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Discourses of Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South Africa, as reflected in Letters to the Editor in the Cape Argus and Cape Times

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of Master of Social Science

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

South Africa's post-apartheid era of democracy has required whites to renegotiate their identities within a new dispensation; a task whites have responded to in ways ranging from deep acceptance to strong resistance. For whites who resist the new dispensation, the aim is to find ways of maintaining white privilege despite the end of apartheid. Based on this contention, the present study investigated how discourses of whiteness were justified and normalised in post-apartheid public discourse – namely in letters to the editor.

Letters to the editor, printed during 2007 in two daily Cape newspapers – the *Cape Argus* and the *Cape Times* – were categorised into themes with the aid of NVivo. Two themes that dealt with issues of post-apartheid transformation were selected for detailed analysis using discourse analysis. The first theme explored resistance to street renaming in Cape Town and the second theme explored resistance to transformation in Springbok rugby within the context of the 2007 Rugby World Cup. An additional, pervasive theme which included white negativity towards Africa, and notions of white victimisation in the new dispensation, was also briefly explored.

The analysis revealed the robustness of discursive attempts to block transformation within sites chosen for transformation. Moreover, it revealed how such discursive attempts were framed in ways that naturalised and normalised whiteness within the context of the new dispensation. These findings are congruent with a general view of whiteness as a shifting, flexible construct, and confirm the need to continuously investigate the changing discursive strategies employed to maintain whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The White man, is the master in South Africa, and the White man, from the very nature of his origins, from the very nature of his birth, and from the very nature of his guardianship, will remain master in South Africa to the end – Speaker at the House of Assembly Debates (March 15, 1950, col. 3610, as cited in Posel, 2001b, p. 98).

South Africa's first democratic election in April 1994 signified the country's transition from close to five decades of apartheid, and over 300 years of colonialism, to a post-colonial, post-apartheid era. This new era has seen official state commitment to a country founded upon the principles of democracy and non-racial citizenship, commonly encapsulated through references to the 'New South Africa' or the 'Rainbow Nation'. The ensuing process of transformation has brought about social, political, economic and cultural changes to the lives of South Africans – not only at a macro-level but also at a micro-level (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997).

At a macro-level, the dismantling of apartheid legislation – which previously upheld and legitimised white privilege and dominance – has resulted in the decentring of whiteness and the loss of white power. Thus, whites have experienced the loss of 'race'¹ privilege automatically granted to them under apartheid (Erasmus, 2005; Leitch, 2006); the loss of political dominance enjoyed previously, including, to some extent, the loss of white cultural dominance (Dolby, 2001a; Steyn, 2001a); and, with the end of racial segregation, loss of the claim to the country's physical space previously reserved for them (Ballard, 2004a). Moreover, while whites continue to dominate the country's most economically advantageous employment categories (CEE, 2007) and, in general, their economic dominance has remained relatively intact and widespread despite the end of apartheid (Dolby, 2001a; Steyn, 2001a;

¹ The term 'race' is used in this first instance in inverted commas to indicate an understanding of race as a set of socio-historically and politically constructed categories (i.e. 'black'; 'white'), rather than a set of biologically determined ones. Hereafter I refer to race rather than 'race' simply for the convenience of the reader. Moreover, the category 'black', as used throughout, does not necessarily refer only to 'Africans', but may also include those classified under apartheid as 'Indian' and 'coloured'.

Steyn & Foster, 2008; Vestergaard, 2001), the introduction of policies of socio-economic redress by the new government such as Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment has meant that economic advantage can no longer be taken for granted by whites.

Moments of radical change enable the emergence and proliferation of previously marginalised discourses (Epstein, 1998) and the post-apartheid context has been no exception to this. As Gqola (2001) writes, “alternative discourses . . . [have] participated in the ‘undoing’ of apartheid and in challenging its most insidious lies. These discourses contribute to the creation of new realities, new ‘truths’” (p. 96). Amid changes to whites’ positioning and the rise of new, competing discourses, the once familiar certainties of apartheid’s reality have been eradicated (Soudin, 2001; Steyn 2001a). Together, these changes have not only left the future of whiteness uncertain, but have also required whites to re-examine their identities as the meaning of whiteness has become unsettled (Dolby, 2001a; Steyn, 2005). Although whites have not been affected by the new dispensation in a uniform manner, in general they have experienced a feeling of dissonance concerning the difference between the past and the present (Leitch, 2006; Steyn, 2000, 2005).

1.1 Focus of this Study

While the new dispensation has removed many of the structures that formerly underpinned white identity, it has also provided an opportunity for the (re)construction of white identity; one which could be premised on a new set of ‘truths’. White South Africans have responded to this opportunity in various ways, and identities ranging from those that accord highly with the new dispensation to those that stand in opposition to it, may be surveyed (cf. Steyn, 2001b).

This study is concerned with those who resist the new dispensation, and whose views represent greater continuity than discontinuity with the ideology of apartheid. For this group, the end of apartheid has prompted reactions such as feelings of Afro-pessimism (Steyn, 2000, 2005), perceptions of being ‘pushed out’ by blacks who are ‘taking over’ (Durrheim, 2005), and thoughts of escape and emigration to other countries including Britain, Australia and Canada (Dolby, 2001a; Steyn, 2007). Although many whites have been able to reject the new

dispensation through complete withdrawal, that is, emigration² (Ballard, 2004a; Durrhiem, 2005; Steyn, 2005; Van Rooyen, 2000), others still must contend with remaining in the country despite their opposition to the new dispensation.

If, as Steyn and Foster (2008) claim, “the central question for whiteness, as the orientation which takes its privilege as normal and appropriate . . . [is] how to maintain its advantages in a situation in which black people have legally and legitimately achieved political power” (p. 26), then resistant whites who remain in the country will, by necessity, seek ways in which to uphold at least some elements of white privilege.

Motivated by this contention, this study focuses on discourses that serve to maintain white power and privilege, in a context where such discourses are no longer state-supported. More specifically, it looks at how whiteness is logically justified, normalised, and carried through to the new dispensation, albeit in new guises, and in forms that allow it to be articulated in public discourse – namely in letters to editors of daily newspapers.

The very context of South Africa, at this moment, places this study within a research orientation that Twine and Gallagher (2008) have termed “third wave whiteness”. Among other things, this wave focuses on “how white privilege is maintained even as the prerogatives of whiteness are challenged by the new interracial social movements, progressive social policies, democratization [*sic*] projects and multiculturalism” (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 5). A pertinent research question arising from this orientation thus concerns how discourses of white privilege are justified and normalised in a context that is actively working to dismantle whiteness.

Closely related to this point, Ansell (2004) has argued that “anti-racist efforts . . . must be directed . . . toward identifying the process by which racism adapts and changes in order to speak to the dilemmas and challenges born of the context of democratic consolidation” (p. 22). Whiteness, like racism, and indeed as part of the structure of racism, is a continually-shifting, changing phenomenon. As such we have to maintain and refresh our contextually-based knowledge of how whiteness operates with the passage of time. What Ansell’s statement also points to is the need to identify issues of contestation within the new

² According to Van Rooyen (2000) it is possible that up to one million whites emigrated between 1985 and 1996.

democracy. Where these issues concern transformation, the outcome of their resolution may either benefit or hamper the broader goals of a post-apartheid, non-racial democracy. The value of this work therefore lies primarily in its analysis and exposure of how white privilege is naturalised and justified in the post-apartheid context. By pinpointing issues pertinent to whiteness, it also highlights some of the sites at which resistance to transformation currently occurs. In so doing, it extends previous work on this topic by contributing towards a more detailed picture of how whiteness operates. This may aid analyses concerned with the direction that white resistance is taking.

At the same time, given that focusing on whiteness has the potential to reinforce rather than subvert white domination by re-centring whiteness (Stevens, 2007; Steyn, 2001b), some clarifications are in order. Dyer (2000) warns that looking at whiteness may give whites an opportunity to continue the historical trend of focusing on white interests, thereby sidelining issues concerning black people which deserve attention. Relatedly, amid an increasing concern for issues affecting black people, and the introduction of policies such as Affirmative Action, some whites have voiced feelings of exclusion, marginalisation and victimisation (cf. Ansell, 2004; Dolby, 2001a). The study of whiteness in contexts such as South Africa may provide a platform for highlighting these feelings (Dyer, 2000; Stevens, 2007), particularly since the loss of privilege that comes with transformation is often not experienced in terms of creating a just society, but rather in terms of what it takes away from whites (Steyn, 2001a).

It is therefore essential to stress the distinction between describing whites' reactions to loss of power and privilege (for the purpose of dismantling strategies aimed at perpetuating power and privilege), and reiterating whites' concerns within academia (thereby making such loss appear both unnatural and unfair) while ostensibly studying whiteness. For example, Van Rooyen's (2000) *The new Great Trek: The story of South Africa's white exodus* is a study of white emigration which in many ways reinforces the perception that whites are the victims of South Africa's new dispensation. Its references to crime and perceptions of falling standards feed into a larger discourse of Afro-pessimism, which, alongside what is considered as the 're-racialisation' of the country through Affirmative Action, serve to justify the idea that South Africa is a country which now works against whites. Similarly, a selective engagement with the country's history – *minimising* whites' advantage both during and after apartheid, whilst simultaneously *maximising* blacks' advantage within those same contexts – has

enabled scholars such as Waddy (2003/4) to argue that whites are victims of South Africa's Affirmative Action policy.

Through highlighting what may be termed 'white' views or concerns over street renaming and transformation in Springbok rugby respectively, this study could potentially be interpreted as highlighting white discontent or victimisation. While such an interpretation cannot in reality be completely prevented, it is forestalled by grounding the analysis historically and in ways that critically question the naturalness of a particular order advocated by whiteness.

1.2 Limitations

Several limitations arise due to the modest scope of this study and the nature of the data on which it is based. These and other limitations are addressed in Chapter 3, but a few points are noted here briefly to orient the reader. First, although this study concurs with the contention that whiteness includes not only a raced dimension, but also gendered and class-based ones (cf. Twine & Gallagher, 2008), it cannot comment on the effect that these dimensions may have on the discourses that it examines. Second, this study does not make claims about the race of those who articulate the discourses under examination. Rather than attempting to link particular discourses to particular races, it simply considers discourses which serve to support whiteness – regardless of a given writer's race. Third, this study draws on discourses found in two English newspapers published in a particular province. As such, its findings are limited to a small and particular part of the South African population.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

The next chapter, Chapter 2, discusses the study's theoretical underpinnings via a focus on the concept of whiteness. While the discussion points to the concept's shifting nature and to its multiplicity of contextually-mediated meanings, it also conveys its more stable aspects in order to provide a definition of whiteness. The chapter also highlights the specificities of whiteness in South Africa, and considers white reactions to loss of privilege in the new dispensation.

Chapter 3 describes the study's methodology. It includes a description of the data on which the study is based, details how data analysis was carried out, reflects on this process, and finally considers the limitations of the study.

Drawing on letters resisting street renaming in Cape Town, Chapter 4 considers five strategies aimed at opposing, and in some cases limiting, street renaming. The first section of the chapter begins with an overview of racialised and spatialised boundaries under apartheid, with a focus on the creation of 'white' space. The second part of the first section briefly considers some of the effects of desegregation on white identity in the post-apartheid era, and how whites have attempted to minimise the effects of the latter on their identities. The third part of the first section argues that naming serves to construct the meaning of space as place, and hence that renaming not only reconstructs the meaning of place but also the identities premised on its meaning. The second section of the chapter then considers how objections to renaming are framed in letters to the editor.

The inclusion of black players in the Springbok rugby team has heralded a highly significant change for rugby (Keohane, 2004), and Chapter 5 examines resistance to racial transformation within this domain in the context of the 2007 Rugby World Cup. The chapter begins by providing an historical framework focusing on sport and racial exclusion, paying particular attention to the meaning of rugby during apartheid and its reflection of apartheid's ideology. Following this, rugby's post-apartheid transformation is discussed with reference to the Rugby World Cups that occurred in 1995, 1999 and 2003. The remainder of the chapter provides an analysis of letters that resist transformation not only on the rugby field, but also at a symbolic level.

Given the long history of white, European control in Africa under colonialism, and South Africa's history of 350 years of white control under colonialism and apartheid, many discourses are pessimistic of Africa's success in the absence of white rule. Chapter 6 briefly considers a range of letters that are negative about South Africa's future under a 'black' government, and how discourses within these letters portray whites as possessing greater competence in successfully leading the country than blacks.

Chapter 7 draws the results of the three analysis chapters together and comments on the possible implications that the discourses of whiteness examined in the study have for South Africa's post-apartheid era.

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2 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

2.1 Whiteness

2.1.1 *Looking at Whiteness*

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of new academic views on whiteness and blackness where “our ideas of ‘whiteness’ were interrogated, [and] our ideas of ‘blackness’ were complicated” (Fishkin, 1995, p. 429). Academic disciplines concerned with the study of race and race relations had traditionally focused their attention on black (minority) groups or the victims of racism, whilst largely ignoring whites or the perpetrators of racism (Dyer, 2000; Frankenberg, 1993; Morrison, 1992). Although attitudinal research focusing on whites’ racial prejudice had been conducted over the preceding decades, the value of such research was mostly limited to providing information on whether prejudice increased or decreased in particular contexts (Ansell, 2004). Moreover, research concerned with race had traditionally not subjected whites’ considerable historical dominance, power and influence on society to much critical analysis (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). As Dyer (1988) has observed,

looking, with such passion and single-mindedness, at non-dominant groups has had the effect of reproducing a sense of the oddness, differentness, exceptionality of these groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm. Meanwhile the [white] norm has carried on as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human.
(p. 44)

By contrast, research ‘interrogating’ our ideas of whiteness (Fishkin, 1995) has formed part of “an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served” (Morrison, 1992, p. 90). This differentiates it from research concerned with investigating whites’ racial prejudice or attitudes towards blacks. First, a focus on whiteness enables an examination of how white privilege operates and is systematically reproduced within society, without the need to label any individuals racist (Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 1999). Second, studying whiteness entails looking at whiteness as a social construction with a view that doing so “is to look head-on at a site of dominance” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6). A focus on dominant rather than oppressed race groups has hence brought about the explicit aim of

subverting the dominant position that whiteness holds (Dyer, 2000). Simultaneously, this has also prompted a move away from notions that race and racism are aspects which should not concern whites, fostering an acknowledgement that whites – and not only blacks – are raced (Frankenberg, 1993). As Frankenberg (1993) explains,

to speak of whiteness is, I think, to assign *everyone* a place in the relations of racism. It is to emphasize [*sic*] that dealing with racism is not merely an option for white people – that, rather, racism shapes white people’s lives and identities in a way that is inseparable from other facets of daily life. (p. 6; emphasis original)

2.1.2 *The Contours of Whiteness*

Kincheloe (1999) has noted the difficulty faced by scholars within whiteness studies in attempting to define ‘whiteness’ since “the concept is slippery and elusive” (p. 162). Following Nakayama and Krizek (1995), the difficulty lies in the fact that “there is no ‘true essence’ to ‘whiteness’; there are only historically contingent constructions of that social location” (p. 293). Stating that we may indeed begin to reveal the dynamics of whiteness by looking at whiteness historically, Kincheloe (1999) also goes on to acknowledge the inherent difficulty in tracing a continually-shifting, dynamic construct. As such, he echoes Frankenberg’s (1993) assertion that “whiteness changes over time and space and is in no way a transhistorical essence” (p. 236). Indications that whiteness operates differently within different contexts (Stevens, 2007; Steyn, 1999), coupled with suggestions that whiteness ought to be considered within particular contexts (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995), support the view that we should see whiteness as ‘whitenesses’ (Steyn, 2001b) and that an all-encompassing, unitary definition of whiteness cannot be established (Ansell & Statman, 1999).

Bearing this challenge in mind, however, at least three main points of orientation, or assumptions, may be highlighted. To take the first main point, whiteness is a relational construct whose meaning is dependent upon the presence of raced ‘others’. Put another way, whiteness has been co-constructed with blackness. Hence whiteness attains its meaning in terms of what it is not; its binary opposite – blackness (Ansell & Statman, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). This means also that whiteness is a

racialised position which provides individuals thus raced with a particular view and understanding of themselves and society at large (Frankenberg, 1993; Owen, 2007).

Whiteness as it is found today – with all its complexities – is historically-rooted, and although only a brief and generalised overview of this history can be provided here, it is important to note some key elements that have given rise to whiteness, or what Steyn (2001a) terms ‘the founding narratives of whiteness’.

The first obvious element that helped give rise to whiteness concerns skin colour. Banton and Harwood (1975) point out that prior to the rise of Christianity in Europe, the colour black was associated with notions of sin and death. From the time it arose, European Christianity commonly drew upon the association between blackness and evil by, for instance, showing Christ’s tormentors as having black faces (Banton & Harwood, 1975). Such associations collectively gave rise to notions positing that white represents light and safety, whereas black represents darkness and danger (Dyer, 1988).¹ The respective meanings associated with these colours subsequently influenced the perceptions of white European explorers, as they came into contact with dark-skinned people in their travels. Blakey (1999) indicates that European exploration was not merely about exploration, and that its deeper motives ultimately dictated the outcome of how newly encountered peoples were described. As he writes, “the purpose behind those new experiences was specific, and that purpose, to exploit the people and things encountered, mightily influenced how they would be characterized [*sic*] and explained” (p. 30).

A second, critical element which served to give rise to whiteness was the context of European Enlightenment, wherein notions of rationality and reason became associated with being white (Kincheloe, 1999). Indeed, Wade (2000) asserts that socio-cultural differences between Africans and Europeans – and not simply differences in skin colour – initially had the greatest influence in establishing notions of African inferiority and European superiority. Eurocentrism fostered the assumption that European culture was superior to African ways of living, as reflected via references to Africans as ‘uncivilised’, ‘savages’, ‘barbarians’ and so on (Wade, 2000). Constructions of blackness and whiteness thus emerged together as binary opposites, with blackness representing chaos and irrationality, and whiteness representing

¹ Dyer (1988) also notes the inherent bias in such associations since darkness may equally provide safety through cover and, by contrast, light may result in danger through exposure.

order and rationality (Kincheloe, 1999). Congruent with Blakey's (1999) statement above, Steyn (2005) maintains that skin colour initially "acted as a useful means of naturalizing [*sic*] what in fact were political and economic relationships" (p. 121) which exploited colonised populations for the benefit of white colonisers. Consequently, alongside these unequal relationships, contrasting representations of blacks and whites gave rise to and solidified notions of European entitlement, so that, over time, whiteness evolved into an ostensibly natural signifier of power and privilege (Steyn, 2001a, 2005).

The above point suggests that whiteness – as something centred on skin colour – is embodied. However, Owen (2007) notes that although whiteness is embodied, this embodiment is distinct from one based simply on skin colour, and includes other aspects such as particular actions and dispositions. This brings us to the second main point: 'white' as a racial category has itself shifted historically, and continues to be an unstable and flexible category rather than a rigidly defined, fixed one. Consequently, such shifts have also had an effect on the category of the racial 'other'. Historically within the United States, as Warren and Twine (1997) argue, certain light-skinned groups, such as Irish and Italian immigrants, were initially considered 'non-whites' and were hence excluded from a racial category of privilege. However, as the definition of being white gradually came to include all those originating from Europe, by the twentieth century, formerly 'non-white' European immigrant groups were assimilated into the white racial category (Warren & Twine, 1997). Similarly, within the contemporary United States, Twine and Gallagher (2008) suggest that this category continues to expand (and shift), for example, via the incorporation of light-skinned Latinos. Likewise, in apartheid South Africa, visiting Japanese businessmen and swimmers were often conferred the title of 'honorary whites', allowing them access to amenities normally reserved for whites (Dolby, 2001a; Draper, 1963). Such shifts in turn expose the constructed nature of racial categories, indicating a social rather than biological basis for whiteness.

Third, there has been wide scholarly acknowledgment of the intersection of whiteness – and race in general – with other axes of privilege and oppression. A now common approach entails looking 'beyond whiteness' (Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 1999) by considering whiteness in relation to aspects such as gender, class, sexuality and religion. These various aspects of identity are seen as inseparable from whiteness as they mediate the experience of whiteness for differently positioned individuals in a myriad of different ways (Epstein, 1998; Erasmus, 2005; Frankenberg, 1993; Kincheloe, 1999). In other words, white women's

experiences of whiteness, for instance, tend to differ from those of white men. Similarly, poor and rich whites respectively are likely to experience whiteness differently.

