Being and belonging among White English-speaking South Africans

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
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Declaration

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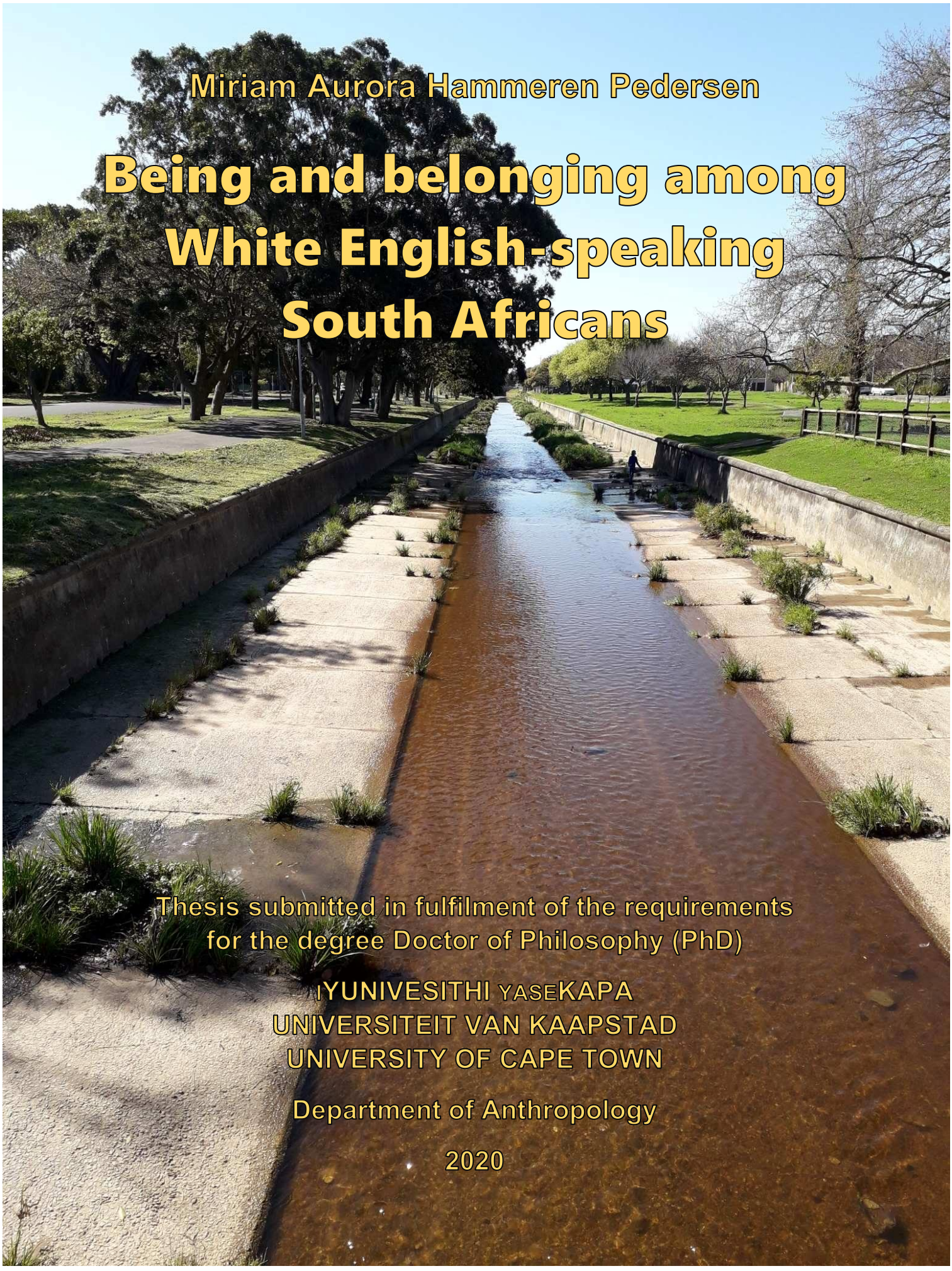

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD
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Department of Anthropology

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Abstract

White English-speaking South Africans – WESSAs – have been an understudied topic in general, and particularly within the discipline of anthropology. In this thesis, I take the reader on an autoethnographic journey of attempting to make sense of life in the suburbs of Cape Town, searching for the elusive middle-class WESSAs and trying to attain an understanding of who they are. What does it mean to be and belong among this fascinating subcategory of Africans of European origin? The thesis takes a novel approach to the topic by viewing it through Nyamnjoh's framework of *incompleteness*, which posits that humans are incomplete by nature and culture (and cultivation). This framework is based on West/Central African philosophy and draws inspiration from the writings of Amos Tutuola, whose storytelling and conceptual universe also informs this thesis.

Two key issues emerging from my fieldwork are *power* and *belonging.* A complex interplay exists between these factors of life in Cape Town. On the one hand, I argue that middle-class WESSAs have significant power in my field-site in terms of social status, linguistic dominance as well as control of institutions and the built environment. This hegemony leads to exclusion, marginalisation and Othering of non-WESSAs and less wealthy people, especially people of colour. On the other hand, WESSAs' tendency to perceive their positionality as universal, and their quest for *completeness* of being, ends up causing alienation and rootlessness even for WESSAs themselves. The themes of rootlessness and non-belonging permeate this thesis, highlighting the detrimental nature of hierarchies of race and class even for those at the top. I join Nyamnjoh in his call for a *convivial* mode of existence which acknowledges interdependencies, interconnectedness and the inherent *incompleteness* of human life.

Keywords: WESSAs, Whiteness, incompleteness, conviviality, Ubuntu

We are here because of those who have lived before us. I dedicate this work to my ancestors, in all their incompleteness and diversity, and especially to my grandmother Kari (1946-2003), who was exemplary in being and becoming as a permanent work in progress. The older I get, the more I realise how profoundly her story, and stor*ies*, have shaped my perception of my own place in the world.

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Firstly, I thank my supervisor, Professor Francis Beng Nyamnjoh. Not only has he made me rethink what anthropology is, should be, and *could* be; he has, on a fundamental level, helped me see the world and human life in more nuanced and complex ways. Our meetings and conversations – accompanied by what is in my opinion the best coffee to be found at UCT – have been a source of inspiration since day one. Without Professor Nyamnjoh as my supervisor, this project would not have been what it is.

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Last but not least, I thank my best friend, life partner and wife-to-be, Sarah, who has been my rock through good and bad times, spreading life, love, and joy to everyone around her.

To all of you, I say
Enkosi kakhulu.
Baie dankie.
Tusen takk.
Thank you so very, very much.

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Tables and figures

Tables:

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Photo credits

All photographs were taken by the author during the period 2018-2019.

The front-page photo, taken on 2 September 2019, shows the Liesbeek River viewed from the Rosebank Bridge. The Liesbeek ties the three suburbs of my field-site together as it flows northwards through Rondebosch, Rosebank, and Mowbray on its way to the Atlantic Ocean. Aside from still being a source of nourishment for wildlife and lush vegetation, the river is a strong symbol of the history and continuity of the area, reaching all the way back to the days when the Khoi grazed cattle on its banks, through renaming by Jan van Riebeeck and settlement by Dutch colonists, up to its canalisation in the 1940s while South Africa was under the auspices of the British Commonwealth.

Acronyms

ANC = African National Congress

BESSA = Black English-speaking South African

CBD = Central Business District

CPF = Community Police Forum

DA = Democratic Alliance

ESSA = English-speaking South African

GSCID = Groote Schuur Community Improvement District

LMRID = Little Mowbray and Rosebank Improvement District

NP = National Party

RMCA = Rosebank and Mowbray Civic Association

SAPS = South African Police Service

UCT = University of Cape Town

WESSA = White English-speaking South African

CHAPTER 1
General introduction

It was Saturday 13 July 2019, and my neighbour Victoria was hosting a party in our common garden area in Rosebank, Cape Town. I stopped by for about half an hour to say hi, and as I sat down with a glass of wine, I was approached by a young woman my age. Although I cannot remember exactly what she was wearing, I do remember that her clothes were in the hippie-esque style which was, and still is, in vogue – indeed typical – among many young people in Cape Town. We introduced ourselves, with me sitting on the lawn and her standing up. When I told the woman that I was a social anthropologist doing fieldwork, the woman showed great interest and asked me to explain my topic and tell her some of my tentative impressions of the group I was studying: White English-speaking South Africans (WESSAs for short). It turned out she was a WESSA herself.

– I'm a Cooper, she told me as she sat down to properly join me. – So, proper English.

At one point during our conversation, I said something about some WESSAs "not having a lot of" something, and I had to think for a moment to find the right phrase. She suggested "culture", which was most definitely *not* the word I was looking for. However, I found the fact that she offered up that particular word to finish my sentence both interesting and illustrative of how many WESSAs seem to think of themselves: *Definable* ("proper English") yet at the same time *indefinable* ("not a lot of culture"). The brief meeting with the young woman reminded me why I had become interested in WESSAs in the first place, namely because of their position as the elephant in the room in the multiracial, multi-ethnic, multilingual nation that is South Africa.

It is well known that there are White people in South Africa who speak English. Strangely, however, looking for WESSAs has something in common with hunting for ghosts or cryptids. WESSAs in Cape Town, and especially those belonging to the middle class, seem to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time: Invisible in their perceived normalcy, yet somehow also omnipresent through powerful cultural ideas and ideals, institutional structures, and the dominance of the English language. In the words of South African Whiteness scholar Melissa Steyn, "there are English-speaking South Africans who are 'white' enough to have become quite translucent" (Steyn 2001: 103). The elusive and mysterious nature of WESSAs is emphasised by the fact that studies of them tend to raise more questions than they answer.

Some, as we shall see, claim that WESSAs are a rather strongly coherent community, united by feelings of commonality, ethnic pride, and shared values such as individualism and political liberalism. Conversely, others argue that WESSAs are tied together only in the loosest of ways by little more than shared citizenship and language. If WESSAs *are* a community, then how are they really that different from other communities in South Africa? How cohesive is the WESSA community? Are WESSAs really as individualist as some claim, or is the emphasis on individualism often seen in discussions of WESSAs simply a way – consciously or subconsciously – of deflecting attention from whatever power they have *as a group?* Additionally, to what extent are WESSAs truly bound together by a common British heritage, and do they, as some have suggested, have a strong connection to (and, by extension, divided loyalties with) a place outside South Africa?

Focusing specifically on those WESSAs who are most invisible and least talked about, namely those belonging to the middle class, I have distilled my curiosities into the following research question:

> *How do middle-class WESSAs in Cape Town experience (a) their daily lives and their social position in terms of race, ethnicity and class; and (b) their own positioning vis-à-vis non-Whites, especially from a geographical point of view?*

In this thesis I will explore this question by taking the reader with me on a journey of attempting to make sense of life in the suburbs of Cape Town, searching for the WESSAs and trying to attain an understanding of who they are. What does it mean to *be* and *belong* among this fascinating subcategory of "Africans of European origin" (Nuttall 2001: 135)? This thesis seeks to be a pioneering ethnographic contribution to the scholarly knowledge of middle-class WESSA identity, a topic that is understudied in general and one that has almost never been explored within the discipline of social anthropology until now. In addition to its subject matter, the thesis is also pioneering with respect to its methodology: Whereas previous studies of WESSAs have focused heavily on verbal data collected through interviews, this thesis focuses mainly on participant observation.

"The world," writes Chinua Achebe (1986 [1964]: 46), "is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place." Taking Achebe's advice, I have attempted to investigate WESSA identity from as many different vantage points as possible, by speaking to WESSAs and other South Africans, but also – and more fundamentally – by an autoethnographic examination of *my own* being. Who am *I* – a White person of foreign origin

who communicates in English – among the WESSAs? What insights may be gleaned from *my* experiences in the strange land that is the Cape Town suburbs? Is it perhaps possible to *become* WESSA? And what meaning do concepts like "Whiteness" and "Englishness" have on the ground, in everyday life, in contemporary South Africa? This thesis takes inspiration, aesthetically as well as conceptually, from Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola's stories of adventurous protagonists exploring uncanny "bushes of ghosts" – in many ways reminiscent of my own life in Cape Town – where little is as it seems and where unsuspected mysteries await behind every corner. Following Francis Nyamnjoh's interpretation of Tutuola, I will put special emphasis on the inherent *incompleteness* of being and becoming, and the ways in which we humans make use of technologies of self-activation – referred to as *juju* in this framework – as a means of bolstering our agency in a world filled with dangers as well as opportunities.

Thesis overview

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. With the exception of the *General introduction* (Chapter 1, this chapter) and the *Summary and general conclusion* (Chapter 7), each chapter will be introduced with a chapter overview and introduction and closed off with a summary conclusion.

Chapter 2 provides a review of extant literature on Whiteness and White people (with a specific and explicit focus on South Africa, and especially WESSAs), the literature on the White middle-class in South Africa, and, lastly, the literature on the intersection between race, class, and geography in Cape Town. I will argue that there has been a near-total lack of anthropological interest in WESSAs which has resulted in a paucity of ethnographic studies about them, a gap in the scholarly literature on Whiteness as a topic and South Africa as a region. In the final section of the chapter I will explicate my conceptual framework for the thesis, a framework based primarily – but not exclusively – on the writings of Amos Tutuola as interpreted by Francis Nyamnjoh, whose main argument is that humans are *incomplete* by nature and culture (and cultivation), and that *Ubuntu*, the philosophy that "I am because you are", is an omnipresent and necessary precondition for human sociality and life itself.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter of the thesis. Its title, *The ethnographer in the field, the ethnographer as field: Reflections on positionality, methods, and ethics*, refers to the fact that my positionality and methodological framework, as I will explain in detail in the chapter, in the logic of incompleteness, blur the traditional distinction between researcher and field. In this

chapter I will describe my field-site, data collection techniques, and data material in detail, and I will also discuss the research ethics of the project.

