated in part three, it has become almost obligatory for Afrikaners to openly reject Apartheid. Despite rejecting Apartheid in no uncertain terms, in what follows I hope to show how participants in fact 'recycle' the discourse of Apartheid. I first discuss participants' awareness of the 'Africanisation' of South Africa (and how they construct this as decidedly negative) before discussing the different aspects of Apartheid discourse they recycle. Participants make the same arguments for the inferiority of blacks, but they now use 'evidence' found elsewhere in Africa. Some participants make arguments for a separate existence based on the *actions* of Africans, in order to de-racialize their argument for separation. Many participants recycle forms of 'cataclysmic thinking' reminiscent of Apartheid discourse

#### *'It's becoming Africa...': The Africanisation of South Africa*

Participants are acutely aware that they are living in a country 'that is redefining itself as African' (Steyn, 2001, p. xxii):

Extract 49: English translation

R: 'Do you think that there is more of a blending of Africa and South Africa? .... Do you think that

South Africa is becoming more African?

P: Yes now, now for sure... now for sure. More than in the past. Um... in the past, especially with the white government and that, people... you kept your... you kept your borders closed... now, ag yesterday man, it's becoming... it's becoming Africa now and... um... I think the Afrikaner has a problem with that... that it's becoming Africa now. It's getting too close to home I think. In the past it was very encapsulated, very safe.... you can sleep with your doors open at night and... um it is not like that anymore the... the Afrikaner doesn't like it, I think.' **(Male, 32 yrs)**

*Extract 49: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Dink jy daar's meer van 'n samesmelting van Afrika en Suid Afrika? ... Dink jy Suid-Afrika is besig om meer 'Afrika' te word?*

*P: Ja nou, nou verseker ... nou verseker. Meer as in die verlede. Um... in die verlede, veral met die blanke regering en so, mense... jy het jou... jy het jou grense toe gehou...nou, ag yesterday man, dit raak... dit raak nou Afrika en... um ...Ek dink die Afrikaner het 'n probleem daarmee... dat dit nou Afrika raak. Dit raak nou too close to home dink ek. Dit was in die verlede very 'encapsulated', very veilig ... jy kan met jou deure oop slaap in die aand en... um dit is nou nie meer so nie die ... Afrikaner hou nie daarvan nie, dink ek. **(Male, 32 yrs)***

This participant starts by describing Apartheid South Africa ('with the white government') as a place that was 'very encapsulated' from Africa because 'you kept your borders closed'. As discussed in the section dealing with separation from Africa, all participants see the term 'African' as decidedly negative. This participant seems to argue that, in Apartheid South Africa, there was more of a separation from Africa and implies that this was a more positive state of affairs than the present. He argues that 'Africa' with all its negative connotations is now 'too close to home' and describes the way in which Africa is encroaching on his sense of safety. This participant feels that South Africa is now 'becoming Africa'. He experiences this as something negative and he concludes that 'the Afrikaner doesn't like it'.

The next section shows how participants construct the same arguments for the inferiority of blacks, which formed such an integral part of Apartheid discourse.

*'The whites are gone and the place is a fuckup...': The inferiority of blacks*

Extract 50: English translation

R: 'So you don't see becoming part of Africa as a positive thing?

P: 'No. I've been everywhere in Africa. I have been fucking high up in this continent and I can tell you that the further away from SA you go the shittier it gets. If you need your passport to drive across the border into Africa then it's not worth it. There are no more tarred roads that you can drive on. I'm sorry, standards lower immediately when there are no more white people involved. Because kaffirs' standards are lower than our standards. They are busy swallowing us and it is getting worse and worse. Look at Zim, the white people have left, the place is a fuckup.' **(Male, 27 yrs)**

*Extract 50: Original Afrikaans*

R: *So jy sien nie deel word van Afrika as 'n positiewe ding nie?*

P: *Nee. Ek was al orals in Afrika. Ek was al fokken hoog op in hierdie continent en ek kan vir jou se hoe verder weg jy gaan van SA hoe kakker word dit. As jy jou paspoort nodig het om oor die grens in Afrika te ry is dit nie die moeite werd nie. Daar is nie meer teerpaai wat jy kan ry nie. Ek is jammer, standarde daal onmiddelik waneer daar nie meer witmense betrokke is nie. Want kaffers se standarde is laer as wat ons standarde is. Hulle is besig om ons in te sluk en dit gaan slegter en slegter. Kyk vir Zim, die witmense is weg, die plek is 'n fokkop.* **(Male, 27 yrs)**

The above quote can be taken as an argument for the inferiority of blacks, which of course formed part of Apartheid discourse. This time, however, the argument is based on 'evidence' found in the rest of Africa. He cites the lack of 'tarred roads' as 'evidence' for the inferiority of blacks. He justifies this by maintaining that black people have 'lower standards'. He further



justifies this position by referring to Zimbabwe. By arguing that ‘the place is a fuckup’ because the ‘whites are gone’ he is essentially arguing that white people are superior to black people. The following participant cites similar ‘evidence’ within South Africa:

Extract 51: English translation

‘Realistically speaking I don’t think that we will ever be in power again, so the country will never come right again... um the country will only go backwards, crime will only increase... um everything will only go backwards... um yes, so there is nothing... That you can make a living here, I won’t argue with that, but I am not optimistic that things can go well again.’ **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 51: Original Afrikaans*

*Realisties gesproke dink ek nie ons gaan ooit weer aan bewind kom nie, so die land gaan nooit weer reg kom nie... um die land gaan net agteruit gaan, misdaad gaan net opgaan... um alles gaan net agteruit gaan... um ja, so daar’s niks... dat jy ‘n bestaan hier kan maak, dit stry ek nie, maar ek is nie optimisties dat dit ooit weer kan goed gaan nie. (Male, 34 yrs)*

The above quote shows how this participant assumes that Apartheid is a ‘golden age’ when ‘we’ were in charge and the country was ‘right’. This participant argues that South Africa is ‘going backwards’ because black people now hold the political power. Essentially, this participant argues that the transition from Apartheid South Africa to post-Apartheid South Africa was a step ‘backwards’.

This section looked at ways in which these Afrikaners found new evidence for an old discourse. The following section will look at a more subtle manipulation of Apartheid discourse. Participants are essentially arguing for separation by saying ‘it’s not because they’re black, it’s because of what they *do*’.

*'I can't associate myself with what they do...': Apartheid discourse de-racialized*

Extract 52: English translation

'I see myself as an African, but I don't want to associate myself with half of the things they do.'

**(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 52: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek sien myself as 'n Afrikaan, maar ek wil myself nie konnoteer aan die helfte van die goed wat hulle doen nie. (Male, 34 yrs)*

The participant quoted above stated elsewhere that 'Africans are black' and excluded himself from this category based on race. Yet, here he states that he is prepared to claim the term African (despite his whiteness). He maintains, however, that he cannot do so because of 'the things they do'. Since we already know that this participant excluded himself from the category 'African' based on race, we should be suspicious of the reasons he offers here, namely the *actions* of Africans. This appears to be another example of "separation de-'racialized'" (Ballard, 2004, p. 55). By removing 'race' as a reason for separation, participants are attempting to give their argument more credibility. It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that he 'sees himself as an African' he still refers to Africans as 'they'. The next participant (who also previously defined Africans as black) again argues for separation based on actions, instead of race:

Extract 53: English translation

'Now it's not a question of I don't want to be a part of their country but... they are busy fucking it up so much that I am not interested anymore. Do you understand? If it worked well then I would have said 'awesome'. Do you understand what I am trying to say? So it's not a question of... I don't want to be part of it... because they are black. I don't want to part of it because it is so shit there.' **(Female, 25 yrs)**

*Extract 53: Original Afrikaans*

*Nou is dit nie 'n question van ek wil nie deel wees van hulle land nie maar ... hulle is besig om dit so op te moer dat ek nou nie meer belangstel nie. Verstaan jy? As dit goed gewerk het sou ek gesê het 'awesome'. Verstaan jy wat ek probeer sê? So dit is nie 'n kwessie van ... ek wil nie deel wees van dit nie ... omdat hulle swart is nie. Ek wil nie deel wees van dit nie omdat dit so kak gaan daar. (Female, 25 yrs)*

This participant also refers to Africans as 'they' and to South Africa as 'their' country. She argues that she feels separated from Africans, not because 'they are black', but because they are 'fucking up' the country. These participants argue for the same separation inherent in Apartheid discourse, however, in a post-Apartheid South Africa they cannot do so based on race. Instead, they are basing their arguments for separation on the *actions* of Africans. This appears to be an argument designed to give the *impression* of rejecting Apartheid discourse, while still utilising it.

The final section of part four deals with the, virtually unchanged, use of cataclysmic thinking. This time, however, it is not only a threat held up to Afrikaners. Participants spend considerable effort in validating this important aspect of Apartheid discourse.

*'They are going to push us into the sea...': The validation of cataclysmic thinking*

The threat of engulfment by blacks was often referred to as 'The total onslaught'. This onslaught by *Die Swart Gevaar* ('The Black Danger') was a prominent feature of Apartheid discourse. This form of 'cataclysmic thinking' was, for instance, used to justify many of the Apartheid regime's oppressive measures. This discourse has survived almost intact amongst these participants:

Extract 54: English translation

R: 'You seem to think that Afrikaners are sort of being pushed into a corner?