2.2 Approaching Whiteness

The foregoing discussion has highlighted the central complexities and multiplicities of whiteness as a social position. In so doing, it has aimed to avoid presenting an essentialised, monolithic, or reified view of whiteness. At the same time, however, it is vital not to lose sight of the primarily stable aspect of whiteness – namely its link to power, dominance and privilege. Thus, while Hartigan (1997) agrees that we should avoid presenting “homogenizing [*sic*] accounts” of whiteness, he nevertheless concedes that “the [conceptual] power of whiteness lies in its ability to describe the coherence of privileges that white people, generically, have developed” (p. 502). Elucidating some of these privileges, Frankenberg (1993) states that “the term ‘whiteness’ signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage” (p. 236). Given these conceptualisations, whiteness can fundamentally be understood as “a social structure that normalizes [*sic*] the interests, needs and values of those racialized [*sic*] as white” (Owen, 2007, p. 211).

South Africa’s history of some 350 years of white domination under colonialism and apartheid, forms a clear example of how a myriad of white, race-based interests – economic, political, social, cultural and so on – were served. Following from the above conceptualisations, this study understands whiteness as a flexible set of discourses that both generate and regenerate white dominance and privilege, operating in ways that simultaneously justify and naturalise a position of dominance and privilege for whites.

Fishkin (1995) has noted that between 1990 and 1995 more than a hundred publications appeared in the United States within what was to become ‘whiteness studies’, these stemming from a diverse range of disciplines including history, anthropology, communication studies, literary studies and philosophy (see Fishkin for a review). The subsequent period has seen a proliferation of works in this area – namely from the United States and the United Kingdom – which cannot be contained within a single review. Moreover, academic interest in whiteness is growing in contexts such as South Africa and Australia, and recent work has begun to

sketch out a comparative discussion on whiteness in these two contexts (cf. Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007).

According to Garner (2006), attention has primarily been focused on whiteness in two opposing ways: in terms of its invisibility or, by contrast, in terms of various forms of specific content. Falling within the former category, among the most influential, and early, articles on whiteness were McIntosh's *White privilege and male privilege*, and Dyer's *White* – both of which first appeared in 1988. McIntosh's ([1988] 1998) work explored the invisibility of white privilege in the United States, via a list of 46 everyday, taken for granted ways in which she benefited from being white. She therefore defined white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in every day . . . an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” (p. 94-95). Dyer's (1988) work on white representation in film explored the relation of whiteness to blackness, and – similar to McIntosh – highlighted the difficulty of looking at whiteness since it “is often revealed as emptiness, absence, denial or even a kind of death” (p. 44).

Notwithstanding the significance of these works in exposing whiteness, it is important to note that although it has been invisible to most whites, whiteness has not been invisible to those who have been oppressed by whiteness – namely blacks (Garner, 2006; Owen, 2007). Garner (2006) therefore contends that instead of seeing whiteness as empty or absent, one ought to see it as merely invisible, where “invisibility . . . denotes ostensible absence but actual presence” (p. 259). In line with this, Frankenberg (1993) has shown that although whiteness in the United States is commonly seen as being empty, it does have specific cultural content.

2.3 Whiteness in South Africa

Whiteness in South Africa differs from that described in the general whiteness literature in two main ways. First, whiteness in the South African context has not been characterised by an invisibility of racial privilege – neither to South Africans themselves, nor to the world at large (Dolby, 2001a; Epstein, 1998; Steyn, 2007). Linked to this lack of invisibility has been a heightened awareness of one's whiteness compared to a context such as the United States (Steyn, 1999). As Stevens (2007) observes, whites living within contexts such as the United States and Australia attained economic, political and social dominance from a position of

numerical majority, making the normativity of their dominance – and the invisibility of whiteness – more easily attainable. By contrast, South African whites have always formed a numerical minority faced with the threat of being ‘swamped’ by the black majority (Steyn 2001b); a threat commonly characterised by the notion of *swart gevaar* (Stevens, 2007). Consequently, whites did not attain a feeling of holding power securely in South Africa, and, stemming from this position, whiteness developed and functioned more overtly – namely along lines of ongoing defence against black threat (Stevens, 2007; Steyn, 2001b).

While this threat was seemingly managed via a range of apartheid legislation designed to reinforce and protect white privilege and power, apartheid legislation also had the paradoxical effect of exposing the unearned entitlements that were conferred to members of the white minority (Epstein, 1998). In this regard, Biko (2004) observed that white South Africans “sit to enjoy a privileged position that they do not deserve, are aware of this, and therefore spend their time trying to justify why they are doing so” (p. 20). Thus according to Steyn (2001a), despite the fact that whites experienced their entitlement as normal, they were not unaware that being white enabled them to receive this entitlement.

Second, whiteness in South Africa has been divided among two groups: the Afrikaners and the English-speaking whites. In general terms, following Steyn (2005), one may state that by comparison to English-speaking whites, white Afrikaners constructed an identity more closely linked to Africa, through the severing of ties with Europe and the acceptance of Africa as ‘home’. The English, on the other hand, maintained strong links with Britain, thus largely retaining their European identities and a sense of Europe as ‘home’ (Steyn, 2005). At the same time, white English-speaking South Africans have not been limited to those of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic descent. Instead, the category has also encompassed a range of white minorities including those of Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Jewish descent (Salisbury & Foster, 2004). Yet despite remaining as two distinct white groups, English-speakers and Afrikaners alike maintained a strong distinction between themselves and the country’s native ‘others’ (Steyn, 2001b). The main differences between English and Afrikaner whitenesses are touched upon in the next section.

2.4 Literature on Whiteness in South Africa

Given South Africa's history of some 350 years of white domination, aside from studies examining inter-race relations, relatively little direct academic attention has been paid to whiteness in the post-apartheid era. In addition, the corpus of work produced on this topic has been fragmented since it has either focused on (1) a general whiteness within South Africa; (2) whiteness among Afrikaans-speaking whites; or (3) whiteness among English-speaking whites.

As this study is concerned with whiteness among (predominantly) English-speaking letter-writers, a review of studies conducted on whiteness among Afrikaans-speaking whites is omitted. It is, however, worthwhile to note that the Afrikaner 'brand' of whiteness has attracted direct academic attention in recent years (cf. Korf & Malan, 2002; Leitch, 2006; Steyn, 2004a, 2004b; Vestergaard, 2001). Moreover, such research has highlighted differences between the relative positioning of the two brands of whiteness in terms of power. Steyn (2004a) summarises these differences as follows:

For English South Africans *white talk* in many ways serves a maintenance function. Afrikaans *white talk*, by contrast, is engaged in a much more active and aggressive constitutive role . . . (de)(re)constructing a positionality for the Afrikaner in the new society from a position that is experienced as weak in relation to both the African Other, who possesses demographic power, and the English Other, whose brand of whiteness comes with a powerful global backing. (p. 162; italics original)

In certain cases, the literature on whiteness has been somewhat vague about the 'brand' of whiteness (i.e. an 'Afrikaner' or an 'English' whiteness – or perhaps both) which it has considered. Explicating the particular focus of such literature is thus difficult. Moreover, the relative paucity of literature directly examining English-speaking whites (cf. Salusbury & Foster, 2004) has meant that this review is better served by presenting a broad focus on whiteness in South Africa. Common to all three categories of whiteness literature, however, is a concern with whiteness following the loss of privilege.

In this regard, Steyn (2001b) has highlighted the pervasive feelings of loss that whites have experienced due to the end of apartheid. Broadly, along with the loss of race privilege and

political power, whites have experienced a loss of what was previously deemed familiar; the loss of established roles, a loss of control, even a loss of 'home' (Steyn, 2001b).

2.5 Mapping White, Post-Apartheid Reactions

Theissen (1997) has suggested that the loss of privilege experienced in the post-apartheid era leaves whites with two choices. On the one hand whites may become part of what Theissen terms "the rainbow generation" – a group which strives to address the injustices of the apartheid past through its support of the country's new democratic government and its commitment to non-racialism. On the other hand, whites may resist change through their rejection of the new democratic government and its commitment to non-racialism, by exhibiting what Theissen terms "a post-apartheid syndrome". Among other things, these whites are more likely to believe that apartheid was not unjust, to deny its oppressive effects on blacks and to hold racist views (Theissen, 1997). In a similar vein, Vestergaard (2001) maintains that white Afrikaners may be divided according to either 'heterodox' or 'orthodox' views on the new dispensation.

While both Theissen and Vestergaard provide a useful departure point for categorising white reactions, I argue that a strictly dichotomous view of possible reactions is of limited analytical value. Rather than representing neat continuities or discontinuities from the apartheid past, white reactions are likely to materialise as a varied mixture of acceptance and resistance towards the new dispensation.

First, as Theissen (1997) indeed acknowledges, it is difficult to distinguish between whites who genuinely support transformation, and those who only wish to appear as if they support the values of the New South Africa. The current era has given rise to a widespread condemnation of racism, both in South Africa and abroad, and thus it is unlikely that whites would openly promote overtly racist views. Instead, such views are more likely to be expressed in veiled, covert terms (cf. Ansell, 2004).

Second, it is unrealistic to expect to find complete discontinuity between pre- and post-apartheid identities and discourses. Frankenberg (1993) notes in a more general sense that changes in thinking about race-related issues occur in response and relation to past discursive frameworks. Indeed, even young South Africans experience a tension between the identities

constructed for them under apartheid, and the possibilities open to them within the new era (Soudien, 2001). Moreover, race has remained a significant factor in young South Africans' identity construction in the post-apartheid period (Dolby, 2001b). Hence elements of 'old' South African identities and discourses are likely to be incorporated into efforts toward creating 'new' ones.

Third, it is possible that as socio-political transformation policies progressively erode white privilege, members of the 'rainbow generation' might reject certain aspects of the new dispensation, and thus exhibit some symptoms of the 'post apartheid syndrome'. A recent example of this has been a tendency for some whites (in particular the youth) to claim that they are now becoming the victims of a 'reverse apartheid' due to the introduction of Affirmative Action (cf. Ansell, 2004).

For the reasons described above, it is suggested that whites' reactions to the new dispensation – and their willingness to adapt their identities to the changes brought about by it – are best classed along a continuum between the two poles suggested by Theissen (1997), wherein whites may occupy complex, varied and even shifting positions.

2.6 White Privilege

The question of white racial privilege, particularly from within women's studies, has served as an impetus to the study of whiteness in South Africa. Holland-Muter (1995) was among the first to call for an examination of whiteness, calling in particular for white women to examine their racial privilege, the numerous ways it has shaped their lives, and to consider their involvement in a racialised system which grants privilege to some while oppressing others. In response to calls for white women to acknowledge their complicity in a system of racism, Bennett and Friedman (1997) explored white women's defensiveness towards such a move, thereby highlighting the complexities that such a move involves.

In a similar vein, writing in the late 1990s, Statman (1999) has commented that whites have continued to live privileged lives within predominantly white, affluent suburbs. He argues that a lived existence, in what may be termed 'a bubble of privilege', enables whites to lead lives that essentially exclude from view the harsh social and economic realities facing the majority of the country's black population. Further, he maintains that this privilege is

supported and maintained by two discourses, namely those of ‘amnesia’ and ‘denial’, operating through an ideology which states that it is “better to forget the past, deny the present, and to use a favorite [*sic*] phrase, ‘get on with our lives’” (Statman, 1999, p. 8).

An analysis of public written submissions about racism prior to the South African National Conference on Racism in 2000 by Ansell (2004), sheds light not only on the differences between black and white South Africans’ thinking on race and racism, but also on how self-identified whites deal with a loss of privilege. For instance, some whites have applauded non-racialism – an integral part of the new dispensation’s ethos – for the purpose of opposing race-based efforts aimed at ameliorating a legacy of racial inequality. Claims that policies such as Affirmative Action have re-racialised South African society thus reflect whites’ denial of persisting black disadvantage, simultaneously masking the fact that whites still retain (mainly economic) advantages gained under apartheid (Ansell, 2004).

Mostly prominently, Steyn’s work on whiteness in South Africa (cf. Steyn, 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005; Steyn & Foster, 2008) has considered whites’ positioning in the post-apartheid context and whites’ (re)negotiation of identity. In her book, *Whiteness just isn’t what it used to be: White identity in a changing South Africa*, Steyn (2001b) has investigated how whites have negotiated their identities following the end of apartheid. The five narratives that emerge from the work demonstrate that whites occupy several positions along a continuum of positions. At one extreme, some whites have adopted a narrative that both supports the deconstruction of whiteness and accepts the new dispensation. At the other extreme, some whites have resisted adopting such a narrative, choosing instead to maintain a narrative that positions whites in charge, and resists the changes brought about by the new dispensation (Steyn, 2001b).

More pertinently, Steyn (2005) has looked at how some whites have attempted to maximise white advantage in the new dispensation through a discursive strategy she labels *white talk*. Among other things, white talk denies or minimises the wrongs of apartheid – and with it, white accountability, – promotes feelings of Afro-pessimism, and helps to position whites as victims within the new dispensation. White talk thus operates in ways that “obscure what is disadvantageous to reveal, and to display what is disadvantageous to conceal” (Steyn, 2005, p. 127) for whiteness.

Moreover, white talk utilises two discursive repertoires which Steyn and Foster (2008) label *New South Africa Speak* (NSAS) and *White Ululation*. By drawing on the New South Africa's founding concepts – such as freedom, equality, fairness and non-racialism – and adopting these as its own, NSAS is able to present itself as congruent with the new dispensation. This positive presentation of whiteness enables the maintenance of white privilege, without giving the impression of 'playing against the rules' (Steyn, 2003; Steyn & Foster, 2008). In other words, it allows whites to "be critical of policies that threaten their advantage without giving up their claim to support the principles that mark them as a respectable post-apartheid diaspora of the broad community of fair-minded western individuals" (Steyn, 2003, p. 166).

Although it is often filtered through NSAS, *White Ululation* is a discursive repertoire that opposes changes brought about by the new dispensation. For instance, by focusing on negative sentiments that seem to confirm preconceived white notions about the country's failure under black rule, white ululation works in ways that make white opposition to changes in the new dispensation appear justified (Steyn & Foster, 2008).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data

3.1.1 Newspapers

My interest in studying whiteness prompted me to investigate how it was expressed in public discourse. To this aim, I chose to investigate how whiteness was articulated in the letters pages of two daily newspapers.

Letters to the editor, printed during the period of 2007 in two daily Cape newspapers – the *Cape Argus* and the *Cape Times* – were photocopied and collated in preparation for analysis. 1 977 letters were printed in the *Cape Argus* and 1 928 in the *Cape Times*, yielding a dataset of 3 905 letters. To ensure that all editions printed during the period under consideration were obtained, the holdings of the African Studies Library at the University of Cape Town and those of the National Library of South Africa in Cape Town were cross-checked.

Founded in 1857 and 1876 respectively, the *Cape Argus* and the *Cape Times* have an established prominence within the Cape Town region. The *Cape Argus* editor has likened the newspaper's attraction to that of Cape Town's Waterfront and Table Mountain (Whitfield, 2009) while the *Cape Times* editor has suggested that the *Cape Times* is as synonymous with Cape Town as the South Easter (the prevailing south easterly wind that blows in summer) (August, 2009). Both titles are owned by Independent News & Media (SA) (Pty) Limited, South Africa's largest newspaper group, responsible for publishing 17 daily and weekly titles across the country. The group publishes Cape Town's English dailies – the *Cape Times* in the morning and the *Cape Argus* in the afternoon – as well as its English weekend newspapers (the *Saturday Argus* and the *Sunday Argus*) (INM, 2008).

The English newspapers have traditionally been more critical of the apartheid government than their Afrikaans counterparts, seeing their role as representing the voice of liberal English-speaking whites, as well as members of the black population (Giffard, 1976). As a newspaper which, in its early days, possessed a “fearless commitment to fighting for the ordinary man and against human rights abuses” (August, 2009, ¶ 1), the *Cape Times* reflects part of this tradition. The *Cape Argus* has similar liberal aims; it sees itself as playing an

important role in the task of getting Cape Town’s “diverse communities” to find “common ground”, by providing “a meeting place where readers, regardless of their race, sex[,] colour or creed can feel comfortable and deal with their fellow-citizens on an equal footing” (Whitfield, 2009, ¶ 4).

3.1.2 Readership Demographics

Based on the All Media and Products Survey [AMPS 2007B] carried out in 2007, the *Cape Argus* has a readership of 336 000, while the *Cape Times* has a slightly lower readership of 305 000 (SAARF, 2008).

Table 1: Readership Breakdown by Race

Newspaper	Race			
	<i>black</i>	<i>coloured</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>white</i>
<i>Cape Argus</i>	16,2%	57,5%	3,4%	23,0%
<i>Cape Times</i>	22,1%	44,1%	1,7%	32,1%

(Adapted from SAARF, 2008)

Table 2: Readership's Three Most Frequent Home Languages

Newspaper	Home language		
	<i>Afrikaans</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Xhosa</i>
<i>Cape Argus</i>	34,2%	52,2%	12,7%
<i>Cape Times</i>	30,3%	49,9%	16,5%

(Adapted from SAARF, 2008)

As *Table 1* shows, coloureds dominate the readership across both newspapers followed by whites. Unsurprisingly, English home-language speakers account for half of the readership, and given the previous point, one may speculate that the majority of Afrikaans-speakers are coloureds as opposed to whites. In general, the black population is under-represented, comprising only about one fifth of the readership.

The survey also shows that three out of five (57%) *Cape Times* readers are male, while *Cape Argus* readers are practically equally distributed across gender categories (52% male; 48% female).

Table 3: Readership's Universal Living Standards Measure by Group in Percentages

SAARF Universal Living Standards Measure group										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Cape Argus</i>	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	2,0%	4,1%	15,7%	17,8%	15,4%	27,0%	17,5%
<i>Cape Times</i>	0,0%	0,0%	0,6%	4,8%	4,0%	17,0%	17,5%	13,8%	23,8%	18,6%

(Adapted from SAARF, 2008)

The *Cape Argus* is “aimed at middle to upper income groups” (Cape Argus, 2008, ¶ 4) and the *Cape Times* similarly focuses on “servicing the needs of the upmarket reader” (Cape Times, 2008, ¶ 3). Congruent with this, *Table 3* shows that the bulk of readers across both newspapers are distributed along the upper-end of the SAARF living standards measure.

3.2 Letters to the Editor

With the exception of front page stories, the letters section frequently forms the most popular and best-read section of the newspaper (Cox, 2006). Within democratic societies, letters to the editor function as an important channel for public debate, allowing individuals an opportunity to highlight various issues of concern, and to express opinions about public institutions such as government (Cox, 2006; Hynds, 1991, 1994; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002). While letters may be written by those who tend to be most opinionated (Popke & Ballard, 2004), strong opinions – often about controversial topics – encourage both readership and debate within the letters section, as writers assert opposing views about a particular topic (Cox, 2006).

The editor’s commitment is thus towards creating an open debate which includes as many different views as possible (Richardson & Franklin, 2003; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). However, threatening and defamatory letters, along with those that are overtly racist,¹ tend to be automatically rejected by editors because it is argued such letters do not enhance public debate (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). The debate is therefore shaped not only by the letters received, but also by newspapers’ criteria for inclusion and other related editorial processes.

Regarding the selection of letters, Wahl-Jorgensen (2002) suggests that four rules are commonly used for selection. First, the ‘rule of relevance’ requires that letters be relevant to

¹ Richardson and Franklin (2003) note that some editors redraft such letters, making their contents permissible for publication, ostensibly for the purpose of presenting a wider range of opinion.

current issues or news topics, and match the type of topic repertoire which normally appears in the paper. Second, the 'rule of entertainment' gives preference to letters which offer readers entertainment or amusement, over those that are considered bland. Third, given the limited space available for the letters section, the 'rule of brevity' requires that editors seek letters conveying ideas and opinions in as few words as possible. Thus, short, concise letters that do not exceed the paper's prescribed word limit are more likely to be printed. Fourth, the 'rule of authority' favours letters that are grammatically correct, express ideas clearly and are generally well written. As such, a certain level of competence is required of letter writers, before they may participate in this type of public debate (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002).

Thus, although letters to the editor are not representative of the general population, they nevertheless reflect a range of views that exist within society on topics that are of public concern (Hynds, 1991; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). According to Richardson (2001), editorial processes subsequent to selection result in letters of varying opinions being grouped in specific ways – an aspect which in itself shapes the debate as letters are compared and contrasted. Importantly, the very inclusion of particular letters in the letters section serves to indicate their relevance to the topic of concern, and is a move which renders their contents significant through publication (Richardson, 2001).