Chapter 4, *Suburban adventures,* is the first ethnographic chapter and the primary autoethnographic exposition of this thesis. The chapter, whose title refers to my feeling of being on a journey of exploration and constantly outside my comfort zone, recounts my life in Mowbray and Rosebank and my attempts to find belonging and inner peace in unfamiliar and often uncomfortable surroundings. After having felt Othered and out of place in bustling upper Mowbray, I started exploring the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the seemingly peaceful, tranquil suburb of Rosebank. The chapter provides thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) of the social dynamics in my field-site – shaped, to a great extent, by sharp divisions in terms of race and class – and presents some important insights I gained about WESSA life through my own experiences as a quasi-WESSA "outsider within" (Harrison 2008). Among these are some important insights regarding WESSAs' positioning in a *geographical* context (in terms of racial, ethnic and class-based (self-)segregation) as well as the generally hegemonic position of WESSA culture in my field-site. In sum, I will show that White people have hegemonic power in my field-site, that WESSAs are the most powerful category of all, and that *jujus* of Englishness are highly sought-after.

Chapter 5, *Conversations on identity,* is the second ethnographic chapter. It is interview-based and provides a deep dive into some of my interviewed interlocutors' thoughts about what it means to be and become WESSA. Several important interviewees referenced in this chapter are WESSAs. However, as I believe that the question of who the WESSAs are and how they see themselves cannot be fully answered simply by asking the WESSAs themselves, I have also interviewed people from non-WESSA backgrounds. From the interviews I will attempt to distil the most basic, core ideas about what it means to be WESSA, what the social position of WESSAs really is, and how WESSAs' self-images resemble or differ from other people's images of them. I will explore the question of whether WESSAs should be understood as a true community – an *ethnic group* or even just a *group* – a question to which I argue that the answer is "yes". Discussing the *jujus* of Englishness, I will argue that whereas White English-speakers of British descent are seen as embodying the most *complete* personhood within the hierarchy of South African Whiteness, the fact that non-WESSAs of all colours also wield the *jujus* of Englishness as a means of social positioning – sometimes very efficiently – illustrates the inherent open-endedness and *incompleteness* of all identities.

Chapter 6 is the thesis' discussion chapter, which I have called *Bewilderments of being and belonging.* In this chapter, I draw on my autoethnographic participant observation data as well as interviews and online ethnography in an exploration of some key perceptions of WESSAs: The idea of the *soutpiel* or "salt penis" divided between Britain and South Africa; the idea that WESSAs are somehow less at home in South Africa than other groups are; and the perception of WESSAs as collectively liberal and morally "good". I will explore these topics in the context of *being* and *belonging* in South Africa, from the perspective of someone who herself has struggled with these issues. The chapter aims at an understanding of WESSAs as neither heroes nor villains, but as *human beings* trapped in the mechanics of a social system – the system of Whiteness – which is not altogether within their control. I argue that the perceived normality, universality and normativity of being WESSA traps WESSAs in a quest for *completeness* through ideologies of superiority which, as seen from a Tutuola-inspired Nyamnjohan perspective, is fruitless and ultimately detrimental for everyone involved.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion chapter of the thesis, in which I tie the various threads together and provide a summarised, overarching analysis of who the middle-class WESSAs are, how they see themselves, how they are seen by others, and how their positionalities and choices – especially their pursuit of *completeness* – are connected to structures of race-, ethnicity-, and class-based inequality in contemporary South Africa. I will end the chapter – and the thesis – on a note of positivity and hope, acknowledging that WESSA culture contains some very constructive elements which may provide an indispensable ingredient in a just, equitable and integrated South African society. Contrary to its popular image as individualist and accumulative and thus the very antithesis of *Ubuntu,* I argue that WESSA culture may in fact be *Ubuntu* at its core.

Like all ethnographic studies, this thesis is by definition and necessity a subjective work. As a situated anthropologist and human being, I recognise and acknowledge that my interpretations may perhaps be better understood as part of my autoethnographic data material than as objective truth. Indeed, Georges Devereux has argued that "When treated as basic and characteristic data of behavioral science [the 'disturbances' created by the existence, observational activities, and anxieties of the observer] are more valid and more productive of insight than any other type of datum" (Devereux 1967: xvii). Nevertheless, the observations I have made throughout my year-long fieldwork, and indeed throughout my whole stay in Cape Town since I came here for the first time in 2017, have left me with certain distinct impressions which I believe reflect real tendencies among the community I have studied. In this thesis I

have, in the spirit of Achebe, attempted to view the WESSA "Mask dancing" of my topic from as many vantage points as possible, and I believe I have been able to extract some original and valuable insights about the group or category of people known as White English-speaking South Africans. In recognition of *incompleteness,* I will not claim that these insights are valid for all WESSAs at all times and in all places, especially considering the diversity within the WESSA category itself. What I have presented in this thesis is *situated knowledge* (Haraway 1988) of a field-site – a bush of ghosts, as it were – and its inhabitants and social dynamics as seen through my eyes, the eyes of Miriam, who is herself inextricably part of the field, and of whom the field itself is part. The term "autoethnography" does not seem to do full justice to the deep complexities of a work like this, which is both ethnography and autobiography, narrative as well as non-narrative (Fabian 2001: 16), and simultaneously something *more* than its constituent parts. A better term might be *entangled anthropology* of being and becoming as a permanent work in progress.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review and conceptual framework

Introduction

What is Whiteness? Who are the WESSAs? In the following, I first discuss some seminal ideas on race and Whiteness which have had a strong impact on my own view of these subjects. I then discuss what has been written about White people, White English-speakers, and the White middle class in the South African context within anthropology and other disciplines. Some of the work that has been done on Whiteness in South Africa and other African contexts is not strictly academic, but rather works of fiction. By engaging with these works, I acknowledge that fiction "can […] encode truth claims and an alternative mode of theorizing" (Harrison 2016: 169) and may help "create a more inclusive space that welcomes a diversity of culturally inflected perspectives" (Harrison 2008: 39).

In the final section, I present Francis Nyamnjoh's ideas on human *incompleteness* and the concept of *juju* as technologies of self-activation, ideas partly inspired by the writings of Amos Tutuola. I discuss similarities between the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan theoretical framework and the works of European scholars including Lacan and Foucault, and I end the chapter by showing how the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan perspective is both original, universally applicable, and particularly useful as a conceptual framework for this research project.

Whiteness and its hierarchies

What exactly *is* "Whiteness"? And who exactly *are* "White people"? The main topics of this thesis cannot be discussed without first allowing for a brief exploration of these questions. I will attempt, in the following, to sketch a portrait of the emergence of *race* in terms of discourse and power dynamics, with specific focus on the historical construction of the category known as "White people". The discussion, informed by a number of writers from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, will show that the category "White", while commonly understood to be synonymous with being descended from light-skinned people from Europe, contains more complexity than meets the eye.

Although the notion that humans are divided into neatly distinguishable biological "races" has been debunked by science (Dentlinger 2016: 114-115), the use of racial terminology is still widespread (Cock & Bernstein 2002: 12-13; Maré 2014: 26-27). I wish to underscore that while the concept of human races is *biologically* unfounded, race is nevertheless *socially* real. The term *race* as used in the following section, and throughout this thesis, will refer to the *idea* of race as it impacts people's lives socially.

In the context of colonialism, it has been argued the idea of different, inferior and superior "races", which had taken "scientific" form in Europe in the 18th century but had even earlier roots (Mohanram 2007: 65; Cock & Bernstein 2002: 13; Mbembe 2017: 54-55; Seshadri-Crooks 2000: 51-52; Mangcu 2015: 2), was a convenient tool of conquest, domination, and oppression. As Achille Mbembe summarises it,

> During the era of the slave trade and colonialism, however, a new link emerged between, on the one hand, the biological discourse on race (although the meaning of the biological has always been quite unstable) and, on the other, a discourse that viewed race metaphorically within a broader approach to age-old questions of division and subjection, resistance and the fragility of the political, of the tenuous but nevertheless inseparable links between politics and life, politics and the power to kill, power and the thousands of ways in which to kill or enable people to live, or at least survive. (Mbembe 2017: 55-56)

Seen this way, race became a way of talking oneself "up" while simultaneously talking others "down", ultimately depriving those others of their very humanity (Mangcu 2015: 11; Pierre 2013: xiv; Maré 2014: 120-121). Seshadri-Crooks argues that the "the *raison d'être* for race itself [is] the will to pre-eminence, to mastery, to being" (Seshadri-Crooks 2000: 58). In the colonial encounter, the idea of the superiority of a certain group – Europeans, dubbed "White" because of the relatively light colour of their skin (a symbolic colouring, or rather *de*-colouring, which in turn came to be linked to European cultural perceptions of white symbolising "good" and black symbolising "bad", "evil" or "dirty" (Dyer 1988: 45; Dyer 1997: 58-59; Flikke 2005), and of white being a neutral absence of colour (Dyer 1997: 47)) – provided a justification for some people to *hunt* with impunity in the territories of others, often by means of extreme violence (as documented, for instance, by Taussig (1991 [1987])). Colonised territories across the world became, quite literally, *hunting-grounds* for Europeans (Nyamnjoh 2015a: 29; Nustad 2012; see also Mbembe 2017: 45; Owen 2015: 16-17; Erasmus 2017: 78-79; and, in fiction, Coetzee 2004 [1980]).

It was a hunt for wealth, in the form of natural resources (including land itself) and the exploitation of cheap and/or enslaved labour. While I could dive much more deeply into the economic aspect of Whiteness, and its role in contributing to and perpetuating pretensions of White supremacy globally, I have made a conscious decision to reserve this aspect for future research. Intersections between Whiteness and class will be discussed later in the thesis in the context of my field-site and South Africa more generally.

Whiteness is often talked about in terms of an absolute dichotomy: A person is either White or not, and a person's race cannot change (Erasmus 2017: 80-81). In the same vein, Seshadri-Crooks (2000: 55) argues that "Whiteness […] is not about aristocratism, but about 'the people' – the *volk* [...] The dichotomy of self and other is within Whiteness in the competition over who properly possesses Whiteness, or sovereign humanness". I agree that "White" versus "non-White" is construed in this way within the *discourses* of Whiteness. In practice, however, there are highly contested spaces both *between* and *within* the categories "White" and "non-White". There is an argument and body of scholarship to the effect that people do not just passively desire Whiteness; they try as hard as they can to get it, and to subvert the "White/non-White" distinction in myriad ways (Fanon 2008 [1967]; Nyamnjoh 2012, 2016; Ueland 2012: 68-69; Phiri 2013; Pierre 2013: 77 cf. also Bashkow 2006:7). This would seem to support Steyn's understanding of Whiteness not merely as an ideology per se, but "as an *ideologically supported and reproduced social positioning*, which has psychological, performative, cultural, economic, rhetorical, institutional, political, and other, dimensions" (Steyn 2003: 111).

In the novel *Wizard of the Crow* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, several of the characters attempt to "whiten up" – more specifically, to become more English. The character Tajirika, who is cured from his "white-ache", admits that he "longed for the *power* of whiteness" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2007 [2006]: 359; my emphasis). A similar way of thinking can be found in Kopano Matlwa's novel *Coconut* (Matlwa 2007; Phiri 2013: 165). In scholarly literature, too, Whiteness is often seen in terms closely related to social class (Distiller 2012: 20; Pierre 2013: 82-86; Owen 2015: 148; van der Westhuizen 2017: 50; Mohanram 2007: 30-33). Using Bourdieu's terminology, one might say that Europeans and their descendants have assumed the position of a "cultural aristocracy", and that this distinction has served to produce a *racial habitus,* similar to the *class habitus* described by Bourdieu as "the internalized form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails" (Bourdieu 1984: 101). The existence of a White racial habitus has been suggested by DiAngelo (2011: 57-58) and Nyamnjoh (2016: 132).

Bourdieu (1984: 28) speaks of the "cultural aristocracy" as a closed system, its doors being open only to those who are already members. Power and privilege define good taste, which is in its turn defined as that taste which takes power and privilege to acquire. Is it perhaps possible to speak of *aristocrats of Whiteness?* Is "pinkish, white-ish skin" (van der Westhuizen 2018: 35) (which can also be acquired to a certain extent; cf. Olumide 2016; Pierre 2013: 101-122) really enough to gain membership of the exclusive society of being "truly" White? Bourdieu argues that the

> 'distinction' or 'vulgarity' [of familiar objects], their 'beauty' or 'ugliness', impress themselves through bodily experiences which may be […] profoundly unconscious […] Every interior expresses, in its own language, the present and even the past state of its occupants, bespeaking the elegant self-assurance of inherited wealth, the flashy arrogance of the nouveaux riches, the discreet shabbiness of the poor and the gilded shabbiness of 'poor relations' striving to live beyond their means (Bourdieu 1984: 77)

In Whiteness, one might imagine that it is the Whites who have this "elegant self-assurance". The *nouveaux riches* and the "poor relations", then, would be the non-Whites trying to "whiten up", but never actually making it. However, as Nyamnjoh (2016: 66) argues, Whites themselves do not necessarily live up to the standards expected of them, and "Africans have probably accumulated and display more whiteness than most Whites that they encounter in their lives". In the words of Zimitri Erasmus, referring to the community in South Africa in which she grew up, "to 'look white' is not sufficient; a person has to 'look and live white' in order to be considered White" (Erasmus 2017: 35).

Within a racialised context, one's *skin* – just like that of the "pot-kings" and their "skin-subjects" in the Cameroon Grassfields of Jean-Pierre Warnier (2007: 38) – is seen as a container for specific contents perceived as differing according to the skin's colour. Like the royal substances of the pot-king, these have "great potential and potency" (p. 25), and can be shared (cf. pp. 27-30). In Warnier's terms, "a pot-king is a monarch that identifies with a container and behaves as such" (Warnier 2007: 41). Similarly, certain White people – those who are most comfortable in their position and act as if they have nothing to prove (cf. Southall 2016: 174-175) – function as "intermediaries" (Warnier 2007: 37) for substances pertaining to the hierarchies of Whiteness, endowing a certain amount of White cultural and social capital (Bourdieu 1997) on others, although never truly giving up their own sovereignty.