P: You know, I can tell you that Afrikaners have been much further up in this country, but the kaffirs have now already pushed us onto the point of the continent and they are going to push us into the sea. There are already no more in Zimbabwe, there are a few, but they are going to systematically push us into the sea brother. It's a question of time. They are going to make it unprofitable for us to be in this country and we are all going to fuck off. That is exactly what they are going to do. And those that are left behind are going to stay behind until they are all dead in eighty years time and then it is all over, then there are no more white people in this country.' **(Male, 27 yrs)**

*Extract 54: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Dit lyk of jy dink dat Afrikaners word soortvan in 'n hoek gedruk?*

*P: Weet jy ne, ek kan jou sê dat Afrikaners al baie hoer op in hierdie land was, maar die kaffers het ons nou al tot op die puntjie van die continent gedruk en hulle gaan ons in die see in druk. Daar is nou al reeds nie meer in Zimbabwe nie, daar is enkeles, maar hulle gaan ons stelselmatig in die see in druk broer. Dis 'n kwessie van tyd. Hulle gaan dit net nie meer winsgewend maak vir ons om in hierdie land te bly nie en ons gaan almal fokkof. Dis presies wat hulle gaan doen. En hierdies wat oorbly gaan nou maar oorbly tot hulle almal dood is oor tagtig jaar en dat is dit nou verby, dan is daar nou nie meer witmense in hierdie land nie. **(Male, 27 yrs)***

This participant gives a description of how 'The Black Danger' has 'pushed' the whites out of Africa. The imagery he uses is reminiscent of Verwoerd's 'piece of Europe on the tip of the African continent' (as cited in Ballard, 2004, p. 54). Apartheid South Africa was often held up as the 'last stand' for whites in Africa. Note that this 'onslaught' is described as happening 'systematically', which suggests that it is *organised* as well as *hostile*. This participant then follows the discourse to its cataclysmic end with the whites either 'all dead' or 'pushed into the sea'. He describes a scenario in which whites are facing an organized onslaught that will quite literally exterminate them as a group. This discourse is almost spoken in the language of

genocide. The next participant utilises Apartheid discourse in very much the same way:

Extract 55: English translation

P: 'It, it, there is not... really a lot of space for us here.

R: You don't think it will improve?

P: No, no-no, no, no. No it will take hundreds of years. It will really... take a very long time. And, and... you know... the white Afrikaners are being forced out of the country. You know these, these... children who can't find work, what are they going to do?' **(Male, 55 yrs)**

*Extract 55: Original Afrikaans*

*P: Dit, dit, hier is nie ... eintlik baie plek vir ons nie.*

*R: Oom dink nie dit gaan beter gaan nie?*

*P: Nee, nee-nee, nee, nee. Nee dit sal honderde jare vat. Dit sal rêrig... baie lank vat. En, en... jy weet... die blanke Afrikaners word uit die land uitgedwing. Weet hierdie, hierdie... kinders wat nie werk kry nie, wat gaan hulle doen? **(Male, 55 yrs)***

He describes the 'loss of space' that is reminiscent of the sense of 'black encroachment' that was utilised by Apartheid discourse. He uses 'these children who can't find work' as evidence for the fact that white Afrikaners are being forced out of Africa.

In the above I hope to have shown that, despite rejecting the *system* of Apartheid, these participants are actively recycling the *discourse* of Apartheid. Also, some aspects of their arguments appear to be designed to give the *impression* of rejecting Apartheid discourse, while still utilising it. Some aspects of Apartheid discourse are 'de-racialized', while others are not. In some instances participants find new evidence for an old discourse, while in others they re-use Apartheid discourse virtually unchanged.

The two final parts of the central argument will deal with the future options constructed by participants. Some participants argue towards adapting, under duress, to post-Apartheid South Africa while others argue for emigration as ‘the only sane option’.

### ***PART 5 ‘You haven’t got a choice...’: Adapting under duress***

The central argument culminates in, essentially, two options: Staying and adapting to post-Apartheid South Africa, or emigration. In what follows I take a closer look at what participants believe will be required of them in order to stay. While I have separated these requirements into different sub-headings (‘Fitting in’, ‘Adapting’ and ‘Accepting’), these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary. The commonality across these sub-headings is their sense of ‘duress’. While this section appears to have an element of pragmatism, it is a rather reluctant pragmatism. The final section of this part of the argument is more interesting and details the way in which some participants are consciously raising their children to ‘fit’ into post-Apartheid South Africa.

#### *‘Trying to fit somewhere...’: Attempts at finding a space for Afrikaner identity*

Extract 56: English translation

‘I think Afrikaners they... are trying to fit themselves in. They are actually trying to fit in. Trying to, actually find a place in the sun and trying to fit somewhere.’ **(Female, 29 yrs)**

*Extract 56: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek dink Afrikaners die... probeer hul inpas. Hulle probeer actually inpas. Maar probeer, actually ’n plek in die son kry en probeer maar fit iewers. (Female, 29 yrs)*

This participant describes a process of ‘finding a place in the sun’ for Afrikaners ‘somewhere’. She does not, however, give any detail on *how* they are doing this. In the above quote she mentions the word ‘trying’ four times. It appears that what she is really describing is a sense of *not* fitting in. This description resembles Steyn’s (2001) ‘loss of cultural and psychological space’ and feelings of being ‘out of place’ (Steyn, 2001, p. 156).