It is in light of this aspect that the significance of letters as tools serving to guide public opinion – either supporting or opposing existing views (Hynds, 1994) – emerges. As Statman (1999) points out, letters to the editor – as well as newspaper columns and similar print media – form one way in which an ideology of white domination is expressed as it moves from the private sphere to the public arena. Using data collected from private conversations, Myers and Williamson (2001) have suggested that racism is expressed more strongly within private discourse (namely private conversations) than public discourse – such as surveys, interviews and various texts. Notwithstanding the ethical constraints of studying private discourse, racist discourse tends to be censored or 'toned down' when it is expressed within the public domain (Myers & Williamson, 2001). This censoring is influenced by an era where racism is generally not tolerated (though by no means eliminated), leading to new forms of racism that are covert rather than overt in nature. "The newness of new racism", as Ansell (2004) explains, "involves hiding, disguising, or coding white anti-black racism in ways that are more culturally and politically palatable" (p. 14).

In the case of letters to the editor, self-censorship appears particularly relevant since individuals are required to name themselves.² Writers are therefore likely to present their views more carefully in order to avoid being labelled, for example, as racists. The nature of public discourse does not however render letters to the editor as an unsuitable medium for the type of analysis with which this study is concerned. Indeed, while noting the care individuals may take to put forward socially favourable opinions within public discourse, Steyn (2003) acknowledges that the opinions put forward are simultaneously aimed at securing support amid a range of contrasting views within the public realm. As Richardson (2008) puts it, argumentative letters are “designed to convince an audience of the acceptability of a point of view and to provoke them into an immediate or future course of action” (p. 67). White interests therefore still underlie, and are promoted within, this type of discourse (Steyn, 2003). Hence letters espousing views that promote whiteness in the context of the New South Africa provide one avenue through which to explore the operation of whiteness.

3.3 Black Letter-Writers

As this study is concerned with the analysis of whiteness, it is important to clarify that it does not attempt to speak directly of whites’ views and reactions, but rather of views and reactions representative of whiteness. Given the readership demographics for the newspapers from which the data are drawn, it cannot be said that most letter-writers are likely to be white. Further, given the data on which this study is based, it is in most cases impossible to determine the race of the author, although common sense dictates that some letter-writers’ names appear more probably ‘white’ than ‘black’ or vice versa.³ Accounting directly for why some black individuals write letters applicable to this analysis is beyond the scope of this study. However, in order to treat letters to the editor as data irrespective of the writers’ race (i.e. merely as articulations of whiteness), it is necessary to argue that black people can and do espouse discourses that support whiteness.

Firstly, the combined effects of some 350 years of colonialism and apartheid on black South Africans cannot be denied. Due to the dominance of whiteness throughout this history, it is

² Both newspapers require letter writers to provide the editor with a full address and telephone contact number. The *Cape Times* specifically states that pseudonyms are not accepted. However, a small proportion of letters in the *Cape Argus* were printed with pseudonyms.

³ An exception to this ambiguity concerns personalities or political figures whose race is common-knowledge. For instance, Richard van der Ross, whose letter is included in Chapter 4, is a well-known ‘coloured’ person.

reasonable to expect that some black people may attach greater value to the norms and values advocated by whiteness. For instance, as Steyn (2005) suggests, whiteness remains associated with good governance in the minds of some, and for this reason there is a risk that black people may adopt discourses supporting whiteness. Relatedly, the possibility that ‘non-whites’ at times align themselves with whiteness in order to gain access to its benefits should not be discounted. Loewen (1988, as cited in Warren & Twine, 1997) has shown how the Chinese in Mississippi distanced themselves from blacks and in so doing attained a white status along with the privileges of being white. More recently, Basler (2008) has suggested that naturalised Mexican Americans “often align themselves with ‘whites’ (and against blacks) in order to obtain the social and political capital inherent in whiteness” (p. 25).

Secondly, at the same time, it is important to avoid taking an essentialised view on race, where race is seen as *the* factor which automatically determines – or should determine – people’s actions and allegiances (cf. Frankenberg, 1993). The practice of perceiving transgressors of so-called race-normative behaviour as ‘race traitors’ is reflective of essentialist thinking. One prominent white ‘traitor’ in South Africa’s history was Braam Fischer, who, despite being an Afrikaner, opposed the apartheid state. More specific to black individuals, terms such as ‘coconut’ or ‘oreo-cookie’ (Gilroy, 1998) are descriptive of the perceived contradiction present in individuals who appear black on the outside, but who nonetheless act in ways that supposedly reveal them to be ‘white’ on the inside.

With reference to indigeneity in Australia, Paradies (2006) has argued that essentialised thinking “leav[es] a community fragmented into those who can authentically perform indigeneity and those who are silenced and/or rendered outside the space of indigeneity because they cannot, or will not, perform” (p. 361). The existence of terms such as ‘coconut’ thus suggests that there is a performative aspect to race, which may or may not generate ‘racial authenticity’. Various scholars have aimed to show that whiteness is not homogenous, and according to Hartigan (1997), scholars of blackness have similarly aimed to stress the heterogeneity of blackness. Essentialism not only constricts our understanding of whiteness or blackness; it may also work to deny people’s agency. As Erasmus (2005) points out with reference to black voting behaviour,

the underlying assumption is when a black person votes for a party led by and/or supported by white people, that person, his/her blackness and his/her vote are flawed.

Moreover, this flaw is often described as ‘white’ and/or associated with whiteness. This thinking not only strips black people of their agency, it ignores the possibility that people might vote according to their interests, and that different black people might and do have different political interests and views. (p. 25)

The discourses examined in this study are therefore not ‘white’ in that they are necessarily articulated by individuals with white skins. Rather, these discourses are considered ‘white’ in that they serve to benefit whiteness. Following Steyn (2005), one may note two indicators of these discourses. First, they aim to perpetuate and maximise white privilege within the new dispensation and to limit whites’ loss of power after apartheid. As such, they attempt to hamper efforts that foster the country’s transformation into a more democratic, and less unequal, society. Second, they attempt to maintain whites’ position of dominance and power by expressing negative views about the black ‘other’ (Steyn, 2005).

3.4 Analysis

3.4.1 Coding of Letters

The bulk of letters written during 2007 were stimulated by national events and events pertaining to those living in the Cape Town region. A relatively small proportion of letters dealt with international affairs or events. At a national level, prominent events included the sacking of Deputy Health Minister Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, as well as Victor Pikoli; Eskom’s load-shedding power cuts; the public sector workers’ strike; the Rugby World Cup; and the ANC’s National Conference at Polokwane. At a regional level events included the election of Helen Zille as leader of the Democratic Alliance and Mayor of Cape Town; the 2010 Soccer World Cup stadium to be built at Green Point; proposed street-renaming in Cape Town; and new property valuations by the Cape Town City Council.

Prior to the formal coding process, I engaged in what De Wet and Erasmus (2005) term a ‘close reading’ of the dataset. They note that this approach serves not only to help the researcher establish the kinds of themes occurring in the data, but also to see individual pieces of data in the context of the dataset as a whole. By gaining familiarity with the data and letting topics emerge through reading, this approach aided in minimising the practice of simply assigning codes to the data (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005). Thus, from the initial stage of photocopying the letters, I began to form an overview of the kinds of topics that concerned

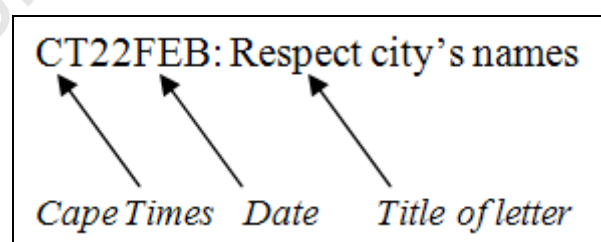
readers, as well as the range of accompanying opinions that prevailed.⁴ Thereafter, as I reorganised the data – letters were cut and pasted onto dated sheets signifying the various newspaper editions. Once organised chronologically, I was able to re-read the entire dataset thoroughly. This allowed me to see how letters emerged in response to various opinions and debates.

The next stage of analysis involved coding the data. Codes enable the analyst to organise data through the process of assigning a label or code to particular segments of text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, descriptive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were used to assign letters into themes or categories on a descriptive level.

Given the requirement of coding a large dataset, I made use of NVivo 8 – a qualitative data analysis software package. The main advantage of using computer-assisted data analysis is data management; compared to manual coding, it provides the possibility to code faster, use more codes and keep track of the codes used (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Marshall, 2002).⁵

The requirement for data to be in electronic format for use with NVivo however constituted a disadvantage. Due to time constraints and the labour involved in scanning and converting the entire dataset to electronic text, importing the data into NVivo was not possible. Instead, I created an electronic text list of all letter headings, coupled with the relevant source and date of publication, and imported this list into NVivo (see *Figure 1* for an example).

Figure 1: Example of Entry in Electronic Text List



⁴ I photocopied all the newspaper editions (489) held at UCT. Photocopies of 20 editions, missing from UCT, were obtained from the National Library via request.

⁵ Certain misconceptions exist about the actual 'work' that computer assisted qualitative data analysis systems do. As De Wet and Erasmus (2005) emphasise, the software "does not do the analysis, nor does it think for one" (p. 39).

I was therefore able to refer to each printed letter, and code its corresponding representation electronically using NVivo. While this approach meant intra-coding comparisons could not be made within NVivo, the approach facilitated the organisation of data. As De Wet and Erasmus (2005) note, “well-organised data enables researchers to implement procedures more effectively, which in turn contributes to rigorous analysis” (p. 39). For instance, comparison between the letters and the list on NVivo during the coding process ensured that no letters were overlooked.

First, an initial round of coding sought to formalise the broad topics that concerned readers. The list of codes generated was then printed and used as a basis for a second, fresh round of coding. Here, broad topics were coded more finely to show subsets of themes. The coding of topics was done primarily with reference to a letter’s contents. However, as mentioned earlier, the editorial selection and grouping of letters influences the type of debate that occurs within the letters section (Richardson, 2001). Moreover, letters tend to prompt responses from other readers, generating further letters and creating a chain of debate. This was represented in the data by the diverging and converging of topics; rather than being discrete units, letters were in dialogue with one another. For this reason, the letter’s title, its context within the broader debate in the letters section, and its relation to other letters was also taken into account during coding.

Wherever possible, letters were coded according to the debate which initiated them. Some topics, such as ‘housing’ and ‘land’, or ‘Eskom’s power crisis’ and ‘alternative energy options’, or ‘Zille’s Mayorship of Cape Town’ and ‘Zille’s leadership of the DA’ were so closely related that each set was coded together. Lastly, the coding that emerged was checked and altered where necessary during a third round of coding. The themes that emerged, and their frequencies, are tabulated below. (See *Appendix 1* for a more detailed tabulation of themes.)

Table 4: Frequency of Themes in the Cape Argus and Cape Times Newspapers in 2007

THEME	Cape Times	%	Cape Argus	%	Total %
Affirmative Action	78	4.0	18	0.9	2.5
African Identity & Culture	9	0.5	8	0.4	0.4
Airport & Airlines	19	1.0	16	0.8	0.9
Anecdotes	110	5.7	132	6.7	6.2
Arts & Entertainment	31	1.6	10	0.5	1.0
Animals	31	1.6	45	2.3	1.9
Banks & Banking	13	0.7	14	0.7	0.7
Built Environment	40	2.1	15	0.8	1.4
Children & the Youth	11	0.6	42	2.1	1.4
Colonialism	8	0.4	-	-	0.2
Crime	120	6.2	169	8.5	7.4
Defence Forces	28	1.5	46	2.3	1.9
Drug & Alcohol Addiction	15	0.8	50	2.5	1.7
Economic Issues	27	1.4	21	1.1	1.2
Education	31	1.6	89	4.5	3.1
Elderly & Pensioners	5	0.3	10	0.5	0.4
Emigration	4	0.2	-	-	0.1
Environmental Issues	144	7.5	77	3.9	5.7
Food & Food Production	14	0.7	4	0.2	0.5
Fraud & Corruption	-	-	28	1.4	0.7
Health	101	5.2	95	4.8	5.0
International Affairs	109	5.7	110	5.6	5.6
Language	18	0.9	4	0.2	0.6
Law & Rights	47	2.4	63	3.2	2.8
Lotto	4	0.2	4	0.2	0.2
The Media	3	0.2	21	1.1	0.6
Moral Decline	-	-	16	0.8	0.4
Noise Pollution	6	0.3	4	0.2	0.3
Property	96	5.0	83	4.2	4.6
Politics	173	9.0	191	9.7	9.3
Poor & Poverty	31	1.6	25	1.3	1.4
Race & Racism	63	3.3	39	2.0	2.6
Religion	74	3.8	39	2.0	2.9
Roads & Road Users	96	5.0	100	5.1	5.0
Services & Utilities	83	4.3	93	4.7	4.5
Soccer World Cup 2010	45	2.3	38	1.9	2.1
Sport	104	5.4	131	6.6	6.0
Street Renaming	28	1.5	39	2.0	1.7
Tourism	8	0.4	9	0.5	0.4
TV & Radio Programming	12	0.6	20	1.0	0.8
Women	4	0.2	4	0.2	0.2
Workers	85	4.4	55	2.8	3.6
Totals	1928	100	1977	100	100

3.4.2 *Selection and Coding of Themes for Analysis*

Due to the deeply-racialised nature of South African society, many themes identified in the preceding analysis contained references to race, had a racialised history or were sites of racial transformation, making them potentially suitable themes for further analysis. The selection of themes for further analysis however had to be guided by the aims of this study. For example, the theme ‘race and racism’ presented views within a larger debate about the meaning of race in the contemporary context, with many letters talking about racism. As this theme was more about negating whiteness than maintaining whiteness, it did not provide a sufficiently rich source of directly relevant material.

Moreover, not all directly relevant material could be examined. One of the most significant themes emerged following an Inaugural Lecture on Affirmative Action by University of Cape Town (UCT) Professor David Benatar entitled *Justice, Diversity and Affirmative Action*. The lecture created significant debate in the letters section of the *Cape Times* (and to a lesser extent in the *Cape Argus*) between Benatar, academics, and members of the public. A follow-up debate to the lecture at UCT between Benatar and UCT deputy vice-chancellor Professor Martin Hall, generated further debate within the University itself, with UCT’s *Monday Paper* publishing comments from UCT academics. As in the *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus*, several academics writing in the *Monday Paper* linked Benatar’s arguments to the perpetuation of white privilege.⁶

The letters generated by the above topic could thus have been included in this study, but were omitted for two reasons. First, given the layers of arguments and counter arguments generated by the debate, space limitations would have constrained an adequate presentation and analysis of the issue. Secondly, given the pre-existing, direct academic engagement with Benatar’s views within the letters section, an analysis on my part would have been largely analytically repetitive and unoriginal. The topics chosen for analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 were therefore chosen because they generated sustained debates within the letters pages which provided greater scope for an original analysis. This is not to say, however, that other topics

⁶ On this issue see, for example, Professor London’s response *Affirmative action and the invisibility of white privilege*, retrieved March 30, 2009, from <http://www.uct.ac.za/print/mondaypaper/archives/?id=6381>

within the dataset were unsuitable for the same kind of analysis. Chapter 6 briefly comments on a few other topics which were excluded from the analysis due to space limitations.

In order to proceed with the analysis for Chapters 4 and 5, a finer level of coding was required. First, a coding report listing all the letters falling within the relevant themes (e.g. street renaming) was generated using NVivo. Based on this list, letters were retrieved and re-read. Letters that either had little relevance to transformation, or did not resist transformation, were discarded. Second, an electronic text list of the remaining letters was imported into NVivo as described in the subsection above. Following this, the reasons for opposition towards transformation (e.g. street renaming) were coded using NVivo. While some letters stated a number of inter-related reasons, drawing on the context of the debate, the most prominent reason was used to define the code. In this way, different strategies of opposition within a broader stance of opposition emerged.

3.4.3 *Discourse Analysis*

Based on Laclau and Mouffe's work, Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) have explicated the assumptions of a discourse theory stemming from poststructural theory. A central assumption within this discourse theory is that meaning is never entirely fixed, but is always established through the exclusion of some other meaning, and the combination of particular signs. Particular discourses thus struggle to secure meaning through temporary fixation amid other, opposing discourses (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002).

A closely related assumption held by this theory is that reality is constituted through, and mediated by, language; rather than simply being a reflection of reality, discourses serve to construct reality. Therefore, all objects gain meaning through discourse, which is studied through language (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002).

As Ansell and Statman (1999) explain,

the study of discourse is important precisely because of the link it forges between language, representations and symbols, and material or institutional relations of power and domination. A focus on discourse allows one to link macro-level trends with the details and lived experiences on people's everyday lives, to discern how people's shared understandings both reflect and shape the social and material world. (p. 153)

Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) define the aim of discourse analysis as “the deconstruction of the structures that we take for granted; it tries to show that the given organisation of the world is the result of political processes with social consequences” (p. 48). De la Rey (1997) has similarly noted that

ultimately, the political usefulness of discourse analysis to political activists may be in its potential to go beneath the surface, to disrupt what may be seen as taken for granted and natural, to reveal contradictions and to show connections between that which may seem distinct. (p. 196)

Discourse analysis therefore entails an investigation of how a particular reality is created and how myths about society and reality gain the status of being ostensibly objective and natural (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002). In the case of this study, the myths of race and of white superiority are particularly pertinent.

Parker (1992) has argued that discourse analysis should not merely serve as a tool for describing discourses, but also provide a means with which the relationship between discourses and institutions, power, and ideology may be considered. Recalling that whiteness “signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 236), the latter point becomes important. As Parker (1992) goes on to note, discourses can (1) form the practice which serves to sustain the material basis of an institution, meaning that ‘discursive practices’ are able to reproduce institutions; (2) be implicated in the reproduction of power relations; and (3) convey ideology, where ideology describes a set of relationships and their effects within a given place and time.

Following from this, Parker (1992) has advocated that analysis should strive to involve the three steps listed below, and which De la Rey (1997) considers relevant to research in South Africa. As indicated within brackets, each of these points can be turned into questions serving to guide the analysis in this study:

- (1) Identify the institutions that are either supported or opposed when a certain discourse is used. (Is democratic transformation supported by a particular discourse or does whiteness benefit from its articulation?)
- (2) Identify those groups of people who might be advantaged by – and would wish to support – the use of a certain discourse. (Do those resistant to the new dispensation gain advantage? Might they support this discourse in order to maintain or extend privilege?) Similarly, those groups who might be disadvantaged by a certain discourse, and would thus be likely to oppose it, may be identified.
- (3) Consider how dominant groups employ discourses to construct a narrative about history which legitimises the current status quo; how this prevents other groups from employing discourses with the potential to alter the status quo. (Although no longer politically dominant, how might particular narratives about apartheid constructed by whiteness block transformation? How do such discourses normalise ongoing racial inequality?)

Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) have outlined suggestions for carrying out an empirical analysis; an approach which Steyn (2003) has followed for analysing whiteness in South Africa. Phillips and Jørgensen suggest that one can begin one's analysis by asking questions about:

- (1) The meanings formed through the positioning of elements (signs whose meaning has not yet been 'fixed') in particular combinations; what other possible meanings are thus excluded? (i.e. what meanings relating to white and black South Africans are put forward in discussions of particular issues? Are whites represented as superior to blacks? Are notions about blacks successfully participating in various spheres thus excluded?)
- (2) The discourses used to support particular articulations; which discourses are reproduced by these articulations? (i.e. are new discourses employed to support whiteness or are old, historically familiar discourses employed for this purpose?)

Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) also offer an approach for identifying what they term 'the lines of conflict' within empirical data. For the purpose of this study, lines of conflict are understood to emerge over issues concerning white privilege. As transformative efforts attempt to tackle sites of ongoing white privilege, conflict emerges between those who wish to preserve white privilege, and those who wish to dismantle it. According to Phillips and

Jørgensen then, contestation over issues concerning South Africa's transformation can be identified by looking at:

- (1) The different conceptions of reality that are presented around a particular issue. (i.e. which conceptions are reflective of the ethos of transformation; which conceptions reflect the ideology of apartheid and/or whiteness?)
- (2) The points at which the different conceptions are in antagonistic opposition to one another. (i.e. which issues cause contestation reflecting competing discourses of transformation on the one hand and whiteness on the other?)
- (3) The social consequences of the respective conceptions should they become dominant within society. (viz. what happens if discourses opposing transformation within a particular domain gain dominance over discourses promoting transformation? Would this discourse benefit whiteness? Would blacks consequently be oppressed?)