In the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue, modern-day Haiti, the intra-White hierarchy was expressed in very direct terms. A distinction was made between *grands blancs*

("big Whites"), who were "wealthy sugar planters" (Stein 1981: 12), and *petits blancs* ("small Whites"), who "generally had little money" and mostly "lived as artisans, shopkeepers, or day-labourers in the larger towns or as overseers on the larger plantations" (p. 13). Besides their "intense hatred" for people of colour, the *petits blancs* also developed "intense dislike" against the dominant *grands blancs* (p. 13). The *petit/grand* distinction suggests that while racial categories in Saint-Domingue were based on physical features and ancestry, Whiteness also came in degrees according to social factors such as wealth and lifestyle.

Thus, while Fanon (2008 [1967]: 124) asserts that "the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man", the example of Saint-Domingue illustrates that the "real Other" – whoever it may be – might sometimes be less immediately important than the classes directly above or below oneself. The "principle of race" (Mbembe 2017: 55), then, which may have started as a blunt instrument of colonial domination, has ended up becoming, through various mechanisms,[1] a totalising system – the *system* of Whiteness – in which *everyone*, White as well as non-White, fight for their positions within the system in order to become, or remain, the "civilised" rather than the "barbarian", the *hunter* rather than the *prey* (Nyamnjoh 2015a: 29-30, 138).

The understanding of Whiteness which informs this thesis is that of a hierarchy within a hierarchy. Although the ideology of Whiteness does possess a dichotomous nature in that it positions a White person higher than a non-White person, the question of who should be the highest *among* Whites is continually contested, as, indeed, is the question of the criteria for being "White".

White people and WESSAs in South Africa

The emergence of "White people" and "Whiteness" as topics of scholarly inquiry is a rather recent phenomenon, picking up pace in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the United States. Although the term "Whiteness studies" may run the risk of reifying and fetishising the very concept of Whiteness that one is trying to critique and deconstruct (Ahmed 2004; Dyer 1997: 10), an interdisciplinary field of study concerned with Whiteness does exist, and I find "Whiteness studies" to be as good a term as any. Sara Ahmed (2004) argues that the genealogy of the field begins with Audre Lorde's collection of essays and speeches titled *Sister Outsider*

[1] See e.g. Fanon (2008 [1967]: 73-74), Pierre (2013: 74-75), and Giliomee (2019).

(1984). This and other works by Black American feminists (such as bell hooks's *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989)), which foreground the experiences of Black women in a racialised society, were soon followed up with works on Whiteness by authors who were themselves White. Richard Dyer (1988; 1997) explores Whiteness in the context of visual arts like film and photography, and argues that this Whiteness is normative yet also invisible. In a similar vein, Peggy McIntosh (1989) names and explores what she calls the "invisible knapsack" of White privilege – the unearned advantages enjoyed by White Americans in *all* areas of society, and to which they are generally oblivious. David Roediger (1991) explores the construction of Whiteness among the US White working class, showing how White identity – and the idea of "white racial superiority" (Cleaver 1995: 1376) – has been an important component in the formation of White American working-class self-consciousness. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) explores the lives and identities of White women (and specifically their theretofore unexplored Whiteness) from a professedly feminist viewpoint. Dyer, McIntosh, Roediger, and Frankenberg – the White authors – have been influential in the study of Whiteness in South Africa via the works of such scholars as Melissa Steyn and Theresa Salusbury.

Although three decades of scholarship have led to the emergence of a substantial body of literature on Whiteness, the field is still small in relative terms both in South Africa and the rest of the world. Moreover, the field of Whiteness studies has been, and still is, largely American-dominated (Salusbury 2003: 13; West 2009: 14-16). Historian George M. Fredrickson compares the histories of interracial relations and White supremacy in the United States and South Africa. Fredrickson's work illustrates how the global phenomena of Whiteness and White supremacy can take on different guises in different local contexts. Although there are similarities between the US and South Africa (Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: xix; see also Schutte (1995: 336-361) for a discussion), American historical experiences are not always directly transferrable to the South African context. The South African history of slavery, for instance, is very different from that of the US (Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: xviii; Schutte 1995: 339; see also Chapter 4 in this thesis), as is the South African history of immigration and colonial conquest. The facts that White people in South Africa have always been a *minority* of the population (albeit an extremely powerful one), and that indigenous African languages, cultures, and ethnic identities are very much alive and vibrant, make for social and political dynamics that are rather different from those of the US (Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: xviii; Schutte 1995: 339-340). Perhaps most importantly, Whites in South Africa do not necessarily experience the same racial invisibility or obliviousness to their racial positionality that Dyer (1988; 1997),

McIntosh (1989), DiAngelo (2011), and many others have argued is part and parcel of being a White American. Additionally, the intra-White rivalry between WESSAs and Afrikaners, which has been highly significant in the history of South Africa, is a regionally specific phenomenon.

Although Whiteness is global, it is of paramount importance to approach Whiteness in South Africa from an angle which does full justice to its situatedness, both in terms of historical roots and contemporary expression. For this reason (and because of the limited scope of this thesis), rather than embarking on an extensive history and genealogy of the field of Whiteness studies which would have had to focus heavily on the US, the following sections will engage with literature on Whiteness, Whites, and WESSAs in a specifically South African context.

Studies of Whiteness in South Africa, and anthropology's "white spot on the map"

The discipline of anthropology in South Africa has a history of being a "handmaiden of colonialism". The late Professor Archibald Mafeje is particularly well-known for his sustained criticism of this aspect of South African anthropology – and indeed the discipline of anthropology itself – throughout his career (Mafeje 1998; Olukoshi & Nyamnjoh 2011: 3; Niehaus 2013; Harrison 2008: 30-31). The chairs of Social Anthropology and African Philology at UCT were originally set up explicitly to aid the colonialist state in the administration of its non-White subjects, to "deal with the 'Native problem'" and shape a "solid 'Native policy'" (Ntsebeza 2012: 2-7). Continuing through the Apartheid era, anthropology was dominated by White scholars (Dickson & Spiegel 2015: xvii-xviii, xxvii-xxviii; cf. also Owen 2015: 56), with scholars of colour – including Mafeje – being met with strong opposition from the Apartheid regime (Ntsebeza 2012: 9; Dickson & Spiegel 2015: xxviii-xxix). As a reaction, many South African anthropologists took a critical, activist stance against Apartheid from the mid-20th century onwards and especially during the 1970s and 1980s (Dickson & Spiegel 2015: xix-xxv; Bank 2016: 99-101).

In South Africa, the topic of Whiteness seems to have been first explored within the interdisciplinary field of women's studies, with White women "investigating their complicity in systems of racial oppression" (Salusbury 2003: 14), and in studies of "autobiographical literature by white liberals" (p. 14). Among explicitly scholarly works on South African Whiteness, Gerhard Schutte's *What Racists Believe* (1995) stands out as an important early contribution. Schutte's main argument regarding the identities of White South Africans is that

they have started to exhibit a strong racial solidarity, a "convergence of economic and political interests" (p. 21) and "visions" (p. 334). Schutte sees the White South African ethnic affiliations (Afrikaner and WESSA) as having lost ground, during the late stage of the Apartheid era, to an all-encompassing White identity. In terms of WESSAs, Schutte specifically emphasises that his "conservative" WESSA participants exhibited "very strong attachment" to South Africa as "home" (p. 292). Despite this, Schutte's findings indicate that both WESSAs and Afrikaners share the same deep-set notion of an "unbridgeable, essential difference between white and black" (p. 198).

In her seminal article *Subjectivities of Whiteness,* Sarah Nuttall explores "constructions of whiteness in South African autobiographies and other narratives of the self" (Nuttall 2001: 115). Nuttall argues that in the South African context, "whiteness emerges within the tropes of looking, watching, masking, concealment, transfiguration, and secrecy" and "play between visibility and invisibility" (p. 115). Melissa Steyn's book *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be*, published the same year as Nuttall's article, is a deep-diving questionnaire-based study of White South Africans' discourses of "what it means to be white in the New South Africa" (Steyn 2001: 49). Steyn – whose stature in South African Whiteness studies can scarcely be overstated – argues that the meaning of Whiteness in South Africa has changed since Apartheid times, the "master narrative of whiteness" having broken down into a multiplicity of smaller narratives "competing to explain, and to promote, a view of how being white should be construed in the new dispensation" (p. 151).

A few other and more recent works must be mentioned. MacDonald (2012 [2006]) provides a historical analysis of the understanding of race in South Africa as well as a deep and critical dive into South African politics and the effects of democratic transition on racial equality. Erasmus (2017) explores processes of racialisation in South Africa through her perspective as a woman classified as Coloured in search for new and *other* ways of "knowing" race. Haffajee (2015) discusses the (lack of) transformation in democratic South Africa both through interviews and through the lens of the author's personal experiences as a Black South African woman. While Haffajee foregrounds the still lingering effects of Apartheid and acknowledges that that "whiteness, rather than non-racialism, is the dominant ideology" in contemporary South Africa (Haffajee 2015: 13), she argues that there is too much racial antagonism and unconstructive focus on Whiteness (p. 43). She challenges the idea that White power is natural and inevitable, and reminds Black (i.e. non-White) South Africans of their agency. The

fundamental call from both Erasmus and Haffaje is for a society that is truly non-racial in outlook, yet not blind to the social realities of race.

Apart from the works hitherto mentioned, there have, as we shall see in the section on WESSAs, been a number of South African contributions on Whiteness emerging from English studies and psychology. In later years there has also been some explicit focus on the position of Whites in the post-Apartheid political context (e.g. Steyn & Foster 2012; Maré 2014). Last but not least, contemporary issues pertaining to Whiteness have been brought up in fictional works like Kopano Matlwa's novel *Coconut* (2007), and in works of creative nonfiction such as Catherine Taylor's *Apart* (2012). In other words, although they rarely take centre stage, White South Africans are not completely absent from the literature, of which they contribute to a significant degree.

Most of this work, however, has taken place outside the discipline of anthropology. Although South African anthropology (if it is even possible to speak of it in the singular form (Nyamnjoh 2011: 703)) may have reason to pride itself on a history of opposition to White supremacy and a tradition of critical deconstruction of concepts such as "races" and "tribes" (Dickson & Spiegel 2015: xxi), White people themselves seem to have fallen into something of a "blind spot" (Steyn 2001: xxvi). Nyamnjoh has argued that South African anthropologists (and other scholars) have done little work on Whites, except in a very general sense (Nyamnjoh 2012: 70). This claim has, however, been sharply criticised and contested by Niehaus (2013). While I agree with Niehaus that anthropological literature on Whiteness and White people in South Africa is "by no means […] negligible" (Niehaus 2013: 122), the subject does not currently seem to be a central concern within the discipline of anthropology, and there seems to be no active effort within South African institutions to promote the study of Whites and Whiteness.

Recent anthropological works on racial issues in the Western Cape Province, where my field-site is located, have tended to focus on non-Whites (e.g. Jensen 2008; Ross 2010; Owen 2015), and when Whites have been on the anthropological agenda, focus has often been on poor Whites (e.g. Teppo 2004) or specifically on Afrikaners as an ethnic group (e.g. van Wyk 2014; van der Westhuizen 2017). Catherine Besteman's *Transforming Cape Town* (2008) stands out as it provides a rare autoethnographic account of the experiences of a foreign White woman in post-Apartheid Cape Town. While the book focuses on socioeconomic transformation for disadvantaged groups, it also deals with the changing dynamics of interracial encounters, and thus touches upon the lives of White as well as non-White people, often in an indirect way

through Besteman's reflections on her own personal experiences. I will be referencing her work in passing throughout this thesis.

Nyamnjoh's complaint about the lack of study of Whites should perhaps be seen in conjunction with another argument he has made, to the effect that "there has been too much of engaged or public anthropology and too little of anthropology as an intellectual pursuit animated by rigorous contemplation and practice on and around a set of shared curiosities" (Nyamnjoh 2015b: 48). This helps explain why the focus of anthropology in South Africa has been on groups perceived as underprivileged, i.e. non-Whites and poor Whites – the ones in direst need, as it were, of "soul saving" (Nyamnjoh 2015b: 48). Afrikaners are added to the list both because of a perceived cultural distinctness and because they have been "seen as the initiators and upholders of apartheid, with the greatest adjustment to make in the new dispensation" (Steyn 2003: 21).

WESSAs

In the latest census, taken in 2011, the South African population totalled 51,770,560, of which White people comprised 4,586,838 or 8.9 % (Statistics South Africa 2012: 21). According to an estimate from 2018, this number has dwindled to 7.8 % (BusinessTech 2018). White South Africans are divided into two main groups or categories. The largest is the Afrikaners. If defined as White South Africans who speak Afrikaans inside the household, Afrikaners comprise 61.2 % of South African Whites (Statistics South Africa 2019a: 8). While the Afrikaners are often perceived and portrayed as a relatively homogenous White ethnic group descended from Dutch colonists (Besteman 2008: 5; Erasmus 2017: 115), their ancestral background is in fact mixed, and their exact racial and cultural identities and affinities are complex and often contested (Steyn 2004: 77, 80, 83; Distiller 2012: 84; van der Westhuizen 2017: 4; Maré 2014: 142-143; Schutte 1995: 61-62; Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: 119).