This sense of ‘not fitting’ into post-Apartheid South Africa is in sharp contrast to the position of Afrikaners in Apartheid South Africa, where Afrikaners saw themselves as the most important population group. While Afrikaners certainly had ‘a place in the sun’ in Apartheid South Africa, their position is now much more uncertain. The following participant treats the topic of ‘fitting in’ with more optimism:

Extract 57: English translation

‘I, I just feel that we, I fit in where we are at present. I don’t know what the future will hold. If it carries on like this then we will fit in. I think things will improve... um... I think we will find a place in this country... um, I think many people are starting to realise that now. Um... this guy was not so bad... There was a white guy that worked here. We miss him. Let’s ask him to come back’. **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 57: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek, ek voel net ons, ek pas in waar ons is op die oomblik. Ek weet nie wat in die toekoms gaan voorle nie. As dit so aangaan sal ons inpas. Ek dink dinge gaan beter gaan... um... Ek dink ons het ‘n plek in hierdie land... um, ek dink baie mense begin dit nou beseef. Um... die ou was nie so bad nie .... Daar was ‘n ou wit ou wat hier gewerk het. Ons mis hom. Kom ons vra hom om terug te kom. **(Male, 34 yrs)***

His optimism is somewhat qualified though: Although he states that Afrikaners do ‘fit in’ at present, he also states that *if* ‘it carries on like this’ *then* Afrikaners will ‘find a place in this

country'. He appears to be describing a process where other South Africans are 'starting to realise' that Afrikaners (or whites in general) are 'not so bad'. By describing the situation in this way he is also implying that the default perception of whites in general, and Afrikaners in particular, is negative. In addition, he argues that 'fitting in' is contingent on acceptance from other South Africans, as opposed to the efforts of Afrikaners themselves. The next section will deal with ways in which participants construct the notion of adapting to post-Apartheid South Africa.

*'We are forced... if we want to survive...': Forced adaptation*

Extract 58: English translation

'Um, you're, you're forced to adapt... That is the country that we are in'. **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 58: Original Afrikaans*

*Um, jy's, jy's gedwing om maar aan te pas... Dit is nou maar die land waarin ons is. (Male, 34 yrs)*

Extract 59: English translation

R: 'Do you think um... um the Afrikaners are busy, busy becoming more part of Africa? In other words, Afrikaners are busy becoming Africans?

P: ... Well, we are forced to become. Uh... in, in, in... ja! We are forced to become. If we, if we want to survive in South Africa... we will have to do it. We will have to adapt.' **(Male, 64 yrs)**

*Extract 59: Original Afrikaans*

*R: Dink Oom um ... um die Afrikaners is besig om, om meer deel te word van Afrika? Met ander woorde, Afrikaners is besig om Africans te word?*

*P: ... Wel ons is geforseer om te word. Uh ... in, in, in ... ja! Ons is geforseer om te word. As ons, as ons wil survive in Suid-Afrika... sal ons dit moet doen. Ons sal moet aanpas. (Male, 64 yrs)*



Although these participants state that Afrikaners need to ‘adapt’, in order ‘to survive’, they do not offer any strategies to do so. It is not clear what participants actually mean with ‘adapt’. What is clear, however, is the sense that they are ‘forced’ to do so. The second quote, in the space of two lines, mentions both the word ‘forced’ and the phrase ‘we will have to’ twice. This appears to be a description of ‘duress’, much more than it is a description of ‘adapt’. The following section describes acceptance where the emphasis is, again, on this being ‘forced’.

*‘Even if you don’t want to accept it...’: Forced acceptance*

Extract 60: English translation

‘And unfortunately in order to fight for your place you have to sometimes accept things, even if you don’t want to accept it, you have no choice, you just have to do it.’ **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 60: Original Afrikaans*

*En ongelukkig om te baklei vir jou plek moet jy maar partykeer goed aanvaar, al wil jy dit nie aanvaar nie, jy het nie ‘n keuse nie, jy moet dit nou maar doen. (Male, 34 yrs)*

This participant maintains that ‘acceptance’ is necessary, yet he uses the phrase ‘in order to fight for your place’ and ‘unfortunately’ in the same sentence, which indicates that he is, perhaps, not talking about eager and graceful acceptance but of acceptance of an irrevocable change that must be grieved. This, again, resembles the ‘losses’ experienced by Afrikaners in post-Apartheid South Africa as detailed by Steyn (2001). In addition, while he mentions the need to ‘accept’ once, he follows this with three phrases indicating that this acceptance is occurring under duress (‘even if you don’t want to’, ‘you have no choice’ and ‘you just have to do it’). It is possible that what he is really describing is *non-acceptance*. The following participant describes acceptance

almost as a last resort:

Extract 61: English translation

‘And accept it now... I think everyone just accepts it... because... it doesn’t matter what anyone is going to do, it won’t help, do you understand?’ **(Female, 29 yrs)**

*Extract 61: Original Afrikaans*

*En aanvaar nou dit ... ek dink almal aanvaar dit maar net ... want ... maak nie saak wat enigiemand gaan doen nie, dit gaan nie help nie, verstaan jy? (Female, 29 yrs)*

The common thread that runs through the above three sections appears to be one of pressure. Participants present vague notions of adaptation, without giving any examples or proposing any strategies on *how* to adapt. These participants construct adaptation as something forced on them by immense and irrevocable pressure rather than something chosen and welcomed.