Guided by the various analytical suggestions and the kinds of questions presented above, I proceeded to 'deconstruct' the letters selected for analysis.

3.5 Self-Reflexivity

Using a feminist perspective, Frankenberg (1993) reminds us that the actions we take for effecting social change simultaneously stem from the same social relations and subject positions which we are attempting to change. Put differently, as Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) note, the researcher is always situated within one or another set of discourses, and within at least some of the discourses which he or she is attempting to analyse. These points raise complex questions about how a white person living in South Africa may carry out an analysis of 'white' discourses effectively.

At a basic level, Phillips & Jørgensen (2002) suggest that the analyst attempt to distance himself or herself from the data in order to better identify the systems of meaning contained therein (viz. identifying what is taken for granted and what is naturalised). On the one hand, having moved to South Africa at the age of seven, there is a degree to which I am distanced from the discourses under consideration. For instance, I am probably not as immersed in white, South African culture as native-born individuals, nor have I grown up with an inter-generational narrative about what it means to be white in South Africa. On the other hand,

this is in no way to claim that I have not experienced – and continue to experience – white privilege due to the colour of my skin. Indeed, there is a degree to which it is tempting (in conscious and unconscious ways) for white people – myself included – to maintain the very discourses examined in this study. At the same time, having a white skin has granted me an insider’s perspective on the discourses articulated by whites, particularly within the context of private discourse (i.e. private conversations). I believe that these experiences have provided me with useful insights into whites’ resistance to the new dispensation and that these insights have aided my analysis in this study.

While it may be possible that I have not ‘exposed’ all the discursive strategies present in the letters analysed here (and others in the dataset), my aim has been to problematise at least some of the taken for granted assumptions and ostensibly naturalised relationships of racial inequality present in the letters.

3.6 Limitations

The newspapers chosen for this study represent only two of South Africa’s twenty daily newspapers. Of these, fifteen are published in English, four in Afrikaans and one in Zulu (SAARF, 2008). My own language proficiency has limited my choice to the English dailies, and due to access and familiarity, this choice was narrowed down to Cape Town’s dailies.

An analysis of different newspapers is likely to yield different concentrations and varieties of discourses resistant to transformation. For instance, dailies such as *Isolezwe* (Zulu) and the *Sowetan* (English) practically have an exclusively black readership (99,5% and 97,1% respectively) (SAARF, 2008). The presence of the type of discourse with which this study is concerned is therefore assumed to be low in such publications.

By contrast, newspapers such as the *Beeld* and *Die Volksblad* (both published in Afrikaans) attract a high proportion of readers who are both Afrikaans-speakers (83,9% and 79,1%) and white (86,2% and 77,1%) (SAARF, 2008), suggesting a dominant white-Afrikaner readership. In an analysis of letters appearing in the *Rapport* – a popular weekly Afrikaans newspaper – Steyn (2004a) has noted that “for English South Africans *white talk* in many ways serves a maintenance function. Afrikaans *white talk*, by contrast, is engaged in a much more active and aggressive constitutive role” (p. 162; italics original). The discourse

examined in this study's chosen newspapers may therefore be a more passively stated variety than that found in the Afrikaans press.

Time and space constraints limited the inclusion of more data in this study, and a broader picture of whiteness could be gained in at least two ways. Newspapers from other provinces – both daily and weekend editions – could be selected, including those which cater for a readership of a different or broader economic group than the *Cape Argus* and *Cape Times* newspapers. Such newspapers may reveal different opinions and topics of concern due to regional differences which include both political and social factors. Coupled with this, a longitudinal approach could serve to better underscore and elucidate the issues most pertinent to whiteness. As has already been mentioned, letters to the editor do not permit an exploration of how whiteness intersects with other axes of privilege and oppression such as gender and class. Moreover, such data do not enable one to make a direct link between race and discourses of whiteness. These aspects could be investigated using other qualitative methods such as focus group interviews or individual interviews.

4 OPPOSING GAMES WITH NAMES¹

Racism is rendered opaque as racist exclusions are translated into spatial exclusions and thereby naturalised because of the apparent transparency, objectivity, and innocence of place (Durrheim & Dixon, 2001, p. 448).

4.1 Boundary Construction under Apartheid

4.1.1 *The Construction of Racial Boundaries*

Apartheid's Population Registration Act of 1950 sought to classify the country's population into various racial categories or race groups; namely Africans, coloureds, Indians and whites. Importantly, Posel (2001a) notes that the official recording of individuals' race on a national registry allowed for the creation of distinct boundaries between supposed race groups. Thus, whereas racial boundaries were formerly characterised by at least a moderate degree of fluidity and uncertainty – since some relatively fair-skinned individuals could either be said to be white or coloured – classification under apartheid meant that the fixity of boundaries could be asserted through the elimination of such uncertainty (Posel, 2001a, 2001b).²

Perhaps most crucial to the construction of these racial boundaries was the fact that apartheid supplied them with meaning – bolstering the distinction between whites and black 'others' – by creating 'empirical proof' of white superiority and black inferiority. While this hierarchical notion existed prior to apartheid, apartheid solidified it in two related ways. Firstly, it constructed South African society in ways that gave whites opportunity and a space in which they could excel economically, whilst denying the same opportunities and space to

¹ The title for this chapter is drawn from Roger Randle's letter *Games with names* which appeared in the *Cape Argus* on 26 February 2007 (an excerpt of which is included in section 4.4.1 of this chapter). In the letter, the writer laments that the government/Cape Town City Council should focus on other tasks "instead of playing games with names".

² This is not to say that the elimination of uncertainty was absolute or that race classifications were final. While not a frequent phenomenon, reclassifications were possible via the Race Classification Appeal Board. Ratele (2007) remarks that there are no known cases of Africans who were reclassified as whites or vice versa. However, less drastic reclassifications, such as 'white to coloured' or 'African to coloured', occurred. See Posel (2001a) and Ratele (2007) for examples of cases and frequencies.

blacks (Steyn, 2001a). For instance, whites received an education equal in standard to first-world countries, while blacks received an education classed as inferior even by third-world standards (James & Lever, 2005). Secondly, as Posel (2001b) describes, official racial hierarchies ranked whites as highly civilised due to their level of education, degree of skill and relative wealth. By contrast, blacks were ranked at the bottom of this hierarchy (with coloureds somewhere in the middle) due to their lack of education and skill, which together were taken to indicate a lack of civilisation (Posel, 2001b). While according to James and Lever (2005) government imperative was to create a pool of cheap, unskilled black labour through inferior education, a further – perhaps indirect – function of this policy may be noted. A lack of skills, coupled with job reservation, meant that whites readily saw blacks (as opposed to whites) carrying out menial, manual labour. In turn, this led whites to perceive that blacks occupied their ‘proper place’ in carrying out such tasks, thus reinforcing and confirming notions of white superiority (Salisbury & Foster, 2004; Steyn, 2001a).

Hence, the system justified its own racial ideology and reinforced racial boundaries through a process where

superior socioeconomic standing and privilege were considered markers and evidence of biological superiority, at the same time that biological superiority was considered grounds for such elevated social status. Racial hierarchies ratified and legitimised the social and economic inequalities that were in turn held up as evidence of racial differences (Posel, 2001b, p. 95).

4.1.2 The Creation of Racialised Space

Alongside the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act of 1950 reflected another core objective of apartheid. Drawing on the former, the latter allowed for the reorganisation of space along racialised lines – through a process of exclusion – leaving the bulk of the country’s physical space either under state control or white ownership; and ensuring that every race group was aware of and occupied its ‘proper place’ (Foster, 2000; James & Lever 2005; Posel, 2001a, 2001b). Added to this, the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 limited contact between races by segregating all public facilities. Further, acts such as the Immorality Amendment Act of 1957 and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 respectively served to keep races apart via the prohibition of sexual relations and marriage between whites

and those of other race groups. Apartheid therefore constructed a direct link between race, space and place, giving rise to a particular kind of racialised order which pervaded and determined nearly all aspects of daily life. As Posel (2001a) has described,

[apartheid] offered the promise of heightened discipline, regulation and surveillance: [racial] boundaries were to be reasserted and spaces reorganised, the movements of people systematised and contained. . . . Race was to be . . . the fundamental organising principle for the allocation of all resources and opportunities, the basis for all spatial demarcation, planning and development, the boundary for all social interaction. (p. 52)

Historically, white spaces were constructed with the aim of creating a 'Europe in Africa' – a place where European settlers, and their descendants, could feel at home (Ballard, 2004a; Manning, 2004). Consequently, white space may be characterised by its close resemblance to a European space, giving those who inhabit that space a sense of being in Europe. As Statman (1999) explains with reference to white South African suburbs:

In quiet, immaculate suburbs of lovely cottages, churches, rugby fields, and cricket pitches, surrounded by familiar vegetation from the north with which they [white settlers] had replaced the indigenous flora, one could imagine living the good life, the colonial dream-come-true. Except for the black maids, gardeners, and garbage collectors, one could easily feel as if this were Europe, but with better weather and a more ubiquitous affluence. (p. 36)

To take one example, as Popke and Ballard (2004) state, from the period of the late 1800s, European settlers in Durban began to administer the city as a European space, introducing controls over black access and spaces of residence. The general characteristic of urban spaces consequently became that of order and European modernity, importantly defined by and set in contrast to the assumed backwardness of uncivilised Africa (Popke & Ballard, 2004). In a similar manner, as a project of the apartheid era, white spaces were constructed to support notions of a modern, Western civilisation and thus an accompanying white identity premised on these notions (Ballard, 2004a). To further this aim, formal segregation enabled the forced removal of those whose presence – due to their dark skin colour, language and assumed values – was deemed incongruent with the ideals of a modern, civilised Western identity. In

essence, the removal of the 'other' created white comfort zones, whereby whites were able to claim that they lived in first-world cities, despite living in Africa (Ballard, 2004a).

Further, it should be noted that the architecture of the country's physical spaces reflected and reinforced apartheid's racial ideology. At the built environment level, Manning (2004) describes how apartheid's civil engineers sought to define, maintain and defend the physical distinction between white space and that relegated to the 'other': "three highway ring roads circumscribe the city as a form of laager defence against 'alien' invasion" (p. 529). Features such as buffer zones – stretching at least 100 meters wide and often incorporating industrial land – between areas designated for different race groups, and dispersed residential suburbs linked via long stretches of road, meant that the apartheid city resembled the antithesis of an integrated city model (Frescura, 2001).

Yet due to the need for cheap manual labour – within both domestic and industrial sectors – the black presence within urban, white space could not be avoided. However, the apartheid regime considered this presence as a temporary feature rather than a permanent feature. Thus, as Frescura (2001) notes, townships built for black accommodation were located away from city centres, consisted of poor-quality housing on small plots which could only be rented, and generally lacked amenities. Moreover, township spaces were constructed as spaces which allowed for white military control via the incorporation of a radial street layout, and a strictly limited number of vehicle entry points (Frescura, 2001; Manning, 2004).

4.2 Racialised Spatial Boundaries after Apartheid

The preceding section has shown that "bodies and spaces . . . are inextricably intertwined in the process of racialization [*sic*]: these bodies 'belong' in these locales, those bodies are consigned to the other spaces" (Foster, 2000, p. 63). From this it is therefore evident that part of South Africa's post-apartheid transformation ought to include a reconfiguration of the link between space and identity (Popke & Ballard, 2004). In the absence of formal segregation, the undoing of this link may appear to be virtually assured, as it is only a matter of time before the 'other' enters and settles within previously exclusionary white space. Yet over a decade after the end of apartheid, former whites-only suburbs have remained predominantly white (Ballard, 2004a; Foster, 2000).

At first sight, a material explanation may account for this. Chiefly, with the bulk of the country's economic wealth still in white hands (Steyn & Foster, 2008), the majority of black South Africans cannot afford to live in the now desegregated, and often up-market, white suburbs. This in turn has meant that most black South Africans have not been able to move out of former black areas. Further, even within the contemporary setting, facilities within formerly white areas tend to be superior to, and more numerous than, those found in former black areas. Consequently, Durrheim (2005) suggests that this type of inequality explains why black people with sufficient economic means have moved into areas formerly reserved for whites – namely residential areas – while at the same time very few whites have moved into areas formerly reserved for blacks, thus creating a one-way pattern of desegregation. Yet a purely material explanation falls short when one notes that the movement of blacks into spaces previously reserved for, and occupied by, whites, has seen whites moving out of those spaces in favour of enclaves still overwhelmingly occupied by whites (Durrheim, 2005).

A fuller understanding of continued informal segregation – and white flight – therefore needs to take cognisance of Durrheim and Dixon's (2005) assertion that “desegregation transforms not only the relationship between self and other but also the relationship between self and place” (p. 180).³ Ballard (2004b), for instance, has found that the presence of the ‘other’ – primarily with regard to informal settlements along the edges of white suburbs – altered white suburban residents' sense of place, in turn disrupting their notion of themselves as civilised, modern, Western individuals. Gibson (1998) cites a similar dynamic occurring in the United States, where the arrival of minority groups – such as blacks – in previously exclusively white neighbourhoods, is perceived as a sign of imminent spatial decay and the demise of social order. Gibson (1998) goes on to state that “associating ‘white’ with meanings of order and stability and ‘black’ with images of decay and chaos . . . create[s] a common sense about race, crime, and neighborhood [*sic*] that equates racial difference [from whiteness] with social disorder” (p. 150). Hence, a permanent black presence within previously exclusionary ‘white’ spaces has the potential to impact on what Durrheim and Dixon (2005) refer to as whites' ‘place identity’.

³ Although pertinent, it is beyond this study to provide an in-depth account of the psychological consequences of desegregation, its effects on identity and the way whites have responded to the loss of ‘their’ spaces. For a recent discussion on these aspects within the South African context refer to Durrheim and Dixon's (2005) *Racial encounter: The social psychology of contact and desegregation*.

With reference to whites living within predominantly white, affluent suburbs, Statman (1999) argues that a lived existence in what may be termed ‘a bubble of privilege’ enables whites to lead lives that essentially exclude from view the harsh social and economic realities facing the country’s black majority population. In particular, he cites the disparities in living standards between whites living in Johannesburg’s up-market suburb of Sandton, and blacks living in the nearby township of Alexandra. In Sandton, whites reside within a ‘Europe in Africa’ filled with modern luxuries and access to conveniences while in contrast, blacks residing in Alexandra lack adequate housing and basic services such as sewage and running water (Statman, 1999). Taking this notion further, Massey (1999, as cited in Hook & Vrdoljak, 2002) argues that enclaves such as gated communities promote a notion of sameness as opposed to difference, where difference is kept outside by means of physical barriers. In addition, difference is used to define not only the criteria for exclusion, but also to define the community itself. Therefore, to take Statman’s (1999) example, if a (white) community sees itself as first-world and civilised, it does so because it sees those on the outside of the ‘bubble’ (i.e. blacks) as third-world and uncivilised. That is to say, enclosed communities define themselves in relation to what they hold themselves not to be (Massey, 1999, as cited in Hook & Vrdoljak, 2002).

While apartheid-constructed physical barriers between racialised spaces, such as roads, still remain, there has been an effort on the part of whites to create new physical boundaries between white space and that occupied by the ‘other’. Notwithstanding the real threat of crime, heightened security measures also enable a form of withdrawal. In an effort to keep so-called undesirable ‘others’ out, residents of predominantly white neighbourhoods have created ‘gated communities’ through the sealing off of roads leading into their area. If possible, only a single road entrance is created, where access is restricted by a boom operated by 24-hour private security guards (Ballard, 2004a; Hook & Vrdoljak, 2002). Within a more private sphere – and often inside gated communities – many whites have surrounded their properties with high walls topped with razor-wire or electrified-fencing, and high-technology security systems in an effort to ‘keep Africa out of sight and out of mind’ (Ballard, 2004a; Manning, 2004; Statman, 1999). A useful term to capture this form of withdrawal is ‘semigration’ (Ballard, 2004b), signifying withdrawal without an actual exit from the country and thus a measure less extreme than the actual emigration option chosen by many whites. Such withdrawal not only enables white residents to exclude others and isolate themselves

from processes of transformation – such as desegregation – but also ensures that their identities remain largely unaffected (Hook & Vrdoljak, 2002).

4.3 Renaming Spaces

As part of the country's ongoing transformation process, a recent endeavour has brought further changes to the spaces whites have thus far still been able to call their own. Starting from around 2001, major city councils, such as that of Cape Town and Johannesburg, initiated a process of renaming various city structures and landmarks – among them, city streets (CCT, 2005; CJ, 2005).

Place names are usually considered primarily in terms of their function as navigational aids. Yet beyond this, place names serve as symbols enabling us to attach specific meanings and values to particular spaces (Cohen & Kilot, 1992). In this regard Rose-Redwood (2008) has argued that “the very act of place naming is an attempt to discursively reconfigure a given space as *a place to be remembered*” and that therefore place naming forms “a commemorative practice, whether those names are descriptive, possessive, or otherwise” (p. 435; emphasis added). Importantly though, this commemorative practice does not occur arbitrarily. Name changes commonly occur following the context of revolution and the emergence of new political regimes, making (re)naming an act interlinked with politics. Hence name changes have occurred following events such as the French Revolution and the end of colonialism and socialism (Azaryahu, 1996; Light, 2004) and the process of renaming in post-apartheid South Africa is no exception.

As Light (2004) comments, renaming provides a relatively quick and simple way for governments to proclaim the existence of a new political dispensation. Further, Azaryahu (1997) contends that

the merit of street names is their ability to incorporate an official version of history into such spheres of human activity that seem to be entirely devoid of direct political manipulation. This transforms history into a feature of the ‘natural order of things’ and conceals its contrived character. (p. 481)

Since new names often signify a profoundly different version of the nation's history and its people, the ability to successfully merge a new narrative of history into a nation's consciousness via street renaming may be particularly important for the processes of nation-building and the (re)formation of national identity (Azaryahu, 1996; Light, 2004). In a similar vein, Foster (2000) points out that apart from the post-apartheid state's general task of promoting transformation, "the state has also a key role regarding the discursive and symbolic dimensions of racialised space: naming and labelling, monuments and memories, reclaiming and dismantling discursive alienations" (p. 75). In broad terms, renaming in this context has stemmed from the recognition that "most of the names currently in existence do not reflect our rich and diverse heritage", with the possibility of renaming affecting not only city streets "but also . . . public places, natural areas and council-owned buildings, facilities or artefacts" (CCT, 2005, p. 2). For instance, the renaming process in Cape Town is intended to promote a greater recognition of the people, culture and history associated with the city, while at the same time ensuring the removal of names currently in use, which are deemed offensive (CCT, 2005).

Masala (2003) notes that European colonisation saw a change in South Africa's place-naming system from one that reflected meanings generated by indigenous peoples to that which predominantly reflected the culture and social and political interests of white colonisers. In many cases (re)naming resulted in European names taking the place of African names, while in other cases African names were used but misspelt. The current process of renaming is thus about reclaiming and acknowledging some of the historical meanings that have been marginalised by the forces of colonialism and apartheid (Masala, 2003).

The process of renaming therefore involves the de-commemoration of an existing name through removal, and the commemoration of a new name through replacement (Azaryahu, 1997). Thus, for example, various streets named after white, colonial and apartheid leaders face de-commemoration through renaming, allowing for the commemoration of other people and events. Renaming can consequently be seen as a site of potential contestation over which symbols ought to be erased, and those symbols which ought to be recognised in their place (Rose-Redwood, 2008). Azaryahu (1996) maintains that the short-term effects of changes in naming include the experience of cognitive dissonance, and perhaps even disorientation, along with more permanent effects to a cultural narrative which relies on constancy in naming to convey the meaning of place-specific memories. More pertinently, renaming has

the potential to effect a long-term change on white identity through a reconstitution of space. If renaming entails the commemoration of previously neglected black individuals and black history, then renaming may be seen as a move which allows the ‘other’ to enter previously inaccessible, exclusionary spaces – albeit not in body but in name. For example, Mitchelson, Alderman and Popke (2007) note that, within the United States, streets named after Martin Luther King Jr. are commonly perceived as ‘Afro-American spaces’. Hence it is conceivable that the commemoration of black individuals and the re-inscription of indigenous, black meanings within the post-apartheid context may serve to disrupt whites’ identity via a process that discursively transforms ‘white’ spaces into ‘black’ spaces.