The second-largest group consists of those White people whose first language is English. White South Africans who speak English inside the household make up 36.3 % of South African Whites (Statistics South Africa 2019a: 8), and about 2.8 % of the country's population as a whole.[2] Much like the Afrikaners, they are a very mixed group in terms of ancestral backgrounds, and also significantly diverse in terms of "class, geography, religion and political opinion" (Salusbury 2003: 23). Following the example of a number of other scholars (Banning

[2] Based on the 7.8 % figure for White South Africans (BusinessTech 2018). 36.3 % of 7.8 % gives 2.8 %.

1989; Foley A. 1991; Sennett & Foster 1996; Salusbury 2003; Salusbury & Foster 2004; van der Westhuizen 2017), I have chosen to refer to this category using the etic term *White English-speaking South Africans*, abbreviated *WESSAs*, a term originally coined by Yvonne Banning (1989). I choose to adopt this appellation because it has a clear descriptive meaning and is difficult to misunderstand, and also because the category in question seems to lack a clear, universal endonym. Terms like "English South African", "English", or even "Anglo", are emically popular in my field-site, but could refer to *any* English-speaking South African regardless of race. Such terms might also be interpreted as a reference to a direct connection to England, a connection which may or may not exist.

Most if not all former British colonies contain populations of White English-speakers descended from colonial settlers. In some of these places, such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, White English-speakers currently comprise the majority of the country's population. What makes WESSAs special within the context of British imperial diasporas is their small number, and the fact that despite this, they are still a "permanent group [in South Africa]; although not *aboriginal*, they are *sociologically indigenous"* (Steyn 2001: xxiv, referencing Stone 1985).

Scholarly attention to WESSAs as a specific topic of study can be traced back to at least the early 1970s, beginning in the disciplines of English studies and psychology and predating the emergence of Whiteness studies as a field of its own. A seminal point for the study of White English-speakers in South Africa was the conference "English-speaking South Africa: an Assessment", held in 1974 to mark the opening of the 1820 Settlers National Monument in Grahamstown. The published conference proceedings (de Villiers 1976) contain several papers on WESSAs, some of which would prove influential on later scholarship. The papers deal with the history and identity of the WESSAs and their situation in the 1970s. I will not go into an in-depth discussion of their arguments in this section, as many of them are primarily of historical interest, although I will refer to some of them in this thesis.

In his 1985 article *English and the English in the New South Africa*, poet and literary scholar Guy Butler describes the WESSAs (using the acronym "ESSA" without the "White" qualifier) as "part of the privileged white minority", but notes that they "as yet have not in large numbers accepted the National Party's *apartheid* policy and all that that has meant" (Butler 1985: 171). Butler foregrounds *individualism* as a WESSA cultural value, arguing that "the ESSA has refused to beat a sectional drum", and that they generally "wish for a society in which cultural

and linguistic associations are voluntary, not compulsory, in which identity is a matter of affinity, not biological prescription" (p. 171).

The first anthropologist to touch upon WESSAs in a larger scholarly work dealing specifically with the subject of Whiteness, is Vincent Crapanzano from the United States in his book *Waiting: The Whites of South Africa* (1985). The book examines "the discourse of a people who are privileged by […] power, and, paradoxically, in their privilege, victims of it" (Crapanzano 1985: ix) through an ethnographic study of the inhabitants of a rural village near Cape Town, focusing heavily – although by no means exclusively – on Afrikaner experiences. On the topic of WESSAs, Crapanzano noticed that

> in the literature on white South Africa there was a marked tendency to treat Afrikaners – 'the white tribe of Africa,' the BBC calls them – as the subject of study. The English seemed to slip away in these studies; often, particularly in studies by foreigners, they were the lens through which the Afrikaner was seen. (p. 25)

Crapanzano himself seems to do the opposite: Although he does write about WESSAs, in his work they are mostly seen through Afrikaner eyes. WESSAs themselves usually "preferred to talk about the Afrikaners, the Zulu, the Xhosa, or the Coloureds rather than [themselves] and [their] fellow English speakers" (p. 109). Crapanzano argues that WESSAs are characterised by an "absence of unity" and a "vague communion" which "cannot measure up to the Afrikaners' monolithic nationalism" (p. 35). This observation, albeit interesting, reads as a generalisation of WESSAs as well as Afrikaners, and considering that Crapanzano's work has been famously criticised for overgeneralisation and lack of representativity (Bell 1993: 3; Teppo 2004: 66-67; Boonzaier, Skalník, Thornton, West and Gordon 1985), his relatively brief reflections on WESSAs would seem to raise more questions than they answer.

After Crapanzano, a certain interest in WESSAs continued within psychology and English studies. Discussing English-language South African plays, Yvonne Banning (1989) argues that the WESSAs of her time – a term she coins in the article – were facing an identity crisis stemming from the facts that they (a) no longer had the same ownership to the English language as they used to, and (b) subscribed to a liberal ideology which "prevent[ed them] from claiming racial distinctiveness" (Banning 1989: 20). According to Banning, this situation left WESSAs paralysed, not knowing what to do with themselves.

In his reply to Banning, Andrew Foley (1991) attempts to debunk two "myths" about WESSAs: Firstly, "the myth of the 'bastard': the idea of WESSAs as rapacious, exploitative imperialists

cunningly masking their racist, reactionary attitudes and conduct beneath a veneer of apolitical neutrality" – and secondly,

> the myth of the 'wimp': the idea of WESSAs as pseudo-liberal weaklings meekly apologising for their mere presence in South Africa, and trying guiltily and feebly to lend their ineffectual support to the noble/savage (depending on the critic's perspective) African liberation movements (Foley A. 1991: 15).

Foley argues that both these stereotypes, as well as Banning's characterisation of WESSAs as inactive "ghosts" (Banning 1989: 25-26), are oversimplistic and unhelpful. The main disagreement between Banning and Foley revolves around the nature of the WESSA's alleged identity crisis. Foley characterises WESSA identity as "elusive of simple exact definition" (Foley A. 1991: 16), more so than any other South African ethnic group, which he attributes not only to their "extremely heterogeneous composition" (p. 16), but to their "unresolved position" in South Africa (p. 17). According to Foley, the identity crisis of the WESSAs at the turn of the 1990s was due to a combination of lack of control of the government, alienation from "the source of their cultural heritage and from their cultural associates" (p. 18), and the general situation of "intense inter-group tension and violence" (p. 18) at the time. Most importantly, Foley argues that a significant segment of WESSAs at the time were not static at all, as Banning had claimed, but actively working to play a more constructive role in South African society.

In 1996, psychologists Sennett and Foster published a follow-up of a 1977 questionnaire-based study by Morse, Mann and Nel, exploring the similarities and differences between WESSAs' and Afrikaners' feelings of belonging in South Africa. Sennett and Foster noted that at the time of their study, WESSAs were still "severely underresearched", and suggested that a possible reason for this might be "the notorious idea that there *is* no such cultural grouping as the WESSAs" (Sennett & Foster 1996: 203). While admitting that WESSAs are a "loosely bound and heterogeneous community" (p. 203) and that they lack the visible symbolic markers of identity found among other groups such as Afrikaners, Sennett and Foster argue that WESSAs "do indeed constitute a group", which "could be inferred from such signs of boundary rigidity as their disinclination toward assimilation or 'marrying out', or even by their residential localization" (p. 203).[3] Sennett and Foster's survey data suggested that "The English subjects' investment in their national identity" as South Africans was "considerably greater than that of

[3] An interesting contrast to Schlemmer, who found "a relatively high extent of intermarriage with Afrikaners" (Schlemmer 1976: 131).

their 1975 counterparts" (p. 208), and they also found that both Afrikaners and WESSAs perceived WESSAs to be "the group most favourably off at the present time" (p. 209).

Steyn's *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be* (2001) deserves a second mention, due to the book's brief but important discussions of the topic of WESSA ethnic and cultural consciousness (e.g. Steyn 2001: 31, 90-93, 103-108). "As opposed to stressing roots within South Africa", Steyn explains, her WESSA respondents reassert "the importance of ethnic origins in Europe, most particularly the British Isles" (p. 90) and "draw on a long tradition of liberal whiteness in the Cape Town area" (p. 90), but with "an indisputable subtext of cultural chauvinism" (p. 93). Steyn argues that "identification with a world beyond the boundaries of South Africa enables English-speaking South Africans to engage in a different kind of psychological withdrawal" (p. 92) exemplified by seeking affirmation "overseas" (p. 93). This seems to contradict Sennett and Foster's argument that WESSAs had become more invested in South Africanness. Steyn also argues that WESSAs have a "tendency to conflate racism with Apartheid, and therefore to feel absolved from deeper soul-searching" (p. 104). Significantly, she shows how WESSAs conflate "Whiteness, racism, Apartheid and Afrikaners" and construe "Englishness as racially unmarked" (p. 107). Indeed, she argues that "The internalized sense of (English) whiteness as the norm remains deeply buried, and continues unchallenged" (p. 108).

To my knowledge, the first larger study focusing *specifically* on WESSAs is Theresa Salusbury's Master's thesis in research psychology titled *Discourses of whiteness informing the identity of white English-speaking South Africans* (2003). In her thesis, Salusbury aims to provide a "partly revisionist perspective on the topic" (Salusbury 2003: 34) from a social constructionist angle. Through in-depth interviews, Salusbury demonstrates WESSAs' tendency to present themselves as "culture-less" and specifically individualist, "naturally" middle-class (in specific contrast to Black people), and the way in which they position themselves as un-situated, generic human beings. In this, her findings are generally in line with those of Steyn (2001). Salusbury argues that there is a strong strategic component in the way WESSAs talk about themselves, and that their image of lacking in "group cohesion and ethnicity" (Salusbury 2003: 35) in fact serves to bolster their position of power and privilege.

Salusbury's work is followed up – and referenced – by Steyn's doctoral thesis in psychology, titled *White Talk* (2003). In two chapters of the thesis, Steyn examines WESSA identities and attitudes by reviewing the content of English-language newspaper columns and analysing it through the lens of the concept of *white talk.* Steyn explains *white talk* as a discursive practice which works to maximise advantage and preserve privilege for Whites in post-Apartheid South

Africa by "play[ing the]field so as to display what is advantageous to reveal and to obscure what is advantageous to conceal" (Steyn 2003: 6). The brand of *white talk* described by Steyn here is essentially the same as the discursive practices described by Salusbury. Both practices arguably share the characteristic of "legitimating and enacting racism while at the same time concealing this activity", and both arguably serve "to reground the ideology that maintained white advantage in the past, ensuring that it has the same effect, but in ways that are able to operate in new circumstances, and are not too obvious" (p. 113).

According to Steyn, the columnists she examines "clearly position themselves within white, English-speaking South Africa, and re-present this positionality" (p. 116). Steyn argues that the "elite versions of *white talk"* employed by the columnists are

> simultaneously (a) the voice of the dispersed white settlers in South Africa, who use the international and historical dominance of western ideology to help retain their position as elevated Westerners in a Third World setting where the tables of power have turned, as well as (b) the voice of the dominant western ideology disciplining an attack from a potentially powerful resistant voice in Africa, acting through its representatives in the local situation which it can do with impunity now that this country is formally free. (p. 158)

She further argues that the *White talk* found in the newspaper columns provides "moral and intellectual support for on-going group-based inequality" (p. 181) by underplaying White dominance and "overplaying the dominance of the African presence in political and organizational contexts, and stoking, even reactivating, many of the constructions of the inimical nature of Africa and Africans to whiteness" (p. 210). Steyn thus frames White people's use of *white talk* – including the specific subgenre employed by WESSAs – as an intentional and organised endeavour to dominate, an image which affirms and complements Salusbury's portrayal of WESSAs as strategic communicators.

Both Steyn and Salusbury contributed chapters to the anthology *Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today* (Distiller & Steyn 2004). Of these, only Salusbury and Foster's chapter *Rewriting WESSA identity* deals explicitly with WESSAs. The chapter is based on Salusbury's Master's thesis and gives an analysis of interviews with WESSAs, short but insightful and presented in an accessible format. The sporadic articles on WESSAs that have appeared after 2004 seem to have come mainly from the disciplines of history and English studies (e.g. Lambert 2005; Barker & De Kock 2007).

The body of literature on WESSAs emerging from other disciplines makes the muted interest and curiosity about WESSAs in South African *anthropology* all the more striking. In his review

of anthropological literature on White people in South Africa, Niehaus (2013) does not mention a single work specifically focusing on WESSAs. Whatever the reason for this lack of interest may be (and it is difficult to see it as anything but a deliberate conceptual and/or methodological choice), it has resulted in a lack of ethnographic studies of WESSAs and an unfortunate gap in the South African and global literature on Whiteness. This gap is perhaps most strongly felt in terms of research methodologies. For example, Salusbury's and Steyn's portrayals of WESSAs would seem to lend credence to Andrew Foley's (1991) "bastard" stereotype, but as their findings are based on verbal data and not backed up with participant observation, it is possible that these studies only tell part of the story. As is well known among social anthropologists, what people *say* they do is not necessarily the same as what they *actually* do (Hoëm 2001).

The only ethnographic study of post-Apartheid WESSAs that I am aware of is Madelen Roxman Ueland's Norwegian-language Master's thesis *Fra hvit til afrikansk?* ("From white to African?", 2012). Ueland argues that among WESSAs, being White – rather than any specific ethnic or linguistic affiliation – is still "the most important marker of identity" (Ueland 2012: 1-2; my translation). Her data is in line with earlier observations of WESSAs being generally more aware of what they are *not* than what they *are* (Salusbury 2003: 25; Salusbury & Foster 2004: 96-97) – they are "not black, and not Afrikaans" (Salusbury 2003: 25). Ueland's main discussion is about the relationship between an identity as "White" and an identity as "African". She argues that the de-centring of Whiteness in South African society has forced White South Africans to "find new narratives to explain who they are, what they are doing in Africa and what relationship they have to the African peoples and to the continent" (Ueland 2012: 15; my translation). Ueland envisions several ends to this conundrum, including, on the one hand, the continuation of Whiteness as is, and, on the other hand, a deconstruction of Whiteness leading to the inclusion of White South Africans as "a people of Africa" (p. 91; my translation).