The next section deals with the dilemma of raising children for a post-Apartheid South Africa. While it is somewhat different than the preceding ones, it also deals with a construction made under duress. However, it offers more of a possibility for change.

*‘Because you are setting an example for your child....’: Raising children for a post-Apartheid South Africa*

The extract below follows from a discussion of how the behaviour of the older generation (the participant’s parents) is not socially acceptable in post-Apartheid South Africa. The participant also describes the importance of her children ‘fitting in’ in post-Apartheid South Africa. In what

follows she details the dilemma which this holds, for herself, as a parent to the new generation:

Extract 62: English translation

P: 'Where now... you can't raise your children that way because you are raising them... I mean what will become of them? You... you are almost compelled, like I am saying, I don't know if it is in a fearful manner.

R: If you care for them?

P: Yes then that is how you... If you want them to stay here and be acceptable...

R: ...and to fit themselves into the country?

P: Then that is what they will have to do. And that is why we have to do it this way.

R: And, and... okay honestly now... are there ever um... things that you teach your children, because you want them to fit in, which you yourself...

P: Don't necessarily feel the same way about...

R: Yes, which you can't change really.

P: Yes.

R: Yes.

P: But you, you, you, feel compelled to do it this way.

R: But you, you... it is almost as if you sense that... in other words that some of your um, um, of the things you believe, or that you accept, are actually sort of... wrong?

P: Yes.

R: But it is difficult to change.

P: That's right. But you have no choice.' **(Female, 31 yrs)**

*Extract 62: Original Afrikaans*

*P: Waar nou... jy kan nie jou kinders so grootmaak nie want jy maak hulle groot... ek meen wat gaan van hulle word? Jy... jy's verplig amper, soos ek sê, ek weet nie of dit 'n bang manier is.*

*R: As jy omgee vir hulle?*

*P: Ja dan is dit hoe jy hulle... As jy wil hê hulle hier moet bly en hulle moet aanvaarbaar wees...*

*R: .... en hulle moet inpas in hulle land?*

*P: Dan is dit wat hulle moet doen. En dit is hoekom ons dit so moet doen.*

*R: En, en ... okay nou eerlik nou..., is daar ooit um... goed wat jy vir jou kinders leer, omdat jy wil hê hulle moet aanpas in die land, wat jy self...*

*P: Nie so oor voel noodwendig nie...*

*R: Ja, wat jy nie rêrig kan verander nie.*

*P: Ja.*

*R: Ja.*

*P: Maar jy, jy, jy voel verplig om dit so te doen.*

*R: Maar jy, jy... dis half asof jy dit aanvoel dat... met ander woorde dat van jou um, um, van die dinge wat jy glo, of wat jy aanvaar, is eintlik half... verkeerd?*

*P: Ja.*

*R: Maar dis moeilik om te verander.*

*P: Dis reg. Maar jy't nie 'n keuse nie. (Female, 31 yrs)*

This participant is aware that, should she raise her children the way in which she was raised, their future in post-Apartheid South Africa will be negatively affected ('what will become of them?'). Like participants in the preceding sections she also maintains that this is happening under duress ('you are compelled' and 'you have to'). Yet, her description of adaptation is motivated by the need for her children to 'be acceptable' to post-Apartheid South Africans. She admits that raising them to 'fit in' entails teaching them things, which she herself doesn't 'necessarily feel the same way about'. Whereas other participants state that they are forced to adapt (without detailing *what* they need to change) this participant shows awareness that some of her beliefs are ill suited to post-Apartheid South Africa. She does, however, end this extract with a statement that, for her, it is 'difficult to change' but (like previous participants) she is 'forced to'. She demonstrates some hope that, although her own generation seems doomed to not 'fit' in to South Africa, there is still hope that the next generation can be taught 'to stay' and be

‘acceptable.’ This is in contrast to the discourse of extermination constructed by a previous participant in which the current generation of whites will be the last.

In essence, this participant argues that some of her beliefs are not suited to post-Apartheid South Africa, but also maintains that these beliefs are firmly entrenched. While she constructs change as ‘difficult’, she consciously attempts to prevent transference of these ‘old’ beliefs to her children. In addition, she appears willing to behave in a manner *contrary* to her own beliefs, to ensure a better future for her children in post-Apartheid South Africa. This appears to be a possible site of adaptive change in Afrikaner identity. However, we also need to consider how this argument positions her: When this participant argues that she is unable to change her own beliefs, but also argues that she is prepared to raise her children with values more suitable to post-Apartheid South Africa, how does that position her? In effect, she constructs herself as someone who has license to maintain her negative belief structures and behaviours *because* she can produce a ‘good South African’ identity by showing that she is working hard to ensure that her kids grow up with different, more acceptable, values. Although she is aware that it is ‘difficult to change’, she elsewhere states that ‘It’s either that, or you emigrate’, which brings us to the last part of the central argument. The last step in the central argument is the alternative option, constructed by participants who are not prepared to even consider adapting under duress. These participants construct lengthy arguments, which position emigration as the only reasonable option.