4.4 Analysis: Street Renaming

A total of 67 letters (*Cape Argus* = 39; *Cape Times* = 28) were printed concerning the process of proposed street renaming in Cape Town. Of these, 14 letters dealt with political debates or made general comments about the process, and as such were deemed to be of insufficient relevance for the purpose of analysis. Of the 53 remaining letters, 23 were broadly in favour of, or promoted, name changes, while 30 were opposed to renaming. Yet, as the analysis below demonstrates, letters which appeared positive towards renaming did not necessarily promote a greater commemoration of South Africa’s neglected historical aspects or its unsung heroes. Thus the five themes or strategies presented in the following analysis consider not only the ways in which renaming is opposed, but also the ways in which renaming may potentially take place without effecting substantial changes.

4.4.1 Strategy 1: The Prioritisation of Social Welfare

This strategy centres on the prioritisation of so-called social welfare processes over the process of renaming.

Get priorities right

So much time, effort and money is being spent on the renaming of certain city streets and nothing seems to be done about our current city’s infrastructure. . . .

Is renaming a street more important than looking after the welfare of people? . . .

When will those in parliament realise that people’s lives are precious and their welfare is much more important than renaming streets. (Gary Williams, *Cape Times*, 6 August 2007; emphasis added)

Games with names

The renaming of the airport several years ago from DF Malan to the geographical name of Cape Town made good sense. Renaming it again will be stupid and costly.

. . . *Let us rather concentrate on the many social problems and spend the time and money on the poor and needy instead of playing games with names.* (Roger Randle, *Cape Argus*, 26 February 2007; emphasis added)

Name changes don't address real problems

The question about name-changing should not be whether it is appropriate to do so, but whether it should be the government's priority right now.

. . . I don't think the timing to spend millions of rand is justifiable given that our people are subjected to appalling and abject conditions, with [the] majority living below the poverty line. (Bonginkosi Madikizela, *Cape Argus*, 9 March 2007)

What's in a name when urgent issues are ignored?

Urgent problems are ignored while the controversy over renaming issues continues.

. . . Aids [*sic*], crime and poverty are eroding South Africa's sustainability. How does renaming resolve these urgent problems, and bring health, wealth and security to the people? (Nien-Tsu-Tuan, *Cape Argus*, 9 August, 2007)

These letters deal with two issues of transformation. On the one hand is the issue of transforming the way in which buildings, streets and areas are named. On the other hand is that of transforming the state of poverty experienced by many South Africans, coupled with other social problems such as crime and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. A number of scholars have indicated that a discourse of denial – aimed at minimising or denying the negative impact apartheid had and continues to have on the black population – is commonly used as a means of preserving white privilege (Ansell, 2004; Statman, 1999; Steyn, 2005). In turn, such a discourse serves to block transformation by denying the legitimacy victims of apartheid have in receiving compensation.

In light of such findings, the above extracts are refreshing in their acknowledged need for transformation. Words such as *welfare* and *social problems*, coupled with *needy* and *precious*, serve to create what may loosely be termed a discourse of 'social welfare', used to

assert the primacy of human welfare over the task of name changing. Thus, at first sight, these extracts appear to stem from a genuine concern towards the plight of the poor and needy. However, while it is impossible to know whether or not the writers are truly committed towards such a goal, it is possible to analyse the implications that their stated commitment has for whiteness. Regardless of these writers' intention, the discourse they promote plays into notions that reinforce whiteness.

At a fundamental level the aim of these extracts is to minimise the legitimacy and urgency of renaming, in favour of expenditure on social problems and general welfare. It is this very substitution of one transformation for another, however, which suggests that the manoeuvre is merely a face-saving exercise, aimed at maintaining the current street names. For instance, the task of renaming is undoubtedly a smaller and more easily accomplished one than the suggested tasks of providing for the adequate needs of the poor, or indeed dealing with the country's social problems – presumably crime being chief among these. As such, the process of renaming is likely to be perceived as posing a more immediate threat to whiteness. Thus, the writers manage this threat by choosing not to openly reject the actual process of renaming. Instead, they frame the issue of renaming solely in terms of social priority, deferring the task to a later stage when South Africa's "sustainability" is assured. This allows whiteness to bypass the debate on the actual exercise of renaming, avoiding the messy terrain involved in argumentation when directly defending the current street names. Taking an indirect approach in the guise of social welfare therefore enables whiteness to simplify the issue, close the debate at an early stage, and remain on safe ground. In effect, not only is the challenge of face-saving here minimised, but the appearance of being in favour of the New South Africa is also maximised, allowing whiteness to hold the moral high ground through a supposed concern for others.

4.4.2 *Strategy 2: Unpronounceable African Names*

This strategy expresses a rejection of proposed African names, on the premise that these would be unpronounceable and confusing for tourists.

Use attractive names

. . . Main tourist roads, especially scenic drives, should be replaced by attractive, profound, memorable names. . . . Otto du Plessis to Ikhwezi (Rising Sun) is a no-no. First, it's on the West Coast, the Setting Sun. Second, a Xhosa name is not nationally recognisable. Third, it should rather be an internationally recognisable name such as Southern Atlantic Drive. . . .

Do not make our country full of political names that visitors struggle to recognise or pronounce. . . .

The use of important historic events would be more acceptable and include June 16 Boulevard, 27 April Avenue, or Avenue of Reconciliation. These have political connotations yet are historical, pronounceable, easily understood and not eroded by time. (Agi Orfanos, *Cape Times*, 27 July 2007)

Mouthful for visitors

. . . I do believe one must consider the foreign tourists. They already have a problem understanding Afrikaans names. So if we are going to offer them unpronounceable African names when giving directions, we are going to have them totally foxed. . . .

So I would suggest that, when honouring our African heroes, they do not become names on national roads – except for Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Dullah Omar, Ruth First and others who are well known locally and abroad. (J. Maxwell, *Cape Times*, 22 June 2007)

The idea that African names are unpronounceable is not new in South Africa's history. Under the domination of whiteness, there was a firm belief that Western names, together with the English language itself, signified a far greater degree of civilisation, respect and dignity than African names and African languages (Manning, 2004). Moreover, blacks were often encouraged, if not forced, to adopt more pronounceable, Western names (Statman, 1999), ostensibly for the ease and convenience of their white employers, who were generally unwilling to learn the pronunciation of African names. However, such acts of renaming extended beyond the mere purpose of aiding pronunciation. In a more important sense, as Erasmus (2000) argues in relation to coloured identity, renaming allowed whiteness the possibility to regulate and maintain the hierarchical distinction between whites and 'others', preserving white identity through altering that of the 'other'. The following is an interview

excerpt in which a coloured woman named Joanie – who worked as a domestic worker – describes her white employer’s reaction on finding out that they shared the same name:

O nee! jy kan nie Joanie . . . wees nie want ek is Joanie. . . . Vir you [sic] roep ek sommer Doris. Van vandag af is jou naam Doris. Want jou naam kan nie Joanie . . . wees nie. Ek is Joanie . . . [Oh no! you can’t be Joanie . . . because I am Joanie. . . . I will simply call you Doris. As of today your name is Doris. Because your name can’t be Joanie . . . I am Joanie]. (Erasmus, 2000, p. 76; original translation)

The example demonstrates two things. Firstly, it shows how a shared name can disrupt the ability for whiteness to remain dominant and maintain a clear distinction of power between those who are white and those who are considered ‘other’ Thus, in this case, the distinction between the position of ‘white madam’ and that of ‘coloured maid’ is (wittingly or unwittingly) re-established through the act of renaming and thus altering the identity of the ‘other’ (Erasmus, 2000). Secondly, it makes clear the entitlement that whites felt with regard to renaming the ‘other’ at will. Indeed, the power to name the ‘other’ was perhaps most clearly demonstrated with regard to racial classification during apartheid (cf. Posel, 2001a).

The distinction between the ostensibly unpronounceable and the pronounceable, coupled with words such as *internationally recognisable*, *easily understood*, and *memorable*, suggests that the writers of the above letters draw on a belief system that gives strong preference to Western, rather than African, styles of naming. Thus, the substitution of African names for ‘white’, Western street names upsets the white status quo by negating this hierarchical logic of naming preference. Moreover, the post-apartheid context no longer provides whites with the power to name exclusively, and this inevitably results in a loss of power for whiteness.

It is thus interesting to note that the writers frame their opposition in terms of a plea on behalf of foreign tourists. In reality though, this manoeuvre serves to deflect attention away from the fact that white South Africans themselves wish to prevent the renaming of streets. At stake is not only the broader concern of whether or not the ‘other’ will gain recognition and symbolic entry to spaces formerly honouring whites – of greater concern here is what such changes would mean to the carefully constructed white identity that Ballard (2004a) describes. A reordering of the hierarchical status quo, with regard to the dominance of Western ideals and the English language, threatens to damage the notions underpinning white identity.

Managing this threat therefore requires rejecting African names while simultaneously promoting alternatives that are compatible with the ethos of the new dispensation. In *Use attractive names* the issue of pronounceability is supposedly resolved through the use of key dates in South Africa's struggle towards democracy – such as April 27 and June 16 – in the process of renaming. The intended result is to give the unmistakable impression that the New South Africa should and is being celebrated, despite an appeal against the use of African names. Similarly, *Mouthful for visitors* attempts to conceal its rejection of naming national roads after black individuals, by pointing out internationally recognised icons, such as Nelson Mandela, as exceptions. The potential advantages for whiteness here are double. Firstly, on a national front, such a token act may dispel some criticism for a failure to honour black individuals while having an insignificant impact on white identity. Secondly, on a broader international front, such an act would give foreign visitors the impression that black individuals have been readily honoured, concealing the exclusion of other important, yet lesser internationally known, individuals. In turn, these strategies would limit the impact on white South Africans' identity, while enabling them to save face at both a national and an international level.

4.4.3 *Strategy 3: Neutralising Naming*

This strategy attempts to block the honouring of blacks through suggestions of supposedly neutral, apolitical, ahistorical names.

Use names of flowers

The renaming of old landmarks is abhorrent to most of my circle of friends, and doubly so for renaming with political names.

If renaming is a must, then use flower and animal names. We have enough of those, for pity's sake. (Leslie Hurst, *Cape Times*, 15 May 2007)

The ABC of street names

A lot of confusion and expense would be avoided if Cape Town street and building names were not tampered with. . . .

It may be useful to read up on the reasons of the original choice of name instead of destroying our history. . . .

To prevent future criticism, it may be prudent to choose alphabetical names of local flora, fauna, mineral etc. or numerical names, which simplify life for all. (Joy Hofmeyr, *Cape Argus*, 2 April 2007)

Build a memorial wall

[Instead of renaming Cape Town's streets] . . . I would like to put forward the suggestion that a memorial wall be built . . . [where] each name would be granted an identical wallspace.

The cost and inconvenience involved [in renaming streets] would far outweigh the petty satisfaction one particular section of the population might feel for having “cleansed” the city at the expense of alienating another.

In future, I suggest that the street and place-naming committees stick to non-people names, which should never have to be renamed. We have plenty of flowers, birds, animals, geographical locations and such names available to us. (Tessa Moore, *Cape Times*, 23 February 2007)

The above letters express resentment towards the process of renaming, by describing the process as generally destructive of history and aimed at giving “petty satisfaction” to the black population while “alienating” the white population. These writers therefore assert that new names should be derived from plants, animals and the like – presumably as a substitute for the names of black leaders. However, the writers are careful to avoid any references to proposed black names, as their mention could allow for a debate as to who should legitimately be honoured through renaming. In turn, this allows whiteness to block that aspect of the debate entirely, and set the terms and parameters of what constitutes a fair process of renaming.

Here then, whiteness allows for renaming by making it conditional on the use of supposedly neutral, apolitical and ahistorical names: “if renaming is a must, then use flower and animal names”. The neutrality of these suggestions is however betrayed by the assertion that the selection of such names would “simplify life for all”. It is important to remember that all individuals within racialised social systems – that is, society – are racialised, and this includes whites (Dyer, 2000; Frankenberg, 1993). Indeed, as Dyer (2000) reminds us, as supposedly non-raced people, whites have long been able to pursue their own interests, while seemingly acting from a position not governed by race. In this sense, to ‘simplify life for all’ may be

interpreted as the ability to pursue white interests while appearing to act in the best interests of humanity.

Therefore, the act of allowing the substitution of plant and animal names for those of white heroes is not a neutral one for the sake of fairness. In a strategic manoeuvre aimed at preserving maximum power, whiteness calculates the cost/benefit ratio between the allocation of street names honouring blacks, and the allocation of names which honour neither blacks nor whites. Thus, although whiteness has to surrender the names of its heroes, it wins half the battle by blocking the honouring of blacks. This manoeuvre therefore has the potential to guarantee a continued stability of white power since “non-people names . . . should never have to be renamed”.

4.4.4 *Strategy 4: Jan Christiaan Smuts*

This strategy aims to retain the name of streets currently commemorating Jan Smuts, by employing a discourse which privileges the white leader’s historical contributions over the contributions of other individuals.

Smuts the hero denied

. . . The British have statues of the world’s greatest statesmen in front of their parliament, Lincoln and Churchill and Mandela have just joined them and, of course, Jan Smuts. Mandela is a great statesman but his works are all within the boundaries of South Africa.

. . . It is ridiculous that while the Brits honour him [Smuts], we try to remove the name of the Western Cape’s great son from our roads. (Peter Marais, *Cape Argus*, 10 September 2007)

Keep Smuts’s name alive

Regarding Jan Smuts, may I too reject proposed name changes in three areas . . . May I remind our nation that Smuts was Freeman of 17 foreign cities, had numerous miscellaneous honours bestowed on him and earned more awards than any other South African. (D. Beelders, *Cape Argus*, 6 September 2007)

Great statesman Smuts earned a spot on the map

. . . What I cannot understand is the attempts to remove the name of Jan Smuts. To me and many others, Smuts was as great a South African as any other living or dead individual and an important part of whites' heritage in this country.

In fact, I venture to ask if this country would have been where it is now without him. . . .

One must concede that Smuts, together with Louis Botha, Cecil John Rhodes and Barry Hertzog, was responsible for the superb infrastructure of this country that the ANC inherited when they came to power.

The Nationalist Party also contributed, but they lost it somewhat with their policy of apartheid. . . .

His [Smuts's] name has already unfairly been taken away from the OR Tambo Airport. . .

How ironic is it that the City of Cape Town wants to take his name off the map, but he was the person who first put South Africa on the map. (Alan Epstein, *Cape Argus*, 28 August 2007)

These letters attempt to portray Smuts as an individual worthy of recognition above all other individuals by generally describing Smuts as “the Western Cape’s great son” who “earned more awards than any other South African” and “put South Africa on the map”. The primary aim of this discourse is thus to block the significance – and recognition – of other important public figures, by proclaiming Smuts’s contributions to exceed all others’. An indication that this aim is motivated by white interests is provided by the third writer’s suggestion that Smuts forms “an important part of whites’ heritage”.

Moreover, the same letter also hints at white superiority through an assertion that without Smuts and other white individuals (including the National Party), the country’s “superb infrastructure” would not be in existence. This assertion in turn ignores the negative impact that various forms of racially-discriminatory policy – both pre- and post-1948 – had on the type of infrastructure available to black South Africans. For instance, as Frescura (2001) points out, the State only took steps towards providing Johannesburg’s urban black population with housing after 1945, and the later apartheid-created townships generally lacked sufficient, or even basic, infrastructure.

Coupled with this is an exclusion of alternate discursive representations of Smuts. To take one example, in an analysis of Smuts's views concerning race, Garson (2007) suggests that although he held more moderate (and perhaps even anti-essentialist) views regarding race compared to Nationalist Party leaders, Smuts nevertheless promoted notions of white cultural superiority, and played an active role in the formation of racially-discriminatory policy. The exclusion of such alternate representations thus permits whiteness to shape the contestation in ways that deproblematised the role played by white historical figures in processes of racial oppression. As a result, the importance of those who fought racial oppression – and who consequently may deserve commemoration – is rendered insignificant through the omission of the very question of racial oppression.

4.4.5 *Strategy 5: Remembering History*

This strategy relies on discourses of amnesia and denial to rewrite history, and thus delegitimize the process of renaming.

Respect city's names

Changing street names in an historic city shows short-sightedness in the extreme. It effectively destroys links with past, historical references in books on the city, for example, “on the corner of Church and Long Street there was a tobacconist in 1810, which moved to 344 Kloof Street...”. Can you imagine the confusion in a century or two? It is doing a complete injustice to our forefathers. What about the thousands of maps and map books lying around? . . .

Sure, name new streets after important or recent political figures, and certain changes are important. For the right reasons. (Bruce Clemence, *Cape Times*, 22 February, 2007)

History in city streets

The names [of city streets] are not lightly given, and should not be lightly removed. Those who come later may not know or appreciate the reason behind the name, but others did. To change a street name is to erase a part of history, or a part of the record of the area.

That the memory may not be pleasant, in the minds of some, is no reason to try and change the record.

We should remember that we can only understand what is good if we remember the bad. . . .

By all means, if you wish to recognise some person or event by way of a street name, give that name to a new street or place, but do not tamper with the record of the past. (R.E. van der Ross, *Cape Times*, 2 August, 2007)

The above extracts present the process of renaming as an erasure of history, arguing that “we can only understand what is good if we remember the bad” despite the fact “that the memory may not be pleasant, in the minds of some”. While the objections appear to speak in the best interests of all, the phrases “in the minds of some” and “a complete injustice to our forefathers” suggest that the contestation emanates from the perspective of whiteness. Firstly, while there is indeed merit in remembering and learning from the mistakes of the past, a sharp distinction needs to be made between *remembering* (or acknowledging) the atrocities committed by those who served apartheid, and *honouring* those who served apartheid via the naming of streets. Following, secondly, in contrast to what these writers claim, changing street names does not equate with erasing a person’s deeds from history, or destroying the continuity of history itself. Instead, one might argue that the process of renaming challenges the legitimacy of honouring those who played a part in upholding the apartheid regime.

Ironically, despite the appeal to “not tamper with the record of the past”, the objective for whiteness is exactly that – to reframe the past through ‘tampering’. Following Theissen (1997), the discourses in the above extracts may be seen as part of “an extensive revisionist historiography” aimed at “playing down the horrors of apartheid” and “denying its atrocities” (p. 83). To this aim, the extracts contain a subtle undercurrent of amnesia, which serves to block aspects of history that are problematic for whiteness. While the honouring and remembering of the past is advocated, events of the apartheid past are rendered unremarkable through omission. Essentially then, amnesia prepares the groundwork and secures favourable conditions for a discourse of denial, wherein the latter may work with an already carefully considered representation of the past (Ansell, 2004). In other words, the forgetting of the apartheid past allows the writer to deny the importance, and thus the legitimacy, of unpleasant memories “in the minds of some”.

Therefore, in a careful balancing act, whiteness has to literally erase aspects of the past through processes of amnesia, minimisation and denial, while simultaneously appealing

against what it considers an erasure of its own past. By ignoring the apartheid past, this discourse neutralises the significance of current street names, thus delegitimizing attempts at renaming. Eliminating the necessity for renaming prepares the way for the suggestion that *new* streets should be named “after important or recent political leaders”. In turn, this manoeuvre allows the writers to keep whiteness intact through the preservation of current street names, securing some reminders of the past, even if future streets no longer honour particular leaders of the past.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted five strategies aimed at forestalling – and generally preventing – street renaming in Cape Town. Although presented here as distinct, these strategies should be seen as inter-woven and mutually-reinforcing. Hence elements of one strategy or theme at times appeared within letters predominantly based on a different theme. For instance, a recurring and underlying theme within many letters was an appeal to preserve current street names due to their historical or nostalgic significance. While the letters examined here collectively aimed to block renaming, it is also evident that some strategies are more open to transformation than others.

5 THE 2007 RUGBY WORLD CUP AND TRANSFORMATION

In South Africa, sport in general and rugby in particular became central cultural elements in the emergence and maintenance of geographies of exclusion and division that conditioned the entrenchment of divergent sporting cultures among spatially divided groups (Black & Nauright, 1998, p. 23).