It may be argued that the most important contribution made by Ueland to the body of scholarship on WESSAs is her methodology, which provides rich and varied data material. While Ueland's thesis is largely interview-based, the interviews are in-depth and contextualised in a way that serves to tell a story beyond the participants' verbal statements alone. Importantly, Ueland draws on insights from participant observation to nuance and supplement her interview data, and adds ethnographic vignettes providing the reader with a glimpse into her own everyday lived experiences in Cape Town and among the WESSA community. In other words, what sets Ueland apart is that she provides *thick descriptions* of her field (Geertz 1973), a dimension arguably lacking from other studies of WESSAs.

In sum, the extant literature on WESSAs is disciplinarily and thematically diverse, with each author coming at the topic from a somewhat different angle. Some points are contested, including the extent of WESSAs' cohesion as a group and the strength of their feeling of belonging to (South) Africa. Most studies of WESSAs in the post-Apartheid era do agree on one important point, however: A central characteristic of WESSA identity seems to be an ongoing attempt at constructing their particular form of Whiteness as *normal*, and to dissociate themselves from the "extreme" or "ethnic" Whiteness of Afrikaners (Salusbury 2003: 53; Steyn 2003: 123, 218; Steyn 2004: 70; Ueland 2012: 43, 69; Schutte 1995: 15; cf. also van der Westhuizen 2017: 4-5, 7, 61), and particularly from any association with the politics of Apartheid (Ueland 2012: 79-80; Steyn 2004: 76; van der Westhuizen 2017:49-50; Besteman 2008: 135-136; cf. also Distiller 2012: 31). Indeed, WESSAs, especially those who describe themselves as "liberal", often seem to evade discussions of race altogether (Steyn 2001: 103-108; Salusbury & Foster 2004: 96; Mangcu 2015: 3-7; McKaiser 2015; Besteman 2008:112-113; cf. also Crapanzano 1985: 204-205; Steyn & Foster 2012: 28; West 2009: 57; Distiller 2012: 91; Southall 2016: 84).

It would appear, if the above accounts are anything to go by, that WESSAs are still invisible, both as a group in South African society and as subjects of research. Especially in anthropology, they seem to constitute a major "white spot on the map". This thesis seeks, in a small way, to help remedy the paucity of anthropological knowledge about WESSAs and, hopefully, to ignite a greater interest in the topic within the discipline.

WESSAs are, of course, a heterogeneous category. By definition, its members have three things in common: Being White (either self-identified or ascribed or both), being first-language speakers of English, and being South African. As Salusbury (2003: 22-23) has pointed out, and as will be further demonstrated in this thesis, the WESSA category contains people of many different backgrounds and with myriad worldviews and life experiences. However, the extant literature does seem to suggest that there is something deeper that ties WESSAs together. According to Richard Jenkins, what distinguishes a *group* from a mere *category* is that whereas a category is "a collectivity that is defined according to criteria formulated by the sociologist or anthropologist" or whichever external agent is doing the categorising, a group has the additional characteristic of being "meaningful to its members […] a self-conscious collectivity, rooted in processes of internal definition" (Jenkins 2008 [1997]: 56). While Salusbury has warned that "there is neither a biological nor a sociological reason to assume the naturalness of the WESSAs as a collective" (Salusbury 2003: 24), Ueland did observe that her informants'

"ethnic identity influenced their perceptions of their social world and the category which informed their actions" (Ueland 2012: 7; my translation). The question of WESSA "group-ness" and its exact nature will be a recurring theme throughout this thesis.

The White middle class

Class is very real in South Africa, and income inequality today is still very much correlated with racial categories (Rosiejka 2017: 8-9; Seekings & Nattrass 2005: 6; MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 154). Although Seekings and Nattrass (2005: 307) noted a trend towards a "declining importance of interracial inequality and rising importance of intraracial inequality", in 2000 the White population's share of income in South Africa was still high – either 40 % or 46 % (Seekings & Nattrass 2005: 305) – and hugely disproportionate, considering that Whites made up only 9.6 % of the South African population in 2001 (Statistics South Africa 2003: 13; cf. also Southall 2004: 522, Besteman 2008: 125). Van der Westhuizen reports that "[i]n 2008, the 20 per cent at the top of the income pyramid consisted of 83 per cent of white people", and that in 2013, "White income rose to R530,880 […] in contrast to black income rising to R88,327" (van der Westhuizen 2018: 35).

This thesis focuses on middle-class WESSAs. What does "middle class" mean? The middle class can be defined according to income or consumption, delimited by a poverty line and an arbitrary upper threshold (Stoffel 2016: 55; Southall 2016: 233-234). Melber has questioned the relevance of a focus on an economically defined middle-class, as it "is increasingly used in an inflationary sense to cover almost everything 'in between', thereby signifying little or nothing" (Melber 2013: 115). However, common understandings of class often reach beyond mere economics (Stoffel 2016: 59). In South Africa, "middle class" as an emic term seems to be used as a cultural label just as much as an economic one (Ngoma 2016: 178; Kistner 2015; Southall 2016: 163). As an anthropologist, my primary interest is less in the economic definitions of the middle class and more in the social meanings invested in the concept of middle-class identity.

Seekings and Nattrass (2005) explore inequalities in South Africa as a *system* encompassing all classes and races. However, their focus is mainly historical (pre-1994). Recent studies on the middle class in South Africa seem to focus mostly on the "new" Black middle class, with the works of sociologist Roger Southall (2004, 2016) being particularly seminal. The Black middle class has been further explored in a number of smaller and more focused studies (Mokotso

2009; Manqoyi 2013, 2016; Kistner 2015; Ngoma 2016; James 2017; Leopeng & Langa 2018), which tend to look at this class not so much in relation to its White counterpart, but from an intra-Black perspective. MacDonald discusses the topic in the context of political governance, and argues that "the ANC is […] building a bourgeoisie of its own kind for the good of the people" in the hope that "the African people, including the poor, [will] prosper because some Africans are being enriched" (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 156) – a strategy which, according to MacDonald, is not working very well (p. 158; see also Melber 2013). In these studies, little is said about the White middle class at all except for vague, suggestive phrases (Ngoma 2016: 177; Leopeng & Langa 2018: 2; Manqoyi 2016: 15-16; cf. also McKaiser 2015: 36-37), indicating that White middle-class culture and values are largely taken for granted, and, indeed, that "White culture" is constructed as "naturally" middle-class (Salusbury 2003: 69-70; Salusbury & Foster 2004: 100; Ueland 2012: 12). MacDonald, for example, claims that "South African whites generally take prosperity to be part and parcel of their way of life, of what they have in mind when they speak of 'white' culture" (MacDonald 2012 [2006]). A similar conflation between being White and being middle-class has been observed in the United States by Frankenberg (1993: 24).

Interestingly, in Leopeng and Langa's description of "an emergent class […] of super-rich Black men", these men do not yet seem to have reached their destination, but are still "becoming", "going – toward the concrete streets of suburban existence and away from the dusty streets of the township" (Leopeng & Langa 2018: 21; cf. also Southall 2016: 174). In spite of their success, they still see themselves as situated *below* the White suburban middle-class. This reinforces two of my personal impressions: Firstly, that for many White South Africans, self-identifying as "middle class" often masks an essentially upper-class lifestyle (cf. Seekings & Nattrass 2005: 309; Southall 2016: 7), and secondly, that Whites are seen as inhabiting a position essentially unreachable (cf. Ahmed 2007: 154) by non-Whites who in turn are often seen as "naturally poor" (Steyn 2003: 200; van der Westhuizen 2017: 37; Schutte 1995: 197).

Of ethnographic accounts of the lives of middle-class White South Africans, the most voluminous and well-known work is Crapanzano's *Waiting,* where the author explicitly states that he "wanted to work with middle- and- upper-class whites who were considered by South African standards 'liberal,' 'subtle,' and […] 'cultured'" (1985: 24). In the post-Apartheid context, the most thorough analyses of middle-class White South Africans is found in Steyn (2001), and Ueland (2012), as well as Finnish anthropologist Annika Björnsdotter Teppo's PhD

thesis *The Making of a Good White* (2004), which deals with poor White people in a suburb of Cape Town. As a historical ethnography, Teppo's thesis focuses more on archives of the past than observations of the present. Additionally, Teppo's focus is on poor Whites, and specifically on Whites who do not fit the norm of what a "good White" is supposed to be. Interestingly, she defines this norm largely in terms of the ways in which the poor Whites are *failing* to live up to "good White" standards, and descriptions of the content of "good Whiteness" are surprisingly absent.[4]

The WESSA middle-class: Hiding in plain sight?

Considering that the South African White middle-class is missing from scholarly literature in rather the same way that WESSAs are, *middle-class WESSAs* seem to be doubly invisible. Dyer's argument that "white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (Dyer 1988: 44) suggests that the apparent invisibility of middle-class WESSA might be a deliberate or *chosen* invisibility, different from the involuntary invisibility of marginalised and "muted" groups (Ardener 1975). Salusbury (2003) argues that WESSAs construct "white culture as 'naturally' middle-class while black culture is constructed as ill-fitted to material success, and [elevate] the position of economics, a WESSA domain of power, in contrast to politics" (p. 70) in order to "reposition themselves within the changing socio-economic landscape" of South Africa (pp. 69-70). She argues that "The constructed 'normalcy' of whites' current economic position means that a less privileged status for whites would be construed as 'abnormal'" (pp. 73-74). There is, of course, no such thing as *one* "White culture" or *one* "Black culture". What Salusbury shows is that such homogenisation and dichotomisation can be used strategically to serve particular interests.

In many ways, Whites self-identifying as "middle-class" seem to be a *de facto* upper class in South Africa (cf. Salusbury & Foster 2004: 100). An informant of Ueland's, a Black man named Sandile, found it "strange that Whites always see themselves as middle-class" (Ueland 2012: 70; my translation). Sandile himself, whose lifestyle and economic situation is very similar to that of Ueland's self-identified White middle-class participants, stated that "I […] see myself as high class" (p. 70; original quotes in English). Sandile reflected that White middle-class South Africans "just wanna be under it. Live a chilled life, and want no one to

[4] The concept of *ordentlikheid*, a form of "respectability" which is a central part of Afrikaner (and Afrikaans-speaking Coloured) identity, has been studied by Ross (2010) and van der Westhuizen (2017).

notice" (p. 70), and that identifying as "middle-class" may in fact be a strategy for flying under the radar. The perceived connection between WESSA-ness and middle-class identity thus seems to add to their overall invisibility.

An important argument pertaining to WESSAs – going all the way back to the works of Garson (1976: 32-33) and Schlemmer (1976: 96-98) – is that WESSAs have had a "preoccupation with global/western culture deriv[ing] from the WESSAs historical link with Britain" (Salusbury 2003: 28), and furthermore, in the words of Steyn, that the WESSAs have been "psychologically more alienated from the African continent than the Afrikaners[, … keeping] a tighter hold on their European identities" (Steyn 2001: 31). In some Afrikaner circles, they have been given the nickname *soutpiele* ("salt penises"), implying that the WESSA[5] has "one foot in South Africa, one foot in Britain and his penis dangling in the Atlantic".[6] In the words of one of my own interlocutors, an Afrikaner woman,

> The Anglais are soutpiele because traditionally they have always been with one foot in SA and another in Britain, which they called "home". And so their cocks would hang in the salt of the ocean. If anything went wrong here, they would pack up and go "home".

The *soutpiel* metaphor is a contested one which I will explore further in Chapter 6 of this thesis. Even if it is true that middle-class WESSAs feel closer or more loyal to their European origins than Afrikaners do, this does not explain their absence from descriptions and analyses of South African society. I find this absence striking, particularly since Britain has been one of the dominant colonial forces in the world for the last several centuries, and *the* dominant one in South Africa during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th (van der Westhuizen 2017: 25). The British, it has been argued, have often tended to see their culture as superior to others (Nyamnjoh 2016: 60; Pierre 2013: 16-17, 49-50; cf. also Distiller 2012), and West argues that "[t]he 'cultural chauvinism of Englishness' is particularly pertinent in relation to South African identity politics" (West 2009: 27). Why, then, are the WESSAs not more visible?

British colonists in South Africa were not only culturally dominant, but also economically, and remained so well into late Apartheid (Crapanzano 1985: xi, 11). They have, however, been described as politically impotent because of their lack of unity (Crapanzano 1985: 37; Salusbury & Foster 2004: 94), especially in the face of Afrikaner nationalism (Worrall 1976: 200-204). Steyn has argued that "[i]t is a modernist fallacy (much touted in the old [Apartheid]

[5] Although trans women and nonbinary people can also have penises, I believe I am justified in assuming that the penis reference implies that the WESSA in this case is construed as a male.
[6] https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/soutpiel (retrieved 7 June 2018).

regime) that only the unified is powerful" (Steyn 2001: 155). Is it really possible for a *culturally and economically* dominant group to be *politically* powerless? Might WESSAs' claim to political impotence – what Worrall (1976: 214) has called their "'powerless minority' complex" – really just be a way of deflecting critical inquiry into their actual position in South African society – and, by extension, their complicity in creating and sustaining its "ills"? Could it simply be that cultural notions of individuality prevent WESSAs from seeing themselves as parts of a larger group? (Crapanzano 1985: 39; Salusbury 2003: 24-25; Salusbury & Foster 2004: 94, 97-98) Or might there be something to Mary Douglas' musings about universalism being a core idea of British culture; that "[p]erhaps we Anglo-Saxons are more concerned to emphasise our sense of common humanity"? (Douglas 2001 [1966]: 75)

These are questions that have rarely been explored at all, and almost never from an ethnographic perspective, even though they are extremely interesting and likely central to understanding the social, economic and political situation in South Africa today. What is perhaps most remarkable is that there seems to be little or no discussion within anthropology, nor indeed within any academic discipline, about the lack of study of middle-class WESSAs.