## ***PART 6 'If you want to have children...': Emigration as the only sane option***

Extract 63: English translation

'I am now going to Australia for a month and then I am going to see how it looks over there and then I am going to become a fucking Australian. So I don't give a fuck about these kaffirs who break everything over here... I think that if you want to start a family and if you want to get married... and you want to be happy and safe, then I don't think that we can find it in this county in the longterm anymore.. it will only get more difficult. God man, it is getting so difficult now... to think of having children now...' **(Male, 27 yrs)**

*Extract 63: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek gaan nou vir 'n maand Australie toe en dan gaan ek kyk hoe dit daar lyk en dan gaan ek 'n fucking Australian word. So ek gee nie 'n fok om oor hierdie kaffers wat alles breek hierso nie... Ek dink as jy 'n familie wil begin en jy wil trou... en jy wil gelukkig en veilig wees, dan dink ek ons gaan dit nie langtermyn meer in hierdie land kry nie... dit gaan net al hoe moeiliker raak. Jirre man, dit raak so moelik nou... om te dink om nou kinders te he... **(Male, 27 yrs)***

This participant starts his argument with the justification that he wants to get away from 'these kaffirs who break everything over here'. This is essentially the same argument this participant made earlier for separation from Africa, based on the inferiority of blacks ('because kaffirs' standards are lower than ours'). He then continues to base the rest of his argument around the idea that 'if you want to start a family and if you want to get married' you cannot do so in South Africa. He maintains that he cannot have a 'happy' and 'safe' existence in South Africa and states that it 'is getting so difficult now' and that 'it will only get more difficult' in the future. Many participants use the construction 'their children' as representative of the future of Afrikaners in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Extract 64: English translation

P: 'So I don't want to be here anymore because I don't see a future for my children anymore.

R: Mm.

P: I don't see a future for us anymore... and.... economy will, the economy will only get worse and worse. Everything will only become more and more expensive. Umm... our skins are white. There isn't even space for us anymore. If \*\*\*\*\* did not have the factory, he would ten to one have been doing very shitty jobs, or he would not have found work if he wanted work. So yes, and for my children I don't see a future here... unfortunately.' **(Female, 29 yrs)**

*Extract 64: Original Afrikaans*

*P: So ek wil nie meer hier wees nie want nou ek sien nie meer toekoms vir my kinders nie.*

*R: Mm.*

*P: Ek sien nie meer toekoms vir ons nie... en... ekonomie gaan, die ekonomie gaan net slegter en slegter gaan. Alles gaan net duurder en duurder word. Umm... ons velle is wit. Daar is nie meer eers plek vir ons nie. As \*\*\*\*\* nie die fabriek gehad het nie, sou hy tien teen een baie kak jobs gedoen het, of hy sou nie werk kon kry as hy werk wou gehad het. So ja, en vir my kinders sien ek nie 'n toekoms hier nie ... unfortunately. **(Female, 29 yrs)***

The participant quoted above also holds up the future of her children as a reason for emigration. She then offers several justifications for this statement: She argues that the 'economy will only get worse' and that living in South Africa will 'only become more and more expensive.' She also believes that her husband might not find work if 'he did not have the factory'. She also refers to the argument for separation, based on race, by stating that 'our skins are white' which means that 'there isn't even space for us anymore'. While the two participants quoted above make more extended arguments for emigration, several participants simply state versions of the following:

Extract 65: English translation

'I mean, I would emigrate tomorrow if I could....' **(Male, 34 yrs)**

*Extract 65: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek meen, ek sal more emigreer as ek kon... (Male, 34 yrs)*

The construction of emigration as a viable option points to a form of disinvestment in post-Apartheid South Africa. In contrast, the following participant describes Afrikaners who have already emigrated as having lost their ‘loyalty’ to South Africa:

Extract 66: English translation

‘I can... count on... my... two hands and feet people who have emigrated, and who are not here anymore, and... it’s not only from... it’s, it’s okay it’s violence and it’s de-de-de-da. Everyone I talk to is sort of, don’t you miss South Africa? And it’s noooo, we have a whole neighbourhood full of South Africans here. Understand so, it’s, it’s that, that loyalty and all that... I... it is no more’. **(Female, 22 yrs)**

*Extract 66: Original Afrikaans*

*Ek kan... on... my... twee hande en my twee voette mense tel wat al geïmmigreer het, en wat nie meer hier is nie, en... dis nie net van... dis, dis okay dis geweld en dis de-de-de-da. Almal met wie ek praat is van, mis jy nie Suid-Afrika nie? En dis neeee, ons het 'n hele buurt vol Suid-Afrikaners. Verstaan so, is, is daai, daai lojaliteit en daai alles... ek... dit is nie meer nie. **(Female, 22 yrs)***

She appears to describe the way in which Afrikaners have maintained their identity as South Africans, while disinvesting in South Africa. The emigrant communities she describes allow Afrikaners to maintain their identities since they are surrounded by fellow Afrikaners (‘we have a whole neighbourhood full of South Africans here’).