5.1 Rugby in Colonial and Apartheid South Africa

5.1.1 *Early Beginnings: The Rise of Sport*

British sports were introduced to South Africa following the arrival of British soldiers at the Cape around 1800, and the arrival of British settlers from the 1820s onward (Archer & Bouillon, 1982; Black & Nauright, 1998). Black and Nauright (1998) contend that compared to other British colonies, sport had a higher significance in South Africa due to its white minority population. For one, British sports served as a reminder of ‘home’ for white settlers in a context wherein they were vastly outnumbered by blacks (Merrett, 2007; Morrell, 1996). More crucially, it provided a means through which to create a boundary between white settlers and the native population. The British culture of the 1800s was considered morally superior to local African cultures by the British, where whiteness and Britishness were seen as signifiers of civilisation. The rules and customs associated with British sports – in particular cricket – reflected many of the moral and cultural values considered essential for the making of civilised men (Black & Nauright, 1998). The introduction of rugby in 1870s Natal, for instance, allowed for the consolidation of an elite class of whites (distinct not only from blacks but also from the white working-class who played soccer) and the construction of a particular type of masculinity via the values attached to the game (Morrell, 1996).¹ The introduction of racially-exclusive sports – such as rugby – at white, English-speaking schools

¹ Although this point cannot be considered further here, rugby’s gendered dimension and its role in constructing masculinity via a space that excludes women (except as spectators) cannot be overlooked. For a discussion on these aspects see Grundlingh (1995b), Morrell (1996) and Van der Riet (1995).

provided educators and administrators with one means to teach and reinforce the values that in turn helped to construct the distinction between a ‘civilised’ settler population and an ‘uncivilised’ native one (Black & Nauright, 1998; Morrell, 1996).

At the same time, however, Odendaal (1995) highlights that mission schools provided a small proportion of the black population with the opportunity to become ‘civilised’ through British-controlled education. The adoption of Christianity, British cultural customs and sport – the latter seen as a form of ‘muscular Christianity’ – enabled some blacks to achieve civilised status, which set them apart from the rest of the black population. Importantly, this status provided opportunities for upward social mobility via access to better-paid jobs, and the hope of assimilation into civilised society. It was thus not surprising that members of the black elite brought sports with them when they joined the emerging mining industry. The industry subsequently used its sponsorship of black sporting activity during leisure time as a means to divert workers’ attention away from appalling working and living conditions on the mines. In this way, it not only used sport as a mechanism of social control, but also helped promote sport within the black working class (Odendaal, 1995).

5.1.2 Afrikaner Appropriation of Rugby

Although rugby started as a distinctly British game, the sport was subsequently appropriated by, and became most closely identified with, white Afrikaners. Tracing the rise of rugby among the Afrikaner community, Grundlingh (1995b) states that the University of Stellenbosch – considered the most prestigious Afrikaner university – played a fundamental role in this regard. Having made rugby an integral part of student life, it helped ensure that graduates, especially male teachers and ministers, went on to disseminate the game in other parts of the country (Grundlingh, 1995b). The popularity of the game was also increased by Afrikaner successes on the rugby field, particularly against the British, making rugby an arena where Afrikaners could demonstrate their sporting superiority and thus generate communal pride (Black & Nauright, 1998; Grundlingh, 1995b). Yet such institutional and cultural factors were not the only reasons for the incorporation of rugby into Afrikaner nationalism. As Grundlingh (1995b) maintains, the combat-like nature and physical toughness of the game – and the requirement for players to possess traits such as strength, resilience and bravery in the face of opposition – symbolically paralleled aspects of a rising Afrikaner nationalism during the 1930s and 1940s. Alongside this fierceness however, rugby

was also held to be a game played by gentlemen. As such it provided an opportunity to instill the sort of discipline and values required of the country's future leaders (Grundlingh, 1995b).

5.1.3 *Rugby under Apartheid*

Given the historical prevalence of segregation in most sports, by the time the National Party took power in 1948, the idea of segregating South African sport was not new (Archer & Bouillon, 1982). The early 1960s saw the formalisation of segregation within sport under Prime Minister Verwoerd, which translated into the banning of racially mixed sports teams and inter-racial matches (Grundlingh, 1995b). According to Grundlingh (1995b) the Afrikaners had also gained administrative control over rugby during this period and rugby became the 'official' Afrikaner sport. Within this context, as Draper (1963) notes, the possible inclusion of Maori players in a 1960 All Blacks rugby tour to South Africa became a major point of contention. Despite protest from its public, the New Zealand Rugby Union decided not to send Maoris on the tour. Suggestions that Maoris might be given the same 'white' status as the Japanese – the latter being considered 'white' for sports such as swimming – were not considered as South Africa remained firm on the matter of racial mixing in sport (Draper, 1963). Political tensions over the matter grew and a planned 1967 All Black tour to South Africa was subsequently cancelled (Grundlingh, 1995b).

The apartheid government's unrelenting segregationist stance resulted in South Africa's ban from the Olympic Games starting in 1964, as well as from other international sporting events. However, as Booth (2003) mentions, several international rugby tours still took place (Britain 1969-70; Australia 1970; New Zealand 1981), albeit under heavy police presence due to violent public protest. Since rugby formed an important part of Afrikaner nationalism, its isolation from the international arena preferably had to be avoided. Just how much it meant was evidenced by Prime Minister Vorster's subsequent decision to allow non-white players from international teams to play in South Africa, but only for rugby (Grundlingh, 1995b). The government therefore faced a difficult choice between maintaining the principles of apartheid, and relaxing those principles in an aim to maintain international rugby participation. At the same time that the international community had to be appeased, the more conservative members of the white population also had to be appeased, and this meant limiting racial integration to the greatest possible extent (Black & Nauright, 1998).

To state the matter briefly, up until 1990, the government embarked on a series of concessionary policy reforms aimed (unsuccessfully) at convincing the international community that significant changes had occurred within the apartheid order, hence urging the lifting of the international sports ban (Black & Nauright, 1998; Grundlingh, 1995b). The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other political organisations in February 1990 allowed for the start of negotiations to end the international sports ban. 1992 saw South Africa's return to the Olympic Games, the launch of a unified rugby sporting body – the South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU) – and, with the arrival of international rugby teams from New Zealand and Australia, the end of rugby's isolation (Grundlingh, 1995a). As Grundlingh (1995a) notes, the period was also marked by extreme political violence. A massacre in the township of Boipatong in June 1992 threatened to halt all international sporting events, as the ANC felt it insensitive to proceed amid ongoing violence and mourning. However an agreement was reached between SARFU and the ANC that respect would be shown to the victims of violence; neither the national anthem – *Die Stem* – nor the national flag that served under apartheid would form part of the proceedings, and a minute's silence would be observed in recognition of the Boipatong victims. Yet the test match against Australia at Ellis Park on August 15 proved otherwise. Nearly 70 000 spectators – mainly white, Afrikaner men – arrived, many bearing the flag in defiance. When the crowd was asked to observe a minute's silence, the crowd started singing *Die Stem*, which was also played over the stadium's loudspeakers after SARFU's Louis Luyt had given his approval (Grundlingh, 1995a).

The Ellis Park test demonstrated the presence of significant white resistance to the widespread changes that were occurring and consequently raised questions over the appropriateness of rugby as a medium for promoting nation-building. Despite this, the apologies issued by SARFU ahead of the test against Australia at Newlands on August 22, along with their subsequent honouring of their agreement with the ANC, served as a reminder that international rugby could henceforth only be played under conditions which accorded with the new dispensation (Black & Nauright, 1998).

5.2 Rugby in the Post-Apartheid Era

5.2.1 *Race and the 1995, 1999 and 2003 Rugby World Cups*

South Africa's hosting of the 1995 Rugby World Cup (RWC) was significant due to a number of inter-related factors. As Black and Nauright (1998) note, the World Cup generated both national and international interest in its own right, and, added to this, it was the first major international sporting event to be hosted in the country after the end of apartheid. On the one hand, the event paradoxically centred on a sport which had been intimately connected with apartheid. Yet on the other, the event provided the country with an important chance to showcase its transformational achievements as a newly-established democracy (Black & Nauright, 1998).

Analyses of media discourse around the time of the 1995 World Cup overwhelmingly show that the event was portrayed as a positive unifying force, fostering nation-building and post-apartheid transformation, and was therefore judged an overall success (Desai & Nabbi, 2007; Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003; Van der Riet, 1995). Perhaps the most significant event picked up on by the media – in conjunction to South Africa's win in the finals of the tournament – was then President Mandela's appearance on the field wearing the Springbok cap and jersey. Mandela's acceptance of the Springbok symbol, coupled with his support of rugby, was seen as a great act of reconciliation – mainly towards white Afrikaners (Black & Nauright, 1998). Added to this, reports highlighting black support of the Springboks conveyed encouraging signs towards a non-racial future, and seemed to confirm the validity of the official Springbok slogan – 'one team, one country' (Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003; Van der Riet, 1995).

Shortly prior to the RWC, Grundlingh (1995a) maintained that both race and class-based inequalities, and a game dominated by whites both administratively and on the field, would stand in the way of uniting the country, thus thwarting sport's ability to act as a mechanism for healing. Due perhaps to South Africa's win however, the RWC served to strengthen "the basis for a new hegemonic conception of 'South African-ness' which went some way towards defining a new basis for social consent, *yet [it] left underlying social and economic relations relatively untouched* (Black & Nauright, 1998, p. 130; emphasis added). The media's portrayal of 'a nation united in celebration' therefore elided significant contradictions and persisting divides, namely along racial lines. Following Van der Riet (1995), media discourse

“aim[ed] to include all those traditionally marginalised by the institution of rugby, especially black men and all women . . . [by] construct[ing] a collective myth of mass support and participation” (p. 102). In turn, this enabled a glaring example of continued racial exclusion to be largely overlooked: apart from one player – Chester Williams – the World Cup Springbok team was a white team.

In 1997 Springbok coach Andre Markgraaff was caught on tape referring to Mululeki George (SARFU’s senior vice-president) as a “fucking kaffir” and excerpts of the tape were aired on national news. Although Markgraaff subsequently resigned, his attitude was seen by some as a reflection of a deep-rooted and unyielding racism that remained within the rugby fraternity despite its supposed transformation (Black & Nauright, 1998). Following the incident, transformation within South African rugby started to receive more serious consideration by the media and the broader public. In a comparison of print media during 1995 and 1999, Farquharson and Marjoribanks (2003) identified a shift from an emphasis on rugby’s symbolic transformation in 1995, to growing concerns in 1999 that the symbolic changes that had occurred thus far were insufficient. In the latter period, the racial composition of the Springbok team emerged as a key point of debate, coupled with questions about the institutional changes which ought to take place within rugby to reflect non-racialism and in turn foster nation-building (Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003).

Another incident bringing the issue of racism to the fore, and making both national and international headlines, occurred in 2003 while the Springboks were at a training camp for the selection of the 2003 World Cup squad. As Keohane (2004) describes, Geo Cronjé, a white player, refused to share a room with Quinton Davids (a coloured player), or use the same shower and toilet that Davids had used. Both players were excluded from the squad, but a committee later cleared Cronjé of racism (Desai & Nabbi, 2007).

5.2.2 *Black Sporting Myths*

The incidents noted above point to continued racial divisions within South African rugby, and indicate some of the dynamics that occur when attempts are made to integrate black players into a formerly ‘white’ domain. To foreground the analysis in the next section, it is important to consider some of the factors (or more correctly, myths) which have helped justify blacks’ exclusion from rugby on the part of whites.

“Contrary to general knowledge” as Odendaal (1995) has stated, “black South Africans have a long, indeed remarkable, rugby and sporting history” (p. 25). The omission of this history, alongside the promotion of white sporting history, has enabled the majority of whites to dismiss over 100 years of black rugby along with its influence on cultural life within the Western and Eastern Cape (Odendaal, 1995). Reasons for this range from the general neglect of black sporting history by scholars (Black & Nauright, 1998), to informal and later formal segregation in sports, which left the majority of white South Africans insulated from black sporting activity (Archer & Bouillon, 1982). These factors in turn allowed whites to hold the erroneous view that white participation in popular South African sports had long preceded participation on the part of blacks (Black & Nauright, 1998). Aided by apartheid propaganda, this view later led to a perception that black people were generally not interested in sport. To take one example, in a chapter on sport in South Africa, the Official Yearbook of 1975 (South Africa, 1975) stated that:

It is only since comparatively recently that the Bantu peoples have shown a marked interest in what may be called modern sporting activities. For centuries they found their recreation in traditional activities, such as hunting and tribal dances. It was the White nation, with its European background and tradition which participated in the recognised sports . . . (829)

Such views were collectively used to rationalise black exclusion from the sporting arena on the part of whites (Booth, 2003), naturalising gross inequalities between well-equipped sporting facilities available to whites, and dusty, unmarked fields set aside for sporting activity within black areas (Booth, 1998). In cases where black sporting interest and ability were acknowledged, the aim was twofold. First, Archer and Bouillon (1982) argue that acknowledging black ability in sports such as soccer, boxing and running served to reinforce perceptions of the black body as a machine capable of performing intense physical tasks. Encouraged by the mines, black sporting activity simultaneously served to justify the appropriateness of black labour on the mines and maintain labourers’ physical productivity (Archer & Bouillon, 1982). Second, Black and Nauright (1998) state that by creating particular associations between race and sport (namely through exclusion), it could be held that black people were naturally drawn towards ostensibly ‘black’ sports – namely soccer and boxing – and that blacks therefore had little or no interest in ‘white’ sports such as rugby.

Assertions that blacks were neither mentally nor physically suited to play the game were used to explain a supposed lack of interest on the part of blacks, and helped to dismiss the possibility of black participation in rugby (Odendaal, 1995).

Legislative changes in the New South Africa have diminished the connection between rugby and race, yet they have not entirely erased the thinking which has informed this connection. In an ethnographic study of a desegregated school in Durban, Dolby (2001b, 2002) describes how, despite waning support from learners, the school attempts to preserve its links to predominantly white schools in the area by promoting rugby. While basketball is popular with a majority of learners, the school devotes little energy to the game as inter-school matches overwhelmingly involve teams from black schools. By avoiding the promotion of ostensibly 'black' sports (including soccer) and channelling its resources into rugby, the school not only attempts to maintain its image as a white school; it also actively creates a space in which to generate whiteness (Dolby, 2001b, 2002). According to Keohane (2004), the 'otherness' of black rugby players has been reinforced in the contemporary context via coaches' references to "non-whites", 'players of colour', 'development players', 'quota players', 'players from previously disadvantaged backgrounds' and 'them'" (p. 50). By reserving the term 'rugby players' for whites, the historical connection between whiteness and rugby is reasserted, and the status of blacks as equals to whites on the rugby field is denied (Keohane, 2004). Whether such a distinction is still generally expressed as boldly and openly is unclear, yet, as the data in section 5.3.1 suggest, at least one contemporary discourse does not regard white and black players as equals.

5.3 Analysis: The 2007 Rugby World Cup

As could be expected in a RWC year, the majority of letters printed about sport in 2007 concerned rugby. Perhaps less expected (yet fully congruent with South Africa's rugby history) was the extent to which, collectively, the 146 rugby-related letters (*Cape Argus* = 79; *Cape Times* = 67) contained racialised undercurrents. This undercurrent was articulated within a broader discourse about transformation, which featured overtly in at least 64 letters. 16 letters appeared about the selection of Luke Watson – a white player – who, for political reasons, was included in the team as a quota player. Though some contained references to race and race-based selection, these letters were generally of insufficient relevance to the analysis. 66 letters about a variety of topics such as coaching, rugby administration, and

South Africa's RWC win were excluded from the analysis. However, it should be noted that some of these letters mentioned issues of race and racial transformation in passing. Further, a separate category of 15 letters spoke about transformation in sport – namely cricket.

The issue of racial transformation in rugby featured strongly in the remaining 64 letters. These may be divided into two themes. The first theme, comprising the majority of letters, dealt with the question of black inclusion in the Springbok rugby squad. Here the debate centred on opposing opinions about the selection of players according to racial quotas, or alternatively, about the selection of players on the basis of merit. The second theme, comprised of a handful of letters, concerned the appropriateness of the Springbok emblem in rugby. The following analysis is hence divided into two sections. Each analysis section covers selected letters which resist transformation, and includes a discussion about the respective issue under contestation.

5.3.1 Theme: Defending White Afrikaner Superiority in Rugby

The following letters employ a discourse which positions white Afrikaners as naturally and uniquely suitable for the game of rugby – particularly in forward positions – and hence largely rejects the suitability of black players for Springbok rugby. These letters form part of a larger debate about racial quotas in rugby.

Brutal treatment

. . . How can it be fair to tell a player that he may be the best in his position but, unfortunately, because of our political expectations, he is unable to secure a place in either the Super 14 franchise or Springboks? . . .

The standard set, and expectations, for transformation in rugby are also unreasonable and unfair. The demands of forward-dominant rugby requires [*sic*] a player with a specific physical make-up.

In South Africa, we have been blessed with this unique feature, dating back to our Dutch ancestry (the second-tallest population in the world) – pure beef brutes. We bulk-produce these “abnormal” humans, even to the amazement of Australian and New Zealand commentators.

. . . There are seven backs in a team and eight forwards. The physical make-up of a backline player is very different to that of a forward.

So, let's be honest and appreciate that we have a most valued asset, suitable for fighting our battles upfront and in the rucks and malls. These brutes are a perfect fit for a forward game of rugby.

Transformation has to be realistic, and it's no use setting quotas in a department of the game where black players will always be disadvantaged . . . (Paul Jacobson, *Cape Times*, 14 August 2007)

Springboks need bruising bulk of Afrikaners

. . . . The South Africans best suited for these positions [forwards] are Afrikaners. Whether the rest of the country likes it or not, they are, as a group, best equipped for forward play. There might be exceptions, but overall it would be fair to say that 90% of forwards will come from this population group if selected on merit.

Blacks, Indians, coloureds and English-speaking white South Africans just don't match up in the bruising bulk department. (Simon Mantell, *Cape Times*, 24 October 2007)

Size matters in rugby

. . . Size dominates rugby. Although our recent under-19 and under-21 squads were reasonably well balanced with black players, it's a different ball game in senior rugby when the boys have filled out more.

White players have bigger frames and seem to grow bigger faster after under-21 level than black players. . . .

The New Zealand Maoris are naturally big and fast and have no problem blending into New Zealand rugby.

The only answer is to import West Africans so that we can have black representation among the forwards especially at lock forward.

Just as the Kenyans and Ethiopians dominate long-distance running events and the Nigerians the sprinting events, so should rugby be left to those suitably built for the sport. (Peter Phillips, *Cape Times*, 8 August 2007)

Real transformation

It is perhaps fortunate that South Africa has won the Rugby World Cup, because if the government and the rugby authorities have their way, it will never happen again.

To these people, transformation is a racist policy based purely on skin colour. No team that has not been selected on merit and that contains mostly black and coloured players will ever win the World Cup.

It seems beyond the understanding of this government that certain peoples are much more talented in, and more suited to some sports, than others.

For example, East Africans like the Kenyans are wonderful long-distance runners, while the bigger, more powerful West Africans are far better sprinters.

There are always exceptions, but black Africans are not generally suited, either by inclination or build, to the game of power and strength that rugby has become. That is why, when they do make teams, either on merit or quota, they are usually backline players, particularly wings. . . .

Transformation as applied to sport in South Africa at the moment is a transformation of quality to mediocrity. (T. Lacey, *Cape Times*, 24 October, 2007)

In the above letters, the representation of white Afrikaners as the sine qua non of rugby undoubtedly reflects the strong historical ties between Afrikanerdom and rugby described earlier in this chapter. Yet in an era where Springbok rugby is no longer formally exclusively white, the place of white Afrikaner players cannot be legitimised via nostalgia or tradition alone. An alternative strategy therefore relies on a biological discourse that creates a sharp distinction between white and black players, and which consequently naturalises and normalises respective inclusion and exclusion on the basis of race.

The letters posit that white Afrikaners possess unique, and naturally given, physical characteristics that provide them with a playing advantage. As “pure beef brutes” who possess the greatest “bruising bulk”, they are held to be “a perfect fit” for playing forward positions. In contrast, other race groups (including white English-speakers in one writer’s opinion) are considered to lack this “bruising bulk”, leaving black players at a “disadvantage”. Put differently, the selection of those other than white Afrikaners results in a decline in playing standards, for, as one letter states, “no team that has not been selected on merit and that contains mostly black and coloured players will ever win the World Cup”.

Having reduced the issue of player selection to the binary opposites of ‘good players’ and ‘bad players’ the letter-writers are seemingly able to take race out of the equation and elide the distinction between advocating the selection of good players and good *white* players –

because good players are naturally white players. By framing the issue of selection in terms of merit, accusations of racism are minimised as the argument assumes a stance of neutrality. As several authors have pointed out (Black & Nauright, 1998; Booth, 1998; Desai & Nabbi, 2007), despite the fact that merit selection was initially advocated by those in favour of black inclusion in sport under apartheid, the notion of merit selection has subsequently been recycled in the present by those wishing to limit black inclusion and thus maintain the former status quo.