Race, class, and geography in Cape Town

In many ways, post-Apartheid South Africa seems, still, to be constructed on old racial ideologies (Maré 2014; Ueland 2012: 44; cf. also Southall 2004: 522). One expression of the lagging progress of racial integration is found in settlement patterns across Cape Town, where different racial groups and social classes inhabit different areas and make use of public spaces in separate ways (Ueland 2012: 49; Swilling 2015: 84; cf. also McKaiser 2014). It may indeed be seen as a "de facto but persistent racial segregation" similar to that of many cities and neighbourhoods in the United States (Sullivan 2006: 17). As Ueland (2012: 5) observes, the areas in Cape Town reserved for non-Whites during apartheid – so-called "township" areas, which I will talk about in greater detail later in this thesis – are still often separated from "White" areas by wide highways, large unused tracts of land, and power plants. In 2001, Turok and Watson pointed to what they saw as a "polarised or divergent" pattern of development across the city, with middle- and high-income housing expanding in the "prosperous suburbs in the north and west of the city" while the Cape Flats, "where the price of land is lowest", had been the focus of "low-income housing projects and public investment in basic services" (Turok & Watson 2001: 120). This effectively served to reinforce the race- and class-based

geographical patterns of segregation originating in Apartheid. Indeed, Southall (2016: 185-186) calls it "neo-apartheid". Schutte talks about South African race and class segregation in terms of a symbolic conflation of horizontal distance with vertical distance, with predominantly White areas *ranking* higher than other areas in terms of "wealth, power and initiative" (Schutte 1995: 210).

Today's segregation is perpetuated by high walls and electric fences around affluent homes, and a large industry of private security guards and "armed response" (Junck 2016: 9-10; Ueland 2012: 49-52; Besteman 2008: 51). Because of the lingering correlation between class and race, this boundary between the private and public spheres often functions as a boundary between predominantly White and predominantly non-White spaces. Additionally, several scholars have argued that the way in which this boundary is often talked about in terms of keeping criminals "out" contributes to White people's *fear* of non-White people (Junck 2016; Ueland 2012: 61-62, 85-86; Rosiejka 2017: 28; Southall 2016: 187-188; cf. also Low 2001). That being said, Cape Town does have the "highest rates of murder, robbery and property-related crimes" among South Africa's major cities, which makes Cape Town residents feel justifiably "more unsafe compared to residents in other cities" (Urban Safety Reference Group 2019: 22). The relationship between crime and security is a complex issue which I will touch on in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

West (2009) describes the quintessential "White bubble" – the suburbs of South African cities – in unflattering terms, illustrating how Apartheid's legacies still creep into one's most intimate spaces in the here-and-now:

> White South African suburbia in 2008 is much the same kind of space as it used to be during the height of apartheid. Though there are blacks moving into previously white residential areas, the ethos of these areas remains largely unaffected. Walls are still high, security gates and alarm systems are still compulsory, and black domestic employees present the same problems they always did: they are a necessity in maintaining excessively big homes and gardens, but 'they cannot be trusted', as whitespeak in South Africa would have it. The owners of these establishments are primarily middle class, mostly white, and anxiously protective of the goods accumulated inside. (West 2009: 159)

These are spaces characterised, even in the post-Apartheid era, by an "unhomeliness and discomfort" (West 2009: 160) that has been better expressed in fictional literature than in academic texts, for instance by Marlene van Niekerk in her short story *Labour* from 2004. This story illustrates the experience of White South African "madamhood", and being a white

"Woman alone" in need of protection in an environment seen as fundamentally unsafe, not least due to the presence of a menacing "they" who are understood to be Cape Coloureds, potential robbers and sexual predators in the minds of the White residents. However, in this story, it is in fact the Whites who are exploiting Coloured labour, dehumanizing them to the point of seeing them as less than dogs (West 2009: 183).

Conceptual framework: *Incompleteness* and *juju*

The fight for prominence within hierarchies of race and class can be conceived as a fight to be seen as fully human. This view calls into question the very notion of the complete, independent and bounded individual, and opens up for phenomena like race and class to be explored in terms of *incompleteness,* a term I borrow from Francis Nyamnjoh (2017a, 2017b). The term implies that no mode of existence is *complete* in and of itself; on the contrary, all beings are by nature *incomplete,* and we constantly have to lend, borrow, give and take in order to activate ourselves in tangible as well as intangible ways. This framework also recognises that such activation is always contextual and temporary, and that technologies of self-activation, however accomplished, uncomplete as much as they complete us (Nyamnjoh 2019: 281). Nyamnjoh sees life's inherent incompleteness not in terms of obstacles or lacks, but in terms of opportunities and abundance. He calls for *conviviality,* a mode of living together which is founded on openness, curiosity, and a constructive acknowledgement of interconnections, interdependencies, and composite identities.

Nyamnjoh's inspiration for exploring incompleteness comes not only from his own West and Central African background (Nyamnjoh 2019: 280), but also from the works of Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola (1920-1997). Through my own readings of Tutuola, I find that his writings, which draw on Yoruba folk beliefs and storytelling traditions, are indeed conceptually helpful when examining the construction of human identities and social relations not just in Nigeria, but universally.

In Tutuola's novel *The Palm-Wine Drinkard,* the protagonist begins his quest by donning "all [his] native juju and also [his] father's juju". He soon starts thinking of himself as "a god and juju-man", and presents himself as the "Father of gods who [can] do everything in this world" (Tutuola 2014 [1952]: 11-14). In spite of all his self-confidence, however, the protagonist is not actually omnipotent. When he finds the man he is looking for, the man turns out to be dead and living in the Deads' Town, and although the protagonist "wanted to die with him and follow

him to this Deads' Town", he "could not die", and even the palm-wine tapped by the dead man "did not taste like the wine he was tapping before he died" (pp. 72-74). Thus, unexpectedly, the most quintessential power-source of all – the very fact of being alive – turns out to be a disadvantage for the protagonist in his quest.

During the course of his adventure, the *Drinkard* protagonist helps a woman who has been seduced by what appears to be the "complete gentleman" who dazzles everybody with his beauty (p. 23). However, it turns out that this gentleman is simply a Skull – in his own words, a "half-bodied incomplete gentleman" – who had rented his body-parts and had to return them after he was finished with them (p. 20). Like Tutuola's Skull, human beings can be seen as *incomplete* beings from the beginning, borrowing from others (although not always with due acknowledgement; cf. Nyamnjoh (2017a: 200)) in order to build identities and relationships.

In his elaborative interpretation of Tutuola's work, Nyamnjoh (2017a) uses the term *juju* to refer to the various technologies that we as *incomplete* humans use to enhance and activate ourselves in different ways according to context. *Jujus* extend and enhance the capabilities and experiences of humans, but always depends on context as well as other *jujus* in order to be fully effective (Nyamnjoh 2019: 284). A cellphone, for instance, is a powerful *juju* or technology of self-activation, but it requires electricity to function, and its full range of functions will only be available if there is a network connection. Thus, even *jujus* are incomplete, and form part of the ubiquitous networks of interdependency that make up the very fabric of being. By way of example, in the context of my field-site of Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch (and the rest of South Africa) where electricity supply is increasingly rationed by the national electricity provider Eskom (Donnelly 2020; Dickson 2020), many *jujus* that depend on Eskom to function properly are helpless to the point of uselessness during power outages. It is important to note that this Tutuolan definition of *juju* is different from the way the word is usually defined by anthropologists (a narrower definition referring to specific West African spiritual practices (Cbanga 2016)). In this thesis, the term *juju* will refer specifically to Tutuolan *juju.*

In the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan view of human society, there is no such thing as the perfect *juju.* Regardless of how much we would like to be "gods and juju-men" capable of doing everything in this world, by nature we will always be more like the Skull, with limited inherent agency and power, and essentially incomplete. There will always come a time when even the most privileged among us will need to borrow the *juju* of others, and there is always someone who would benefit from borrowing one of ours. Such a view means looking at life not in terms of zero-sum games, but in terms of meetings, interconnections, sharing, and *co-naissance*

(Devisch 2013: 26; Olukoshi & Nyamnjoh 2011: 17). Seen this way, being Black or White, Afrikaner or WESSA, South African or foreign, male or female, are no eternal absolutes. Underneath our masks, all humans are interconnected and interdependent beings existing with, by, for, and through others. This view is not a negation of humanity; it is an admission that humanity is open-ended, with boundaries that are porous, fluid and open to negotiation. It is a confirmation of *Ubuntu*, the fact that *I am because you are* (Nyamnjoh 2015a: 8-20; Bahi 2015).

In my opinion, Nyamnjoh's interpretation of Tutuola offers a great example of the potential of academic and literary genres to constructively "interpenetrate" (Clifford 1986: 2), not only stylistically, but on a deep conceptual level. By distilling Tutuola's "truth claims and […] alternative mode of theorizing" (Harrison 2016: 169) into a coherent theoretical framework, Nyamnjoh crafts a versatile analytical tool, a sophisticated and powerful lens through which society can be interpreted.

The Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan framework bears similarities to certain European critiques of the "classical" idea of the subject as "unified" and "substantial" (Gardner 1983: 57). For example, Lacan states his "object[ion] to any reference to totality in the individual" (Lacan 1953: 56), and sees the subject as divided in a dialectic between Self and Other, the conscious and the unconscious (Benson 2018). While the two may not be *identical*, I see a distinct *resemblance* between the Lacanian conceptualisation of a "split subject" and the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan idea of Skull plus *juju* as conjoined but distinct parts of the activated self. On its own, the concept of Tutuolan *juju* also evokes Foucault's idea of subjects constituting and shaping each other through strategies of power (Foucault 1982; de Souza 2018), as well as de Certeau's "practice of everyday life" in which representations and modes of behaviour are *used* strategically by groups and individuals (de Certeau 1988 [1984]: xii). As Žižek (1998) points out, sometimes "illusions" are created which are taken at face value even when their illusory nature is known, a phenomenon reminiscent of Tutuola's "complete gentleman".

Despite these similarities, however, the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan framework is an original one with as much claim to universal applicability as those of the European thinkers mentioned above (cf. Harrison 2012: 90). Indeed, it may be argued that the framework *ties together* some of the key concepts also known from the works of Lacan, Foucault, de Certeau, and Žižek and takes these concepts a step further by foregrounding in clear and intuitive terms their rootedness in the fundamental commonality of all humans. Furthermore, the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan framework stands out in the explicitness of its framing of incompleteness as something

valuable, an *opportunity* for discovery and growth, achievable not by clinging to *juju* in the hope of momentary completeness, but only through a genuinely convivial mindset.

How is the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan framework useful for this thesis? On a general level, it provides a highly efficient means of understanding the ways in which humans use identity labels and other significant symbols and attributes to position themselves vis-à-vis others. As will become evident in the ethnography sections of this thesis, the framework is doubly useful in a country like South Africa where ideas of racial and ethnic belonging strongly shape people's sense of Self and Other, and where people use a wide repertoire of strategies to move upwards in the hierarchies of Whiteness. It is triply useful in my project, since my own multifaceted and complex positionality in the field brings the issue of the communication and interpretation of identities to the fore in a particularly explicit way. Understanding my own relationship with my field-site and with WESSAs in terms of *incompleteness* and Tutuolan *juju* allows for a constructive deconstruction of my own identities as well as the identities of the WESSA community which I have studied, as well as a clear view of the interplay between my *jujus* and theirs. Furthermore, by breaking down its constituent *jujus,* the very banality of Whiteness itself is foregrounded (Fine 2019). A critical exploration of the idiosyncrasies of different *modes* of Whiteness through a Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan lens may help deconstruct the monolithic façade of Whiteness and put us in a better position to understand it as the ideological construct it is.

Summary conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature on WESSAs and the White middle class in South Africa. The literature on WESSAs agrees on certain important points, such as WESSA Whiteness being a pre-eminent and *normative* form of Whiteness in South Africa, and WESSAs' tendency to avoid discussions of racial issues. Unfortunately, there has been a paucity of participant-observation studies on WESSAs, which has left a significant knowledge gap – a "white spot on the map", as it were – in South African anthropology. The lack of literature on the White middle class is equally serious. My review of some of the seminal literature on the spatial dimension of racialised socioeconomic inequalities strongly suggests that Cape Town is still a highly segregated place in terms of both race and class. The time, therefore, seems to be long overdue for an ethnographic study of middle-class WESSAs, their view of themselves, and their relation to other groups and categories of South Africans.

I have ended the chapter by arguing that Amos Tutuola's writings provide a useful avenue by which to explore WESSA lifeworlds, especially the concept of *juju* as interpreted by Francis Nyamnjoh in the context of human *incompleteness*. The various labels, symbols, and attributes related to such phenomena as race, ethnicity, and class can be understood as technologies of self-activation which we humans use to supplement our essentially *incomplete* selves. Nyamnjoh's framework of incompleteness foregrounds the fact that humans are more alike than different, and that underneath all labels, we remain the same *kind* – a perspective which forms a fundamental point of departure for this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

The ethnographer *in* the field, the ethnographer *as* field: Reflections on positionality, method, and ethics

Introduction

What is ethnography? The word comes from the Greek *ἔθνος,* "race" (meaning humankind), and *γράφειν,* "to write" (Encyclopædia Britannica 1911: 849). However, *γράφειν* originally meant not only writing; it meant to "scratch, scrape, graze", and then to "delineate, draw, paint" (Champion 2012). Ethnography is therefore not merely a technique of the cognitive mind and the written word; it also has a strong element of art and craft: *Drawing humankind* (cf. Malkki 2007: 181-185; Marcus 2009: 3,7,16). This view reflects the fact that just like a work of art, every ethnographic work is a unique, expressive and essentially subjective interpretation of the world (Geertz 1973: 15), aimed not so much at *describing* the world as at "noticing, and responding in kind" (Ingold 2016: 11-12).