If we consider part five and part six of the central argument together, the following possible construction emerges: Since participants argue that staying in post-Apartheid South Africa



entails adapting under duress (which they are not willing to accept), they are constructing an argument for disinvestment. Participants argue with such vigour for emigration that they give the impression of it being the only sane option left open to them.

The central argument as a whole can be seen as one constructed *against* acceptance of Africa. Participants appear to be jettisoning traditional/stereotypical aspects of Afrikaner identity. These, very visible, aspects of Afrikaner identity are experienced as of no benefit in post-Apartheid South Africa. While working hard to jettison these aspects, participants work just as hard to retain those parts of their identity that intersect with whiteness more generally, since whiteness (free from the negative residues of Afrikaner identity) still affords access to privilege in South Africa. However, while participants condemn Apartheid, they are in fact ‘recycling’ the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism and Apartheid. This argument then culminates in two options: The first option is constructed as one of adapting under duress. The second construction is one that makes an argument for emigration as the only sane option.

### *Limitations of this study*

Maxwell (1996) refers to two ‘validity threats’ (p. 90) common to qualitative research and I would like to address both, as they pertain to this study:

#### *Researcher Bias*

Researcher bias is addressed in more detail in the section dealing with reflexivity in the methodology section above. As indicated, researcher bias can be a threat to the validity of this study in that I, as researcher, might have selected data to fit my ‘existing theories or preconceptions’ (Maxwell, 1996, p. 90). In addition, the conclusions of this study painted post-apartheid Afrikaners in a less than positive light, which in turn has implications for people’s perceptions of me (since I am an Afrikaner myself). Therefore, despite my best attempts at reflexivity, the possibility exists that I might have inadvertently ‘toned down’ some of the more ‘negative’ findings in order to, in effect, paint myself in a more positive light.

#### *Reactivity*

Maxwell maintains that ‘eliminating the *actual* influence of the researcher is impossible’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, as cited in Maxwell, 1996, p. 91) and ‘the goal in qualitative study is not to eliminate this influence, but to understand it and to use it productively’ (Maxwell, 1996). Participants were aware that the interviews would be transcribed and eventually published

in a public document (see appendix 1), which could have led to them portraying themselves in a more positive light. However, they were also aware that they were speaking to a fellow Afrikaner (most participants used phrases like ‘us’ and ‘we’ when making statements, while some referred to me as ‘brother’). As discussed under the section dealing with overt racism, Afrikaners are acutely aware of things which they are only ‘allowed’ to say in the privacy of their own homes or when amongst fellow Afrikaners. I believe that the ‘informal’ Afrikaans they used, together with the many uncensored racial slurs indicate that, to some extent, participants experienced the interview process as happening in this (more permissive) ‘private’ domain. This is possibly as a result of me using my own ‘Afrikanerness’ productively during the interview process and could to some degree have offset social desirability.

### *Generalizability*

Maxwell (1996) maintains that validity ‘depends on the relationship of your conclusions to the real world’ (p. 86) and does not imply ‘the existence of an objective truth to which an account can be compared’ (p. 87). Generalizability hinges on whether these Afrikaners are representative of the general population. The question is: To what extent are these Afrikaners representative of ‘real world Afrikaners’? This sample is drawn from middle class Afrikaners who live in Bloemfontein suburbia. My previous research (Verwey, 2005) also dealt with middle class Afrikaners from Pretoria suburbia. I found almost no differences in the views of these two samples. I have also spent considerable time living and working in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, which is another middle class Afrikaner suburban setting. My impression is that the views of the participants in this study might be generalised to other settings in middle class (Afrikaner

dominated) suburbia. These findings, however, can not be taken to be representative of Afrikaners who live in other areas where there is more contact with individuals from other ethnic groups (like Johannesburg for instance). There is, however, the chance that Afrikaners in Bloemfontein have unique (extreme) views. This is a strong possibility if we consider the recent racist incident at the Reitz student residence in Bloemfontein (Mail & Guardian Reporter, 2008, April 21) as well as the fact that Bloemfontein is a notorious conservative Afrikaner stronghold.

## Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the demise of Apartheid and Afrikaner Nationalism, it is hardly surprising that Afrikaners (whose very identity is intimately tied to Afrikaner Nationalism) are involved in attempts to reconstruct their identity. This study used the Afrikaner/African distinction as a mechanism to investigate constructions of Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. While the South African social landscape has been dominated by whiteness since the arrival of the first European colonists, whiteness itself has only recently been looked at critically. Investigating the role that whiteness plays in these post-Apartheid identity constructions contributes to the understanding of Afrikaner and South African whiteness. This research indicates that participants are in the process of reinterpreting their identity as Afrikaners. However, there are no indications that they are discursively redrawing the group boundaries, such that 'Afrikaner' is part of a broader 'African' identity. The dominant orientation, in fact, indicates the opposite: participants argue for a definite separation from Africa, which belies their 'entitlement' to the term 'African'. However, participants also appear to claim the 'category' African, while rejecting the contents of that category as it pertains to identity. 'African-ness' is simply not valued in relation to 'Afrikaner-ness' and participants do not seem to truly reposition themselves in relation to the African 'other'.

The main question of this study is: *How* are Afrikaners reinterpreting their identity post-Apartheid? Participants appear to be constructing a new version of Afrikaner identity, which is somewhat more acceptable in post-Apartheid South Africa. Participants jettison the aspects of *public* Afrikaner identity which are not 'socially acceptable' anymore. These unacceptable

aspects only serve to identify them as members of an ethnic group who have much to answer for and are therefore being discarded as liabilities in post-Apartheid South Africa. However, participants keep the parts of their identity that relate to whiteness more generally, since it still affords access to privilege. While participants condemn Apartheid, they are in fact ‘recycling’ the discourse of Afrikaner Nationalism and Apartheid, which places their condemnation of Apartheid ideology under question.

Some participants argue for adaptation under duress, while others argue for emigration, yet *all* participants argue against acceptance of ‘African-ness’ as integral to Afrikaner identity. If we accept the hypothesis that successful re-negotiation of future Afrikaner identity (and other varieties of South African whiteness) are likely to be ‘a versatility in both black and white aspects of society’ (Steyn, 2001, p. 168), then this does not bode well for the re-negotiation of Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa. However, although this analysis may not have identified *all* of the ways of producing Afrikaner identity in post-Apartheid South Africa, it is nonetheless clear that these ways of producing Afrikaner identity in relation to Africa and African-ness are ways in which (private) Afrikaner identity *can* be constructed (Silvermann, 2000). The fact that these constructions could be produced at all, and the fact that they were consistently produced by fifteen Afrikaners of different ages (including some who were only nine years old when Apartheid officially ended) and who were selected for their ‘ordinariness’, makes these results all the more disconcerting.

Some participants are aware that their own version of Afrikaner identity is both outdated and maladaptive, and consciously attempt to not transfer this to the next generation of post-Apartheid

Afrikaners. Although, it should be noted that at the same time, this construction affords them the luxury of being able to maintain their positions relatively unchanged. However, it does offer the faint possibility of a successful reinterpretation of Afrikaner identity for future generations and could be the focus of further research on Afrikaner identity. As indicated above, these findings can not be taken as representative of Afrikaners who live in areas where there is more contact with other ethnic groups. Further research could focus on whether Afrikaners in such areas are orientating themselves any differently to the category 'African'. Although it did not emerge strongly enough from the data to form part of the central argument, some participants alluded to the fact that they might 'need permission' to claim the category 'African'. It would be interesting to see how black South Africans view this possible need for permission, as well as how they view the Afrikaner/African distinction. This also has implications for post-Apartheid Afrikaner identity, and could be the focus of further research.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Informed consent form*

**Research Project: ‘The reinterpretation of post-Apartheid Afrikaner identity’.**

Researcher: Cornel Verwey, Masters Student

Supervisor: Michael Quayle

Affiliation: School of Psychology, UKZN

This study aims to answer the following questions:

How has Afrikaner identity been affected by all the changes in South Africa after Apartheid?

In what ways are Afrikaners changing their identity themselves?

Do Afrikaners now see themselves as Africans?

**Please sign below if you:**

Are willing to be interviewed and for this interview to be recorded.

Are willing for the recorded interview to be transcribed and used in research.

**Please be aware that:**

Your participation is completely voluntary.

You have the right to withdraw at any time, without any negative consequences.

All information will be confidential and your identity will be strictly protected.

**The benefits of this research include:**

A chance for you to express your personal view on the questions above.

Contributing to knowledge about Afrikaner identity.

Please feel free to ask questions if anything is unclear. Either the researcher, Cornel Verwey (cornelverwey@icon.co.za) or the supervisor of this project, Michael Quayle (033-260 5853 or quaylem@ukzn.co.za), will be happy to discuss any reservations or problems you may have in participating in this study.

If you agree to participate in this study, understand the terms and have had the opportunity to ask questions, please sign below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Appendix B: Interview schedule*

1. How would you define an Afrikaner?
2. How would you define an African?
3. What do you make of the fact that 'Afrikaner' is the Afrikaans word for 'African'?

### *Appendix C: Transcription conventions*

- ... - Pauses in speech.
- (...) - When two extracts from separate places in the interview are presented consecutively.
- R: - Indicates talk by the researcher.
- P: - Indicates talk by the participant.