Underpinning merit selection is a belief in equality between individuals and thus the assumption that all South Africans are on a level playing field. While this goes some way towards fostering transformation, it does risk perpetuating racial privilege by overlooking both the material and structural inequalities created by apartheid (Booth, 1998). For instance, SARFU's multi-million rand development programme – launched in 1993 – aims to correct such inequalities by promoting and developing rugby for black youth (Grundlingh, 1995a). Recent criticism of the programme's ability to adequately attain this goal suggests that these historical inequalities will not be overcome in the near future (Keohane, 2004), indicating that the playing field is not yet level. Moreover, Booth (1998) notes that merit selection ignores the fact that black people can and do excel if they are merely given the opportunity to participate in the game. Chester Williams is one example of a token black player who went on to excel in the game (Booth, 1998). More recently, as one of the few black Springboks, Bryan Habana went on to become the International Rugby Board's Player of the Year for 2007. One may speculate that myths about the abilities of black players, as well as the biological thinking described below, serve to limit black inclusion and mark black players who excel as exceptions to the norm.

These issues aside, the letters suggest that, if chosen on merit (i.e. all things being equal), whites belong in forward positions while blacks belong on the wing. This idea is reflective of what Maguire (1991) terms 'stacking' in team sports, or the over-representation of players of a certain race in particular playing positions. Stacking divides playing positions into 'central' and 'non-central' ones; the former involving much interaction with the greatest number of one's team-members, and the latter involving little interaction with only a few of one's team-members (Maguire, 1991). Importantly, stacking is informed by a biological view on race – positing that significant differences exist between races – translating into assumed differences in sporting ability and the ostensible suitability of particular races for particular playing

positions (Maguire, 1991; Spracklen, 2008). Reflecting on research on football in the United States, Maguire (1991) notes that “the more ‘central’ the position, the greater the likelihood that it would be held by a white rather than a black” (pp. 98-99). Racist assumptions about sporting ability thus mean that white players are placed in positions requiring “leadership, intelligence, emotional control and the ability to make decisions under pressure” while blacks are channeled towards positions requiring “strength, speed, quickness, high emotion and good ‘instincts’” (Maguire, 1991, p. 99).

The stacking of black rugby players in positions of speed has been shown to occur in the United Kingdom (Long, Carrington & Spracklen, 1997). Similarly, Desai and Nabbi (2007) have shown that this practice occurs in South Africa. Moreover, based on the pool of under-21 teams from 1994 to 2005, Desai and Nabbi add that white players participate in an average of 6,5 more games than their black counterparts. It is possible that the practice of giving white players greater participation on the field may be caused by the perception that the inclusion of black players results in the exclusion of white players with superior sporting abilities (Koehane, 2004).

In particular, the above letters are replete with references to blacks being physically too small for forward positions. Following one coach’s comments, Koehane (2004) maintains that references to black players being *too small* may be interpreted as being *too black*. Yet the letters attempt to avoid racist accusations by grounding this assertion within a biological discourse. The power of this discourse is in its contention that there exist physical differences between black and white players, making each race suitable for a particular position. Since these are assumed to be inherent and natural they become unchangeable and are thus held to be a reflection of biological reality. This discourse is thus reminiscent of the type of ‘scientific racism’ found during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In a process of reverse causality, common social beliefs, and not objective data, guided scientific enquiry about race and race differences. Bodily measurements (e.g. cranial capacity) taken in biased ways led to foregone conclusions about race, in effect ‘proving’ pre-existing notions about the racial inferiority of blacks and the superiority of whites (cf. Blakey, 1999; Gould, 1996).

Thus, although claims about racial differences in sporting performance are not particularly new, Spracklen (2008) notes that the debate has recently focused on the performance of black, West African sprinters and the idea that they possess a greater number of fast-twitch

muscle fibres than whites. The claim that such significant physical, biological differences exist stands in opposition to studies which have found no such significant differences² and, moreover, to the finding that differences are greater within a given race group than between race groups (Blakey, 1999; Carter, 2007). However, Spracklen (2008) suggests that the need for sports scientists to explain and boost performance has the effect of perpetuating the quest for a possible racial factor in performance, in turn normalising a newer brand of scientific racism. In a more general sense, Carter (2007) explains that genetic research (viz. the Human Genome Project) has helped to revitalise race categories since

genomics dissolves race categories (by undermining the link between somatic appearance and group) only to reconstitute them at a deeper level (by suggesting that our most significant connections to other human beings lie in our genes). Race categories thus re-appear as a new truth about human identity. (p. 554)

By relying on a biological discourse founded on race differences, the letters presented above attempt to carve a special and permanent place for white Afrikaners in Springbok rugby. Yet the letters ultimately contradict the very foundation of their logic, for they ignore the fact that Afrikaner blood is not, and cannot be, 'pure'. According to Posel (2001b), the whiteness of many ostensibly 'white' South African families has always been tenuous due to a genealogy which, to varying degrees, included black roots through intermarriage. Referring to the intermarriage between the Dutch settler population, and imported slaves and the indigenous Khoikhoi, Steyn (2001b) notes that "the implications of this interbreeding have been repressed within Afrikaner culture, though most eminent Afrikaner families are known to have some 'impure' blood in their ancestry" (p. 27).

It is only by ignoring this fact that the letters can unproblematically perpetuate what Spracklen (2008) terms the myth of "Holy Blood" which centres on "the belief that blood, heredity, [and] genes constitute a biological essence that defines individuals" (p. 222). Acknowledgement of racial impurity in this case not only risks exposing the myth of white Afrikaners' suitability for particular sporting positions; it also risks opening up such playing positions to members of other race groups with Afrikaner blood in their ancestry, thus thwarting any hope of securing white Afrikaners' place in Springbok rugby.

² See Spracklen (2008) for some recent examples of studies which claim that such differences exist, as well as a refutation of such claims.

5.3.2 *The Springbok Emblem*

The springbok was adopted as the emblem of the South African rugby team in 1906. In the following decades, being selected as a Springbok player – both in rugby and other sporting disciplines – represented the achievement of sporting excellence, and the Springbok thus became a revered symbol to which young athletes aspired (Booth, 1996; Dobson, 2006; Retief, 2006). Of all South African sports, rugby has enjoyed the closest connection to the Springbok, to the degree that references to the *Boks*, *die Bokke* or *Springboks* have become synonymous with rugby (Booth, 1996; Dobson, 2006).

Yet the honour of being a Springbok was reserved for whites. As Prime Minister John Vorster articulated to parliament in 1971, “the Springbok rugby team is not representative of the whole of South Africa. It has never been that. It has never claimed to be representative of the whole of South Africa. It is representative of the whites of South Africa” (Booth, 1996, p. 462). The first break with this vision occurred in the 1970s with the government’s introduction of multinational sport. The first Springbok rugby trials including black players took place in 1977 and it was only in 1980 that the first black Springbok rugby player – Errol Tobias – was selected (Booth, 1996).

South Africa’s re-entry to international sport prompted the task of replacing apartheid-era team symbols with symbols representative of the new dispensation. Impending tours in 1992, the establishment of SARFU and the 1995 RWC all heightened the necessity of assessing the merit of using the Springbok as rugby’s symbol. While other sporting codes changed their symbols with relative ease, suggestions of replacing the Springbok elicited strong reactions from some rugby administrators and the public. As a result, the Springbok was retained, with a view of finding a suitable replacement for the emblem following the 1995 RWC (Dobson, 2006; Grundlingh, 1995a).

The debate concerning the emblem re-emerged around the time of the 1995 RWC, and according to Farquharson and Marjoribanks (2003), it focused on reconciliation. Those in favour of retaining the Springbok argued that retention would help foster reconciliation with the Afrikaner community, while those against argued that reconciliation was not possible in the presence of a symbol of apartheid (Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2003). Following the

1995 RWC, Nelson Mandela's efforts played a large role in ensuring that the Springbok remained the symbol of South African rugby (Retief, 2006). Following Booth (1996), a pertinent question involved whether the Springbok may be used as a symbol with which all South Africans can identify. The government's decision to retain the emblem was largely interpreted as an appropriation of an apartheid symbol with the aim of investing it with new meaning. This move has seen condemnation from among the more conservative of white Afrikaners, who have vowed not to support rugby under the Springbok symbol (Booth, 1996). Similarly, it is possible that some members of the black population have been offended by the decision to retain the symbol.

5.3.3 *Theme: Preserving the Springbok Emblem*

A first subset of letters argues for the emblem's retention by using a discourse that attempts to minimise the emblem's history and thus neutralise its significance.

Embrace your leaf

Dr Maurice Hommel [a letter-writer] (October 30) obviously suffered under the apartheid regime, which is unfortunate.

However, this wonderful Rugby World Cup aftermath we are experiencing should be celebrated and admired. We are so sick of politics and history, and we would love to enjoy the simple things – like our Bokke winning the world cup and the unity they have brought.

Why does the springbok have to be an offensive emblem? *Can't it just be what it is? A beautiful animal which can duck and dive like Bryan Habana.*

If the Springbok emblem is so offensive to Dr Hommel in Canada, maybe he should embrace the maple leaf and leave our springbok alone. (Leigh-Ann Blake, *Cape Times*, 01 November 2007; emphasis added)

Winning picture

. . . Please let us ignore the past and accept the name Springbok for what it is – a lovely athletic animal with the ability to *pronk*. It is a fine logo and nothing good will come from replacing it.

Those who write from Canada are needed here for their skills and not for criticism from afar. Keep the emblem. (Peter Stratten, *Cape Times*, 01 November 2007).

The minimisation of the emblem's history is achieved by advocating a focus away from politics and towards ostensibly simpler (and more significant) matters such as the Springboks' Rugby World Cup win: "We are so sick of politics and history, and we would love to enjoy the simple things – like our Bokke winning the world cup and the unity they have brought". A further attempt to minimise the emblem's historical significance involves putting forward its literal rather than symbolic significance, hence portraying it as "a lovely athletic animal with the ability to *pronk*".

A second subset of letters is also concerned about the future of the Springbok emblem. Here, however, a deeper historical significance of the emblem is invoked. The common thread running through these letters therefore does not depend on whether letter-writers agree on retaining the Springbok. Instead it depends on the assertion that whichever choice is made, it must be made in order to preserve the link between the Springbok emblem and sporting excellence.

Springbok emblem stood for excellence

Since Oregan Hoskins [South African Rugby Union's president] is adamant that as of next year he doesn't want a rugby side picked on merit but on skin colour, perhaps it is fitting that the Springbok emblem is dropped in favour of tree, or flower, or even a lump of manure. Frankly, who cares?

The Springbok has, for over 100 years, symbolised excellence in sport. It was around long before the word apartheid was thought of. In so doing [dropping the emblem], at least the heritage of the emblem will remain intact and proud, and that when someone in the future speaks of the Springboks, they will be referring to the real side, and not a political puppet side. (Mark Snyman, *Cape Argus*, 11 July 2007)

Boks to be Proteas?

. . . It is surely now time to listen to the minister [of Sport and Recreation – Makhenkesi Stofile], and to follow the example of our cricket team, the Proteas, by retiring the Springbok name and emblem and renaming the team the Proteas – new team, new name. This way we will honour the memory of all those who proudly wore the jersey in days gone by.

I can accept and support a transformed Protea rugby team, but not a mediocre Springbok team, for the next how many years. (Stefaans Olivier, *Cape Times*, 23 October 2007)

The two letters above centre on the historical connection between the Springbok and sporting excellence. Yet the history which is presented in the first letter is selective. While it is historically correct that the Springbok predates apartheid, it is an oversight to disassociate its conception from a period of white supremacy, where it was seen as an exclusive symbol representing whites and in particular white Afrikaners (Booth, 1996; Grundlingh, 1995a). As in the previous subset of letters, by disassociating the emblem from apartheid, the first letter is able to present the Springbok as a supposedly neutral emblem. This makes it possible for the emblem to appear as merely signifying a proud sporting heritage, devoid of racial significance, and in turn simplifies the debate.

Yet issues of racial transformation underlie much of the contestation here. The first letter contends that a Springbok team selected on the basis of race (presumably referring to the inclusion of black players) is not worthy of the emblem, suggesting that “the real” Springbok side existed under the days of apartheid. Here the withdrawal of the Springbok seems welcomed for the sake of disassociating it from rugby which has undergone transformation; that is, rugby with an ostensibly compromised level of excellence. This sentiment is also expressed in the second letter via a rejection of a now “mediocre Springbok team”. The persistence of thinking that associates ‘white’ with excellent rugby and ‘black’ with inferior rugby thus becomes clear. Further, the idea that “retiring the Springbok” will enable one to “honour the memory of all those who proudly wore the jersey in days gone by” (i.e. at a time when rugby was exclusively or at least predominantly white) suggests a reluctance to share the Springbok with black players. If the history of Springbok rugby can be sealed at this moment, then white rugby excellence and the myth of white superiority can still be preserved. In an era ostensibly heading towards rugby mediocrity, the Protea (or some other symbol), and not the Springbok, will be disgraced. Put more bluntly, if the Springbok can be disconnected from an era where rugby is no longer exclusively white, if the focus can remain on those who wore the emblem at a time when it was not shared among all South Africans, the Springbok – and with it the history of white rugby – can remain within the exclusive domain of whiteness.

In equating the Springbok with sporting excellence, both of the above letters indirectly preclude the possibility of sporting excellence under a different emblem. The following letter, however, takes this notion to its logical extreme.

Keep Springbok beacon

. . . Instead of looking for reasons to change the name of our national rugby team, let us use the positive energy that has been generated by the Rugby World Cup win to go back to having one name for all of our sports codes and one set of colours.

Let us use what was once a symbol of division and derision as a positive beacon of excellence – our most famous sporting brand and colours – the Springbok and the green and gold. (Leonard Kope, *Cape Argus*, 26 October 2007)

Here the Springbok emblem is held out “as a positive beacon of excellence”. By arguing for the reinstatement of national Springbok honours for all sporting codes due to the success of the Springboks, the writer implies that only the Springbok can act as a symbol to foster sporting success. Further, the use of *our* in the phrase “our most famous sporting brand and colours” assumes the acceptance and wholehearted ownership of the latter by all South Africans. Given that a fair number of white families are likely to have a history of inter-generational Springbok participation – as Dobson (2006) has noted in the case of rugby – this discourse may be aimed at creating continuity in the sporting aspirations of white South Africans. Thus, while certain aspects of the symbol’s history should be shed – namely those of “division and derision” – there is an unwillingness to let go of the Springbok’s supposed hold over the definition of sporting excellence. By blocking the possibility that South Africans might aspire to sporting excellence under a new symbol, formed in the context of a new South Africa, this discourse attempts to reinstate a sporting tradition with which whites were most comfortable and over which whites felt they had ownership.

Conclusion

Discourses assuming the naturalness of black exclusion from Springbok rugby are no longer given an exclusive voice in the South African media via a censorship of alternative discourses. Most significantly, such discourses are no longer backed-up or actively defended by the state. Nevertheless, the new dispensation still provides spaces in which discourses aimed at opposing or limiting black inclusion in Springbok rugby can be publicly articulated.

However, as such articulations are now more vulnerable to assault by counter-discourses, more robust (though not necessarily novel) defences need to be found in the hope of preventing rugby from being 'over-run' by blacks.

Indeed, the reliance on a biological discourse in letters to the editor – as part of a new era of 'scientific racism' – indicates that mere appeals to separate sporting traditions or historical nostalgia are no longer sufficient in securing black exclusion. A discourse positing the 'natural' sporting superiority of white Afrikaners over all 'others' in rugby's forward positions is reflective of a more general, wide-spread and established discourse of white racial superiority. The latter discourse thus serves to lend ostensibly unassailable validity to the claim of white sporting superiority, thereby securing the 'rightful' place of white Afrikaners in South African rugby.

This chapter has also shown that the contestation over the Springboks extends beyond the sports field and into the symbolic realm. While some wish to disassociate the Springbok emblem from a rugby team which is becoming more racially inclusive, others wish to preserve the Springbok and promote it within all South African sporting-codes as a symbol of sporting excellence. Neither strategy opens the possibility for a successful rugby future under a new symbol. Instead, it has been suggested that, in different ways, both strategies serve to preserve the link between the Springbok and whiteness.

6 RESOURCES FOR WHITENESS

As Steyn and Foster (2008) write, it is ironic that “black empowerment, as well as the difficulties that certainly are part of the transforming political and social landscape, become *resources* for whiteness” (p. 46; original emphasis). In other words, many of the issues arising within the post-apartheid context may be utilised in ways that bolster, even justify, whiteness as a ‘normal’ position of power and privilege. This chapter briefly highlights and comments on some topics that may collectively serve whiteness in this way.

Negative sentiments about Africa and its native population have helped justify and legitimise past colonial endeavours in Africa, with such sentiments continuing to inform perceptions of African decline following the end of white rule (Steyn, 2000, 2005). The following letter describes a general decline of standards as compared to the ‘more efficient’ running of the country in the past (i.e. under apartheid). Although few letters expressed these sentiments as boldly or in such concentration, this letter can be seen as a summation of a collective negativity expressed within letters across the data towards the new dispensation.

Remember when...

I remember Cape Town when buses ran a cheap and frequent service from St George’s and Adderley streets; when there were no sidewalk stalls; police kept traffic orderly and the accident rate low; when hundreds of extra police and “security guards” weren’t necessary; when one could drive out into the country without taking one’s life in one’s hands; when crime, drugs and interruptions in schools were unheard of; when a high-quality, problem-free education was the norm; when riots and jiggling mobs were not daily TV fare; when land and farmers were secure; when ... [*sic*]

The motto of this world is improve or die, period. It is why Britain is no longer an empire; why the US is on its way out; why South Africa and civil society are following suit. You can’t build a quality house with inferior materials, or have good governance with poor quality government. (R. Pentecost, *Cape Argus*, 29 January 2007)

Through nostalgia for the past, the above letter portrays the ‘old’ South Africa as having run smoothly and efficiently. Most strikingly, by claiming that “you can’t . . . have good governance with poor quality government”, the writer suggests that blacks cannot lead South Africa to a successful future. This claim is reflective of whites’ perceptions of blacks as “displacing the institutions and culture of Europe with the chaos and degradation of Africa” (Statman, 1999, p. 36) ostensibly threatening adequate standards and efficiency within a number of areas such as universities, places of work and the government (Statman, 1999).

For those holding sentiments of Afro-pessimism, Zimbabwe’s severe decline serves not only as a warning of Africa’s impending doom, but also as proof that such decline is inevitable – particularly under black leadership. Therefore, as Durlington (2006) maintains, there is an element of fear among some white South Africans that the country will – sooner or later – follow in Zimbabwe’s ruinous footsteps.

Better under Smith

Zimbabwe is ruined. One-third of its people now live in South Africa. . . .

All are critical of Mugabe, often publicly, and many even have the courage to say things were much better under Ian Smith [Zimbabwe’s Prime Minister under white rule].

Under Smith, Rhodesia became the number two country in Africa, with great infrastructure, productive farms and efficient industry. . . .

Southern Africa has lost a great leader in Smith, who established one of Africa’s greatest nations. (Agi Orfanos, *Cape Argus*, 26 November 2007)

The above discourse prepares the way for a related discourse which portrays whites as the only group who is able to ensure Africa’s success, and thus serves to advance white interests.

Whites must seek to join blacks in securing our future

Our government does not seem to recognise that it is alienating the white community by not addressing, firstly, crime, and secondly, the various disincentives for attracting new white investment and skills to this country.

It is no coincidence that the Western world’s wealthiest countries have substantial white populations, and South Africa, with the largest white community on the continent, is still the most economically successful in Africa. But for how long?

If whites' concerns about crime and other yardsticks of progress are disregarded by our government, and whites are merely regarded as a bunch of "whingers" and not the valuable resource they represent, future growth and development of our country does not look that rosy. (Guy Macleod, *Cape Argus*, 8 February 2007)

This discourse is also reiterated in the context of Affirmative Action. Here, however, white competence is presented alongside its supposed binary opposite: incompetent blacks appointed solely due to Affirmative Action.

Skills shortage

Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka's comments on affirmative action (November 15) are novel and absurd. In disputing that affirmative action retards economic activity, she attributes the skills shortage to ANC-sponsored economic growth.

Firstly, she should consider that nearly a million people have emigrated from South Africa in the past decade, mostly qualified, and many professionals.

It is beyond question that affirmative action – generally replacing experience with inexperience and substituting less-qualified people for those who knew what they were doing, in the name of redress – has contributed to this.

Secondly, she should know that human capital – accumulated knowledge and experience – makes for efficiencies; conversely, that its lack promotes inefficiency. . .