In the following chapter, I elaborate on the background and context informing my own interpretations and responses as an ethnographer. I start off by giving a reflexive overview of some important facets of my own personal identity, and how they affect my positionality in the field. I then describe how I first got into the field itself, accounting for my interest in the topic of WESSAs as well as my choice of methodological framework. Finally, I describe my field-site and methodological approaches in detail, before discussing issues of research ethics surrounding my project. As will be shown, my positionality and methodological choices place me in a position of deep entanglement in my field in certain respects, whereas in other respects I remain an outsider. My position of "outsider within" blurs the boundary between researcher and field – or, more precisely, keeps this boundary in a perpetual state of flux – and forces me to constantly reflect on the relationship between myself and the group I study.

Positionality

A social anthropologist doing ethnographic research is part and parcel of the social relations in their field, a fact which necessitates "a self-conscious dialogue with the other so as to remove the premise of inequality in knowledge-making, without surrendering self-identity" (Mafeje

1998: 10). This practice – which demands situating oneself openly and honestly in relation to the context and topic one is studying (cf. Devereux 1967: 134-147) – is commonly referred to as *reflexivity.* To practise reflexivity means to recognise that "the self is a multiple, constructed self that is always becoming and never quite fixed, and the ethnographic productions of such a self and the 'cultural other' are always historically and culturally contingent" (Foley D. E. 2002: 473).

Who am I? The short answer would be: *A 29-year-old White trans woman from Norway, living in South Africa.* However, as Bourdieu points out, "treat[ing] the properties attached to agents – occupation, age, sex, qualifications – as *forces* independent of the relationship within which they 'act'" (Bourdieu 1984: 22) is problematic. "Token statements" of reflexivity (Nyamnjoh 2012: 72), like my short answer above, do not actually provide anything except an "'intuitive' half-understanding" (Bourdieu 1984: 18). A much more thorough investigation of one's positionality is required, especially when the researcher is deeply entrenched in her field (Cerwonka 2007: 22-33; Malkki 2007: 177). Furthermore, as a White person I take special heed of Dyer's warning that "[s]tudies of dominance by the dominant should not deny the place of the writer in relation to what s/he is writing about it, but nor should they be the green light for self-recrimination or trying to get in on the act" (Dyer 1988: 45).

Being White

The idea of race is intrinsically connected with ideas about one's ancestral origins (Dyer 1997: 25; Seshadri-Crooks 2000: 16-18, 20; Maré 2014: 39; Ahmed 2007: 154; Erasmus 2017: 82). My own ancestry is mostly Norwegian, of the "ethnic Norwegian"[7] majority group, mixed with a number of other European ethnicities usually considered White. However, besides my White European roots, I also have Romani,[8] distant Afro-Caribbean, and allegedly even Mongol[9] ancestors, connecting me to groups *not* usually considered White (or whose Whiteness is, at least, contested). Furthermore, recent genealogical research suggests that one of my grandparents may have indigenous Sámi ancestors within a relatively recent timeframe. I acknowledge and embrace all parts of my ancestry, and I strongly oppose "politics of purity" (Monahan 2011, cited in Erasmus 2017: 93) and the tendency to amnesia (Steyn 2003: 219)

[7] A literal translation of *etniske nordmenn,* the term used in Norway to refer to the country's numerically, culturally and linguistically dominant ethnic group.
[8] A heritage I have been aware of my whole life, and which forms an important part of my identity.
[9] According to an unverified statement made by my grandfather.

surrounding non-White and/or indigenous ancestry in White families around the world, including in my own home region of Scandinavia.

The association of Scandinavia with Whiteness – indeed as a seat of primordial, pure and *complete* Whiteness embodied in the idea of a "Nordic master race" (Kyllingstad 2012: S46) – has a long and tortuous history which includes Nazi ideology as well as various forms of pseudoscience (Kyllingstad 2012), the minutiae of which I will not dive into here. Suffice it to say that the frequent and often unquestioned conflation (Rosiejka 2017: 2; Eide 2010: 64; Dyer 1997: 12, 19) of the concepts "Norwegian" and "White" (which is a cause of frustration for many Norwegians who are visibly non-White in appearance, such as Afro-Norwegians, especially because of the Norwegian cultural taboo against talking openly about race (Rosiejka 2017: 2; Synnes & Fylkenes 2019)), and the disconnect between this conflation and my family history and personal identity, force me to constantly rethink and re-evaluate what it means to be Norwegian. I perceive my Norwegianness as open-ended; a Norwegianness which merges and blends with the histories and cultures of other places, challenging essentialist and absolutist notions of identity.

Out in society, however, one's actual ancestral origins and one's "self-authorship" of one's own identity (Erasmus 2017: 75) are of little consequence. In the words of Seshadri-Crooks, "What matters in racial practice today is visibility – the supposed evidence of the eyes – surface not depth" (Seshadri-Crooks 2000: 19). Regardless of how strongly invested I am in the complexities of my family history and my self-identification as a person of mixed origins,[10] it is my outer White-ness, my *collective,* ascribed White identity, that counts in my day-to-day interactions (Appiah 1994: 151; MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 94-95). While this White-ness sometimes makes me feel out of place in South Africa, it also gives me the unearned privilege (McIntosh 1989) of accessing almost any space at any time without having my intentions questioned (Sullivan 2006: 25); it enables me to move in academic circles without necessarily being seen as an impostor or outsider (Nyamnjoh 2012: 71-74; Harrison 2008: 12-13, 15-16; Ahmed 2007: 157-158, 161); and it shields me from racist remarks and racially motivated violence. Pierre sums this up as "the often invisible power and naturalization of White positionality" (Pierre 2013: 98), and it is to this lived experience I refer when I state that *I am White.*

[10] By which I do not mean a mixing of biologically distinct "races" (which do not exist), but rather the awareness of being the outcome of a confluence of diverse histories, geographies, experiences and social identities.

Being foreign

Although I may look like a White South African,[11] I am in fact a recent arrival from Norway. Born in Oslo, I spent most of my childhood in Norway with Norwegian as my first language and growing up with specifically Norwegian cultural references. This is perhaps the most important facet of my positionality in South Africa: *I am often assumed to be a cultural insider when I am really an outsider.* I am by no means the first anthropologist in South Africa to find herself in this situation (compare, for example, Junck 2016), but not everyone has been open and critical enough in their examination of their own positionalities as foreigners. I notice, for example, that Teppo (2004) does not problematise her own Finnishness.

For me, coming from a country bordering Teppo's Finland, my first meeting with South Africa was an unsettling experience (similar to the experiences of Besteman (2008: 29-32)). Racial relations, especially, I found to be fraught with tension and assumptions to a degree I had never experienced before, making open conversations across racial lines, and with other Whites, difficult. It was quite clear to me from the start that our different historical and cultural backgrounds meant that White South Africans and I did not participate in what Frankenberg terms "a shared universe of *discourses* on race" (Frankenberg 1993: 18, my emphasis). Uncomfortable encounters, however, have given rise to many valuable learning opportunities. My positioning as an outsider-looking-like-an-insider has often forced me and my South African interlocutors to acknowledge the incompleteness of our perspectives, thus opening up for constructive reflection and dialogue about things otherwise taken for granted – a mutual "defamiliarizing" (Frankenberg 1993: 44).

Although Norway and the other Nordic countries did take part in colonialist endeavours and the trans-Atlantic slave-trade,[12] giving the Nordic region a clear place in the history of colonialism, Norway itself is not a settler colony in the usual sense. My *intuitive* perspective on Whiteness may therefore be somewhat different from that of researchers hailing from more typical colonial and postcolonial environments (Nuttall 2001: 117). There has been internal colonisation within Norway, with the "ethnic Norwegian" majority seizing the territories and marginalising the culture and language(s) of the indigenous Sámi people in the central and northern parts of the country. However, despite the fact that they have historically been perceived as "racially" different by the majority (Kyllingstad 2012: S49, S54-S55), and despite

[11] Evidenced, for example, by the fact that strangers have sometimes spoken to me in Afrikaans.
[12] I myself descend from a Danish slave-ship captain active on the West Africa-Caribbean route in the 1770s and 1780s (Pedersen 2018a).

their position as a genetic outlier population within Europe (Aikio 2004: 5), the Sámi are not generally distinguishable from the majority population by their physical features.[13] In terms of colour, the Norwegian discourse of belonging is the inverse of those found in more typical settler-colonial settings like South Africa: In Norway, being read as White means you are assumed to belong, while people of darker pigmentation are often seen as outsiders (and much of the racism against people of colour in Norway and Europe is based on that sentiment (cf. Eide 2010; cf. Çankaya & Mepschen 2019)).

Being middle-class

Since my project deals with class as well as race, I must say something about my own social background. While my father comes from a materially privileged upper-middle-class background, my mother is the daughter of urban, so-called unskilled labourers and was the first person in her family to attend university. I have seen my upbringing as middle-class largely because my parents' high educational backgrounds and skilled careers have placed them, and me, in a distinctly advantaged position compared to my maternal grandparents. More specifically, I have seen myself as rooted in the *middle* of the middle class, which is probably not too far off the mark even in the South African context. What is colloquially termed "middle-class" lifestyle among White people in Cape Town often strikes me as rather luxurious, but compared to the population of the greater Cape Town area as a whole, my upbringing was privileged in both material and emotional terms, and I have always had a strong social safety net.

Being a transgender woman

In addition to being White, Norwegian and middle-class, I am also a transgender woman. I came out as transgender in late 2017 immediately prior to moving to South Africa and embarking on this project, and in May 2019, in the middle of fieldwork, I began hormone replacement therapy (HRT). As I have written about my coming-out process and the beginning of my gender transition journey in detail elsewhere (Pedersen 2018b), I will not dwell on that here. This section will focus on the significance of my transgender identity specifically in the context of the current project.

[13] The Sámi Parliament of Norway bases its definition of Sámi-ness not on any "racial" criteria, but on the use of Sámi language within families (Sámediggi 2020).

Traditionally, in the positionality section, an anthropologist reflects upon being a man or a woman and how this impacts on their field access and/or analytical perspective (see e.g. Besteman 2008: 99-100; Malkki 2007: 177-178; Owen 2015: 56-57, 165-166, 170). The gender binary is usually taken for granted, as pointed out by Raewyn Connell (2007: 42). This is problematic for several reasons: There are more gender identities than two (cf. Stewart 2017); gender is conceived and expressed in different ways in different contexts; and not every society subscribes to Western definitions of, say, "women" (Oyěwùmí 1997). In my own personal case, considering my ongoing transition experience, the complexity of my gendered positionality makes it impossible to discuss in strictly binary terms despite the fact that I am a binary trans woman.

I do not believe that being a woman has had much of an impact on my project, at least no more than it would have had if I were cisgender. In my experience, the community in which I have done fieldwork is one where people of different genders are seen and treated as equals. In fact, the WESSA community in my field-site counts many notably strong female personalities among its members, several of whom became participants in my project. I have been met with hospitality, warmth and respect by all my interlocutors, which suggests that the people in my field-site – of all ages and genders – are very much open to less "traditional" (in this context) gender identities like my own.

However, being AMAB and early in transition,[14] my physiology has often forced me to "perform" my gender actively in order to be acknowledged as a woman. Because my processes of transitioning had only quite recently begun when I embarked on fieldwork, I have experienced many uncomfortable incidents related to my gender expression. Many transgender people are routinely subjected to misgendering, misnaming, being shut out of bathrooms and other gendered spaces, and having to defend and explain ourselves to strangers because of our often ambiguous appearances. All these things have happened to me during this fieldwork. My experience of being trans in cisgender spaces is not dissimilar to Sara Ahmed's (2007: 161, 163) descriptions of the experiences of non-White people in White spaces; being called out and "stopped".

[14] AMAB means "assigned male at birth", and is a common term used within the transgender community to refer to anyone who was wrongly ascribed a male gender identity at birth. Put simply, the term encompasses trans women as well as AMAB nonbinary people. The converse term is "assigned female at birth" (AFAB), which encompasses trans men as well as AFAB nonbinary people.

At the same time, my "unintelligibility" (Finlay 2017) has undoubtedly been a source of confusion and discomfort to others as well.[15] As Finlay argues in their "trans-positive" reading of Judith Butler, "the unintelligibility and unrecognizability that [queer and trans people's accounts of themselves] elucidate may constitute queer and trans agency by opening possibilities for subversion" (Finlay 2017: 63). For me as a transgender ethnographer, such friction might conceivably open up for new and interesting forms of interaction which could lead to unexpected research finds – *surprises* (Malkki 2007: 174-175; Marcus 2009: 22; cf. also Ahmed 2007: 163) of a kind that a cisgender anthropologist would not have been able to uncover. In other words, transgenderness might become a Tutuolan *juju* for self-activation in certain contexts. That being said, the opposite is also true: There are aspects and experiences of being trans that have *restricted* my field access, for example in explicitly religious spaces, an issue I will elaborate on in Chapter 4.

Being an outsider within

In Faye V. Harrison's (2008) view, scholars belonging to a marginalised or academically peripheral category have considerable transformative power. They are especially well situated to expose and subvert taken-for-granted power dynamics within the discipline, and to help create an "alternative" anthropology where the voices and perspectives of the so-called Other are taken seriously (Harrison 2008: 7-11). Such people are sometimes referred to by the term "outsiders within" (Harrison 2008; Gold 2016). As a trans woman, I am a member of a minority group often framed as a quintessential *object* of anthropological research, one of anthropology's Others. I recognise that as an openly transgender anthropologist, the perspectives I bring to the table may possibly run counter to conventional anthropological wisdom, thus positioning me as an "outsider within", at least in certain contexts (Pearce 2020: 3). My hope is that this might add to the critical creativity (Harrison 2008: 17) and general value of my work, enriching the discipline and perhaps even contributing, in a small way, to its constructive transformation.