Likewise, the drain of accumulated skills has contributed to crumbling education, deteriorating law enforcement, declining health services and small business apathy. (MG Warburg, *Cape Times*, 20 November 2007)

As Ansell (2004) notes, the change in South Africa's presidential leadership from Nelson Mandela to Thabo Mbeki in 1999 more or less paralleled a change in government imperative, from that of fostering national unity and reconciliation, to tackling racially-based socio-economic inequalities. The shift from transition to transformation has in turn given rise to a context where the law dictates that neither citizenship nor governance may be based upon race, yet race has nonetheless been included in the law to facilitate social redress (Ansell, 2004). As part of such redress, Affirmative Action has served as "the lightning rod that catches feelings of grievance" (Steyn, 2001b, p. 73) from whites.

A number of letters associated being white with a victimised positionality; some as victims of crime, others as victims of Affirmative Action. Indeed, whites' perceptions of themselves as victims of 'reverse apartheid' within the new dispensation have been relatively common (Ansell & Statman, 1999; Steyn, 2005). The following letter articulates a position of white victimhood around Affirmative Action in strong, direct terms.

Whites have become the victims of reverse racism in the new SA

I am a white South African of the older generation, who was around during the apartheid era.

I was thrilled that apartheid was abolished because I believe all men and women are equal before God, regardless of their skin colour, and I am ashamed of the way many whites used to treat people of colour during those evil years.

However, if racism, prejudice and discrimination were wrong then, it's still wrong now when directed towards white people.

How long are we, the white minority, going to keep silent in the face of blatant discrimination like BEE?

How many more years must we labour under guilt while our white youth face constant rejection in job situations for which they are qualified?

Most of our white youth know nothing about apartheid except for what they're taught at school. Yet some of the very same things are now being directed at them.

. . . We need some white Mandelas and white Tutus to rise up on behalf of the injustice against whites and be a voice, so that we can truly be a democratic and free country, where even if your skin is white, there is equal opportunity and justice.

(Mrs Gohl, *Cape Argus*, 04 December 2007)

The writer is careful to establish her position regarding apartheid at the onset of the letter, which serves as immunity against racist accusation. Moreover, by equating Affirmative Action with apartheid – and simultaneously condemning apartheid – the writer is able to oppose Affirmative Action. The argument employed here is structured around a discourse of denial, constructing the current generation of youth as 'an innocent youth' removed from and cleansed of the apartheid past. Indeed, this kind of denialist reasoning mirrors the common assertion 'I never voted for the Nats' which Ansell and Statman (1999) link to a similar assertion used within the US context, namely 'I never owned slaves'. With reference to 'I never owned slaves' they point out the impossibility of directly accusing today's white

American population for the introduction of slavery or the ownership of slaves. This discourse of denial thus grants immunity against accusation through the absence of those directly responsible, resulting in the rejection and shedding of white responsibility for past injustice (Ansell & Statman, 1999).

By constructing young white South Africans as victims, this discourse shifts focus away from whites' ongoing economic power and how the accumulation of wealth under apartheid has allowed whites, including today's youth, to live comfortable lives (Steyn, 2001a). This discourse may thus help evade transformation and limit the extent to which whiteness has lost its position of advantage in the new dispensation.

Conclusion

The topics surveyed in this chapter have provided some examples of how whiteness can utilise the changes brought about by the new dispensation to construct discourses of resistance. A range of letters, including those about the country's political leadership, crime levels, African cultural customs (e.g. ritual animal slaughter) and the performance of governmental departments (e.g. Home Affairs) and utility providers (e.g. Eskom), contained similar discourses suggesting black incompetence.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Summary of Results

In a democratic South Africa, newspapers' letters pages form a public space wherein various opinions can be expressed about matters of concern. This means, on the one hand, that letter-writers can articulate new discourses that promote transformation and counter the old discourses of apartheid. On the other hand, it means that discourses reflecting apartheid's ideology and opposing transformation can also be articulated. Thus, whilst the former may create 'new truths' (Gqola, 2001), old truths may be reinvigorated, justified and reinforced by the latter. As the three preceding chapters have shown, attempts to maintain old truths can be found across a variety of topics.

The post-apartheid era has eliminated the legislative connection between race and space, thus undoing the link between racialised identities and space. The reclaiming of the country's physical spaces formerly reserved for whites has also been accompanied by the reclaiming of space at a discursive level – namely via the removal of offensive place-names and the renaming of some places commemorating whites and white culture. Alongside the desegregation of the country's physical space, the renaming of spaces has served to place the meaning of white identity under threat. Thus, objections to street renaming are not only about possible feelings of marginalisation as the legacy of colonialism and apartheid domination is addressed; these objections are also about the impact renaming has on white identity.

Five discursive strategies aimed at opposing street renaming – and, by implication, preserving part of the basis for white identity – have been examined in Chapter 4. The existence of overlap between these resistant strategies means that they are mutually reinforcing rather than analytically distinct. Yet, at the same time, it is also evident that different levels of opposition exist within these strategies. By way of summing up – if we consider each strategy separately – it is possible to note that some strategies appear more open to transformation than others.

Letters defending the commemoration of Jan Smuts advocate an outright rejection of renaming, portraying Smuts as an individual worthy of recognition above all other South Africans. This indicates a refusal to look beyond notions of white superiority and to consider

blacks as equally worthy of commemoration. Although letters advocating the prioritisation of social welfare similarly reject renaming, these are more careful in that they argue for a postponement of the task of renaming. By arguing that renaming should take place after various social problems have been addressed, this strategy attempts to hold the moral high ground while thwarting transformation.

Two strategies – namely *neutralising naming* and *unpronounceable African names* – allow a very limited scope for name changing. While the former does not advocate the retention of current names, it limits renaming to neutral, apolitical names. Hence, by blocking the commemoration of black leaders and African names, it limits the impact of transformation on whiteness. The latter strategy, by contrast, allows for the commemoration of some black, internationally known, anti-apartheid leaders, as well as key dates signifying South Africa's struggle towards democracy. While more accepting of transformation than the foregoing strategies, this strategy is merely a face-saving exercise which effects limited change. It is, in other words, an example of how whiteness engages in 'New South Africa Speak' (Steyn & Foster, 2008), presenting itself as compatible with the new dispensation while pursuing its own interests.

Lastly, by using discourses of amnesia and denial, letters urging us to remember history attempt to neutralise the colonial and apartheid past. In turn, these letters serve to delegitimise attempts at renaming, thus preserving current street names. While the suggestion that newly built streets should commemorate other important leaders and events is a positive step towards transformation, the suggestion that current street names ought to be retained, is not. This suggestion would perpetuate sites resistant to discursive transformation – allowing whites to retain exclusive spaces – instead of creating sites reflective of a democratic, post-colonial, post-apartheid order.

The positive changes that have occurred within the rugby fraternity over the past two decades cannot be denied. Authors such as Dobson (2006) and Retief (2006) have recently portrayed South African rugby as much more inclusive by pointing to the contrasts between apartheid and post-apartheid rugby, thus implying that racial issues within rugby have now been resolved or minimised to the level of general insignificance. In particular, their discussion of the Springbok emblem and its endorsement by Nelson Mandela generally elides issues of race, allowing them to present a picture wherein rugby has ostensibly fostered unity among

all South Africans. However, such a portrayal needs to be considered alongside issues of racial inclusion and exclusion. As Chapter 5 has shown, the link between whiteness and rugby is still very much evident within the contemporary setting; discourses espousing the superiority of white Afrikaners over blacks continue to emerge within debates about the racial composition of the Springboks and amid efforts to find ways of increasing black inclusion within the highest levels of rugby.

The Springbok emblem – historically linked to white rugby – remains a contested symbol though one which resists replacement.¹ Although some letters were open to replacing the Springbok emblem, these were united with letters opposing such a change in that they equated the Springbok with (white) sporting excellence. While some wish to preserve a history of white rugby excellence by changing the symbol at this time, others can only imagine excellence under the Springbok, and thus wish to extend its presence into the future. Such contentions can neither be separated from rugby's historical link to whiteness, nor from a discourse espousing the superiority of white Afrikaners. In Booth's (1996) words, it is probable that

the Springbok emblem will remain a symbol of racial division until there is ample evidence of black ownership by, for example, an equal racial mix of players. Only then will blacks recognize a legitimate historical discontinuity. Until such a break with the past occurs . . . history will conspire to preserve the Springbok as a symbol of an unsavoury ideology. (p. 477)

Although brief, Chapter 6 has shown that a range of themes or issues in the New South Africa provide whiteness with resources to potentially bolster its position in terms of power and privilege. These themes include perceptions about the country's general state, its political leadership, the implementation of Affirmative Action, and the performance of government departments and utility providers.

¹ In late 2008, a National Sports Indaba in Durban raised questions over the appropriateness of the Springbok rugby emblem. The ANC responded by stating that it did not wish to see the removal of the Springbok. As of 2009, the South African rugby jersey bears a Springbok emblem on the right breast and a Protea emblem on the left breast.

7.2 Discussion

The letters examined in this study demonstrate an “inventive dedication to maintaining business as usual” (Statman, 1999, p. 39) on the part of whiteness, despite the end of apartheid and the pressures of ensuing transformation. As outlined in Chapter 2, the ability to continually shift and adapt is a core characteristic of whiteness. The ‘inventiveness’ of these letters thus lies in their ability to block change within sites chosen for transformation, and to do so in ways that appear (at least on the surface) compatible with the new dispensation. As Steyn and Foster (2008) point out, whiteness in the New South Africa has to perform face-saving manoeuvres in order to maintain a position that appears morally acceptable and anti-racist. These face-saving manoeuvres in turn allow whiteness to be articulated in an arena of public discourse such as letters to the editor. Although Twine and Gallagher’s (2008) discussion of ‘third wave’ whiteness suggests that this is a general problem for whiteness in contexts that attempt to decentre it, one may speculate that – compared with contexts where whites are a numerical majority – South African whiteness faces greater challenges in this regard.

As a democratic society, we should expect to find a range of viewpoints about various topics in the letters pages. However, it is worrying to find a disproportionate number of letters opposing transformation within the very spheres that reflect apartheid’s legacy. Questions, including whether relatively few readers in favour of transformation took the opportunity to write to the *Cape Argus* and *Cape Times* to express their views, or, alternatively, whether the editors of these newspapers were biased towards printing more letters that opposed rather than supported transformation, cannot be addressed here. Nonetheless, it is possible to comment on the broad implications that the presence of resistant white discourses has for whiteness.

First, the letters examined in this study – particularly in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 – aim to render a resistant stance towards transformation as acceptable, even ‘normal’, and, in so doing, encourage action towards halting or limiting transformation (Richardson, 2008). Further, the inclusion of such letters in the letters section is a move which bolsters the legitimacy of resistant white discourses through publication (Richardson, 2001). While the discourses contained within these letters are no longer state-supported, their numerical dominance over counter-discourses serves to recentre rather than decentre whiteness.

Apart from the ‘inventiveness’ of whiteness already mentioned, another aspect ought to be considered. As Ansell (2004) comments, “racism resides less in the white (or black) mind than in the socio-historical context, which gives it purchase” (p. 22). In other words, South Africa’s deeply racialised, white-dominated past continues to influence the present and fuel the kinds of discourses that this study has examined. For instance, rugby’s close historical association with whiteness – coupled with myths about black unsuitability for the game – probably accounts for the tenaciousness of discourses espousing white Afrikaners’ biological superiority in rugby. At the same time, in light of this, there is an even greater urgency in detaching such discourses from the firm grasp of whiteness. At stake here is how to get those who feel entitled to a position of privilege to surrender such a notion.

Second, the broad theme examined in Chapter 6 indicates that the very changes brought about by the new dispensation may be utilised to bolster white privilege. This suggests that even if whiteness fails to block transformation in certain spheres – such as street renaming and Springbok rugby – it can still attempt to construct discourses that attack the results of such transformation. As transformation progressively erodes white advantage, it is possible that whites will increasingly use their status as a minority group to claim victim status. Thus, although English white talk currently serves to maintain white advantage (Steyn, 2004a) rather than actively defend it, this may change in the future. Hence, discourses of whiteness may be articulated in more bold, overt terms, and such articulations may be reflected in different topics than those examined in this study. In other words, as whiteness comes under new threat, new discourses may have to be employed to justify and legitimise its advantaged position. In turn, this may bring English whiteness closer to the Afrikaner brand of whiteness.

Concurrently, we may see a proliferation of discourses that represent whites as more competent than blacks in establishing a successful, post-apartheid future. In this regard, Salusbury and Foster (2004) indicate that white English-speaking South Africans are able to construct themselves as appropriate leaders for South Africa’s successful future, in turn perpetuating this group’s position of advantage. The risk of equating whiteness with South Africa’s only chance of success is therefore great, and carries with it alarming implications. Chief of these is that the same whiteness which oppressed blacks during apartheid, and continues to perpetuate its own advantage in the present, will be able to reframe itself as the

necessary force for bringing about meaningful social and economic change within the country (Steyn, 2005).

Given the tenacity of discourses aimed at securing white advantage more than a decade after the end of apartheid, it is unlikely that the kinds of discourses examined in this study will disappear in the near future. Moreover, the shifting nature of whiteness will probably contribute towards extending their presence by, for example, giving rise to justifications and legitimisations that are compatible with the country's contemporary social and political changes. It is only by continuing to research whiteness that the shifting discourses employed to justify, naturalise and normalise white power and privilege can be identified. Once identified, such discourses can be challenged, and this suggests that whiteness studies has an important role to play in fostering the country's post-apartheid transformation.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 4: Detailed Frequency of Themes in the Cape Argus and Cape Times Newspapers in 2007

CAPE TIMES 2007 THEMES	n	Sum	CAPE ARGUS 2007 THEMES	n	Sum
Affirmative Action		78	Affirmative Action		18
African Identity & Culture		9	African Identity & Culture		8
Airport & Airlines		19	Airport & Airlines		16
Anecdotes		110	Anecdotes		132
			Argus Anniversary	14	
Charity Appeals	11		Charity Appeals	3	
Corrections	13		Corrections	12	
Jokes	8		Jokes	1	
Memoriam	8		Memoriam	5	
Other	30		Other	47	
Reunions	5		Reunions	6	
			Seeking Information	10	
Seeking Persons	11		Seeking Persons	11	
Thanks	24		Thanks	23	
Animals		31	Animals		45
Animals & Animal Rights	21		Animals & Animal Rights	29	
Ritual Slaughter	10		Ritual Slaughter	16	
Arts & Entertainment		31	Arts & Entertainment		10
Banks & Banking		13	Banks & Banking		14
Built Environment		40	Built Environment		15
Architectural Heritage	12		Architectural Heritage	3	
Decline & Decay	8		Decline & Decay	7	
Urban Development	20		Urban Development	5	
Children & the Youth		11	Children & the Youth		42
Colonialism		8			
Crime		120	Crime		169
FNB's Anti-Crime Campaign	3		FNB's Anti-Crime Campaign	8	
General Crime	46		General Crime	66	
Gun Ownership	10		Gun Ownership	19	
Murder	10		Murder	18	
Punishment/Sentencing	10		Punishment/Sentencing	12	
Rape	2		Rape	1	
Robbery	5		Robbery	3	
Table Mountain Muggings	20		Table Mountain Muggings	25	
Theft	7		Theft	6	
Violence Against Children	7		Violence Against Children	11	
Defence forces		28	Defence forces		46
Navy & Other	9		Navy & Other	9	
Police & Policing	19		Police & Policing	37	
Drug & Alcohol Addiction		15	Drug & Alcohol Addiction		50

CAPE TIMES 2007 THEMES	n	Sum	CAPE ARGUS 2007 THEMES	n	Sum
Economic Issues		27	Economic Issues		21
Education		31	Education		89
Elderly & Pensioners		5	Elderly & Pensioners		10
Emigration		4			
Environmental Issues		144	Environmental Issues		77
Biofuel	5		Biofuel	3	
Fynbos & Alien Vegetation	22		Fynbos & Alien Vegetation	13	
General Issues	19		General Issues	13	
Global Warming	13		Global Warming	21	
Herbicides & Genetic Modification	22		Herbicides & Genetic Modification	2	
Human Population Control	10		Human Population Control	3	
Marine Life	29		Marine Life	7	
Parks Board	8		Parks Board	9	
Waste & Recycling	16		Waste & Recycling	6	
Food & Food Production		14	Food & Food Production		4
Food & Dining	8		Food & Dining	4	
Farming	6				
			Fraud & Corruption		28
Health		101	Health		95
Abortion	7		Abortion	7	
Deputy Health Minister	12		Deputy Health Minister	20	
Health Issues	12		Health Issues	12	
Health Minister Manto	6		Health Minister Manto	7	
Healthcare System	20		Healthcare System	19	
HIV/AIDS	10		HIV/AIDS	10	
Hospital Budget Cuts	17		Hospital Budget Cuts	16	
Medical Aid	4		Medical Aid	1	
Smoking	13		Smoking	3	
International Affairs		109	International Affairs		110
Africa	7		Africa	11	
International Terrorism	9				
Middle East	39		Middle East	41	
Other	22		Other	26	
Zimbabwe	32		Zimbabwe	32	
Language		18	Language		4
Law & Rights		47	Law & Rights		63
Disability Rights	2		Disability Rights	4	
Diversity Issues	2		Diversity Issues	3	
Human Rights	5		Human Rights	6	
Judge Hlophe Case	10		Judge Hlophe Case	8	
Justice System	13		Justice System	23	
Prostitution	4		Prostitution	8	
Refugees	11		Refugees	11	
Lotto		4	Lotto		4
The Media		3	The Media		21

CAPE TIMES 2007 THEMES	n	Sum	CAPE ARGUS 2007 THEMES	n	Sum
General Media	3		General Media	6	
			Press Freedom	10	
			SABC	5	
			Moral Decline		16
Noise Pollution		6	Noise Pollution		4
Politics		173	Politics		191
ANC (National)	30		ANC (National)	23	
ANC Presidential Elections	30		ANC Presidential Elections	23	
Floor-Crossing	10		Floor-Crossing	7	
Inter-Party Politics & Other	44		Inter-Party Politics & Other	50	
President Mbeki	12		President Mbeki	21	
Western Cape ANC & Premiership	9		Western Cape ANC & Premiership	13	
Western Cape DA & Mayorship	38		Western Cape DA & Mayorship	54	
Poor & Poverty		31	Poor & Poverty		25
Property		96	Property		83
Land & Housing	62		Land & Housing	52	
Property Valuations	34		Property Valuations	31	
Race & Racism		63	Race & Racism		39
Religion		74	Religion		39
Evolution & Creationism	16		Evolution & Creationism	5	
Religious Issues	58		Religious Issues	34	
Roads & Road Users		96	Roads & Road Users		100
Cyclists	2				
Fuel Costs	8		Fuel Costs	3	
Metro Police	6		Metro Police	19	
Motorists	16		Motorists	9	
Other	2				
Parking	4		Parking	8	
Pedestrians	2		Pedestrians	1	
Public Transport	14		Public Transport	19	
Road Infrastructure	13		Road Infrastructure	14	
Road Safety	4		Road Safety	10	
Taxis	5		Taxis	7	
Traffic Congestion	12		Traffic Congestion	4	
Traffic Department	8		Traffic Department	6	
Services & Utilities		83	Services & Utilities		93
City of Cape Town	10		City of Cape Town	16	
Eskom Power Crisis	35		Eskom Power Crisis	41	
Home Affairs	10		Home Affairs	12	
SA Post Office	2		SA Post Office	12	
SA Revenue Service	9		SA Revenue Service	4	
Telkom	7		Telkom	4	
Water	10		Water	4	
Soccer World Cup 2010		45	Soccer World Cup 2010		38
2010 Stadium	32		2010 Stadium	22	

CAPE TIMES 2007 THEMES	n	Sum	CAPE ARGUS 2007 THEMES	n	Sum
2010 World Cup	13		2010 World Cup	16	
Sport		104	Sport		131
Cricket	16		Cricket	22	
Other Sports	14		Other Sports	22	
Rugby	67		Rugby	79	
Transformation in Sport	7		Transformation in Sport	8	
Street Renaming		28	Street Renaming		39
Tourism		8	Tourism		9
TV & Radio Programming		12	TV & Radio Programming		20
Women		4	Women		4
Workers		85	Workers		55
Public Sector Workers' Strike	44		Public Sector Workers' Strike	32	
Skills Shortage	5		Skills Shortage	5	
Strikes	19				
Unemployment	5		Unemployment	3	
Wages	8		Wages	3	
Workers	4		Workers	12	
Totals		1928			1977

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