Being an "outsider within" also has methodological implications for research. As mentioned, the combination of being White, transgender and foreign has the interesting effect of positioning me as an *outsider-looking-like-an-insider*. As a White person, I usually get treated

[15] After all, sex (and gender) is often seen as "a fundamental and normative factor of human embodiment, something that one inherently is from birth" (Seshadri-Crooks 2000: 20; cf. also Connell 2012: 868).

like any White South African in my field-site, and the fact that I communicate in English makes me, in a sense, a "quasi-WESSA". This positionality has made me highly aware not only of the ways in which WESSAs are similar to and different from me, but also of various facets of my own identity (such as my skin tone, accent, and various Norwegian mannerisms), and enables me to use them consciously, at least some of them and in certain contexts, as *jujus* for self-activation.

Tumbling into the fray

When I visited Cape Town for the first time in 2017 for ten weeks as part of the Social Entrepreneurship programme run jointly by the University of Oslo and the UCT Graduate School of Business, I got to see the city from all its different sides. I lived with two Norwegian classmates in a house in Rosebank, a prosperous suburb with what I felt to be a British atmosphere, while my internship was with a small organisation based in Khayelitsha, which meant that I paid frequent visits to that township. The organisation's headquarters were in Town 2, an informal settlement next to Spine Road (M32), which gave me insight into Khayelitsha's more "downmarket" areas.[16] Most of my work, however, was done in the Cape Town city centre and in various suburbs and smaller towns surrounding the city, and within a week after arriving from Norway I had already seen and experienced more or less the whole socio-economic spectrum of the Cape Town metropolitan area.

One week into my stay I went on a date with a woman named Zimkhitha, and before long, the two of us embarked on a romantic relationship. Zimkhitha, a university student, considered herself an activist for Black and disabled people and marginalised groups more generally. She had had many problematic experiences during her university life; she had, for instance, once been arrested for being in the wrong place at the wrong time during one of the *#FeesMustFall* protests. While I was in Cape Town, Zimkhitha was dismissed from her university programme for lack of academic progress. The reason for this was her physical disability, which caused her to miss a significant number of lessons, and for which she was given little support by her university's administration. No longer a student, Zimkhitha lost access to student health services, which had deteriorating consequences for her physical and mental health.

[16] Contrary to popular belief outside South Africa, a township is not synonymous with a slum. Many townships contain informal, slum-like settlements side by side with formal housing in more suburban neighbourhoods. In the Cape Town area, larger townships like Khayelitsha and Philippi are home to major shopping centres and railway stations.

While we were a couple, Zimkhitha and I had many tough conversations about race. Zimkhitha came from a poor, rural Eastern Cape background and was a so-called "born-free". [17] Her mother had been a domestic worker during Apartheid and had told Zimkhitha many stories about unpleasant and humiliating experiences she had had with her White employers. Because of this, and because of her own bad experiences with White people during her schooldays, Zimkhitha harboured much hostility towards Whites. At the same time, she admitted that she had had no White friends until she met me.

Zimkhitha and I broke up after a few months, but during our time together, we both learned a lot. I learned about the realities of racialised inequality and my own White privilege both in South Africa and Norway, while Zimkhitha acknowledged that despite the realities of structural racism, skin colour does not predetermine a person's attitudes. We also learned about the challenges of being an interracial couple in contemporary South Africa, such as the time when a cashier at KFC Mowbray asked Zimkhitha in isiXhosa if I was her *umlungu* (which Zimkhitha interpreted as meaning "boss" and implying a noncommitted, coercive, and/or transactional relationship), or the time we went to the township of Gugulethu and were told not to hold hands in public.

During my stay in Cape Town in 2017, I also spent much time with my Norwegian peers from the entrepreneurship class, many of whom seemed to remain rather ignorant about the racial and socio-economic inequalities in Cape Town despite our long stay in the city. I myself observed that the affluence and tranquillity of Rosebank and other suburbs around Cape Town stood in stark contrast to places like Khayelitsha and Gugulethu, and I started developing an interest in the things that were not said about these inequalities, especially concerning the wealthy, powerful and privileged tier – the tier to which it was always taken for granted that I myself belonged. As I noticed various ways in which the extreme and very visible inequalities in Cape Town apparently still correlated with Apartheid-era racial categories, I became more and more curious about the position of middle- and upper-class White South Africans in this hierarchy, and the ways in which these people see themselves as a collective and as part of the wider South African nation and imagined community (Anderson 2006 [1983]).

I soon began to feel that I had to come back to Cape Town and do an ethnographic study of these issues, as nobody else seemed to be doing it. Everyone's focus seemed to be on the poor and disadvantaged, but I had an intuitive conviction that it would never be possible to fully

[17] A term used for South Africans born in or after 1994, the year of democratic liberation.

understand South African society without also understanding the powerful and privileged. After a brief meeting with Professor Francis Nyamnjoh on 7 August 2017, shortly before my return to Norway, I decided to apply for a PhD position at UCT to do a project on White self-segregation. After being accepted, I moved back to Cape Town on 20 January 2018, this time more permanently, and Professor Nyamnjoh agreed to be my supervisor. Through many discussions with him, and through my readings, what started out as a general interest in White people's lives in contemporary South Africa developed into a specific focus on the world of middle-class WESSAs.

In short, my experience resembles that of Catherine Besteman who, on her first visit to Cape Town, felt it to be a "fundamentally weird place" (Besteman 2008: 4) and found herself compelled by curiosity to make an ethnographic study of the city. As with Besteman, my entry into my topic was very much a product of serendipity.

Fieldwork

To explore my research question and gather the data necessary for a thorough analysis, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork from 8 October 2018 to 14 October 2019, a period comprising twelve months and one week, including a total of five weeks of field-breaks. However, I started taking fieldnotes from as early as January 2018, and I also collected some supplementary data after the end of formal fieldwork. I have used a combination of different qualitative data collection techniques, mainly participant observation and interviews. In the following, I will describe and discuss the various aspects of my fieldwork in detail: Firstly, my field site; secondly, my methods of data collection; and thirdly, the ethical aspects of ethnographic research in general and my project in particular.

Field site

I have conducted my fieldwork in Cape Town, South Africa; more specifically, the suburbs of *Mowbray, Rosebank,* and *Rondebosch,* which are situated next to each other in the semi-periphery of Cape Town. They are part of the area known as the Southern Suburbs, which, in its very widest sense, can be said to run along the eastern side of the Table Mountain massif from Woodstock in the north, bordering the city centre, all the way down to Muizenberg on the False Bay shore. My reason for this choice of field-site is that it contains heavily WESSA

middle-class to upper-middle-class residential areas as well as more diverse, lower-middle-class residential areas and business areas. During my fieldwork, I lived in both types of areas. In addition, the site has a significant population of non-South African university students of all colours and from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. All this makes it a particularly interesting site for the study of inter-racial, inter-ethnic, inter-class and inter-national social dynamics. I have chosen to disclose the identity of my field-site largely for the reasons cited above, but also because the suburbs would have been difficult to keep anonymous in any case, due to historical, social and geographical particularities that play important roles in my ethnography.

I had a social network in my field-site from the get-go, which facilitated my participant observation and recruitment of participants. In August 2018 my engagement with the Mowbray and Rosebank communities became even deeper, as I was co-opted as Secretary of the Rosebank and Mowbray Civic Association (RMCA). I remained Secretary for one full term and stepped back at the AGM on 25 September 2019. As Secretary of the RMCA I got to know several people who would become key participants in my project, and through what may be called a form of organisation-based participant observation, I began to gain a deeper understanding of community dynamics.

From 20 January 2018 to 1 March 2019, I lived in Mowbray. From 1 April 2018 I lived in a rented room in a cottage on Upper Durban Road, a very busy side-road bordering the Mowbray bus interchange, railway station and taxi rank. On 1 March 2019, halfway through my formal fieldwork, I left my lodgings in Mowbray and moved to a cottage in Liesbeek Road, Rosebank. Dividing my fieldwork between these two residences proved useful, as it provided me with hands-on experience with a bustling neighbourhood very mixed in terms of ethnicity, race and class (upper Mowbray), as well as a quieter, heavily middle-class neighbourhood (lower Rosebank). The very experience of moving from Mowbray to Rosebank provided invaluable insights upon which I will elaborate in Chapter 4. Additionally, one of my Afrikaner interlocutors described Rosebank as "probably the most Soutpiel Suburb in SA", which indicated that Rosebank and its surroundings would be an ideal place to study WESSAs.

The suburb of Rondebosch has ended up being a somewhat secondary part of my field site. Although I have spent much time in Rondebosch and interviewed people who live there, I have not actually lived there myself. Additionally, Mowbray and Rosebank share a number of important institutions (such as the RMCA, LMRID and the Mowbray police station, all of which I will talk about in detail later in the thesis) which Rondebosch is not part of. Most of my day-to-day interactions with the Rondebosch community have been through my walks to

and from the Fountain Centre area and my dental clinic in Crawford, as well as my jogs in and around Rondebosch Common and adjacent residential areas. In many ways, the suburb of Observatory turned out to be just as important to my fieldwork as Rondebosch, since several of my friends and interviewed participants lived in Observatory.

Figure 1. *Map*[18] *of Cape Town, with my field-site highlighted in green. The red pin marks my first residence (Mowbray), while the blue pin marks my second residence (Rosebank).*

Data gathering

Participant observation

My main data collection technique has been participant observation. In a project like this, where the researcher is entangled in the field in complex ways, ethnographic participation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 1995) is a necessary and fundamental part of fieldwork, and a more primary data source than any other. My chief source of participant observation data has been

[18] Created with Scribblemaps.com, 2 September 2019. Map data ©2019 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd. Imagery ©2019 CNES/Airbus, Landsat/Copernicus, Maxar Technologies.

autoethnography. As Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) define it, "Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience"; it is "one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist". While this is arguably true for all ethnographic work, what makes autoethnography different is that it explicitly focuses on the researcher's personal experiences as a source of data (cf. Devereux 1967: xix). And while the method has been criticised by some as lacking in rigour (Pearce 2020: 5), it has also been argued to be particularly well suited to provide insight into the experiences of transgender people and other "outsiders within" (p. 5). An autoethnographic understanding of what counts as data includes "all of life's materials", resulting in interpretations that "better reflect the complex interactions of power, community and self" (Stewart 2017: 292). In terms of research access and communication, the autoethnographic approach has the major benefit of combining "personal with critical analysis and theoretical perspectives", which "can engage listeners who might other wise [sic] feel estranged, alienated" (hooks 1989: 77).

I have had no institutional affiliation in the field except for UCT and the RMCA, and the paid jobs that I have had have been sporadic and mainly online-based. In other words, I have had no regular "office hours" during my fieldwork, and I have had to structure my daily life by myself. My fieldwork, then, has to a large extent been an exercise in "deep hanging out" (Geertz 1998), of simply living in my field-site and making note of the various encounters and incidents that have happened over time, with some periods being intensely social and other periods quieter.

In terms of participant observation, getting accustomed to everyday life in Cape Town – and living with South African housemates and neighbours – has itself been very educational. My social life with my fiancée and our friends has also provided me with many insights, and so has my involvement with the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA) and the Cape Town transgender community. My own journey of gender transitioning has brought me into contact with a number of interesting individuals, mainly outside my field-site proper, but still offering valuable insights into the social dynamics I have studied. Through my many walks, jogs and hikes, I have become well acquainted with the geographical layout of my field-site (especially Mowbray and Rosebank), and I have become a regular customer at many shops and

cafés in the area. Last but not least, I have made a point of attending a number of community events in my field-site[19] as well as neighbouring suburbs.[20]

Participation and observation are difficult to distinguish from one another. Observation itself, the act of engaging with the world with one's senses, even in the most silent and inconspicuous way, is an *active* undertaking. In my own fieldwork, I have tried to avoid limiting myself to purely visual observations, making use of other sensory impressions as well, including sound (cf. Taussig 1993: 26; Malkki 2007: 175-177). *Pain* has also been an important source of insight in this project (Pearce 2020: 14; Scarry 1987 [1985]; Cerwonka 2007: 33-36), primarily in the form of emotional stress related to being transgender (cf. Pearce 2020: 6) and of inhabiting a racially visible body in racially charged spaces (cf. Ahmed 2007: 153-154; Besteman 2008: 148-150).

In addition to *physical* participant observation, this study also contains an element of online ethnography. I have paid regular visits to open groups and threads on Facebook, Reddit and WhatsApp of relevance to the project, and I have also followed local, national and international news outlets' coverage of relevant issues. These sources have provided valuable insights, especially about community goings-on, the discourse around security, and political issues such as "White flight" and land expropriation. I have usually been a passive observer rather than an active participant in discussions on social media, in part because I have wished to stick to a "listening and learning" approach, and in part because of the heated nature of some of the discussions. In this thesis, publicly available online material has been treated like any other publicly available documents, with citations clearly marked and sources clearly referenced. Posts and threads on publicly open social media groups have been treated similarly, although I have anonymised the names and aliases of individual commenters for the sake of privacy.

In this thesis, I will be quoting extensively from my fieldnotes. These quotes may contain various inconsistencies as well as errors in grammar and/or spelling. Since I prefer to present my fieldnotes in a raw, unedited form, I have left these inconsistencies and errors as they are. The only changes I have made to these quotes have been to change bold or underlined text to italics, in line with the highlighting style of the rest of the thesis text.

[19] Including several Rondebosch Market events, a flea market at the Huis Lückhoff home for the aged, an outdoor tea event organised by the Rosebank Neighbourhood Watch, my landlady's Africa Day party in Liesbeek Road, the welcoming ceremony for the new Mowbray SAPS Station Commander, two CPF meetings, and two civic meetings outside the RMCA.
[20] Such as Open Streets and Streetopia in Observatory.

Interviews

My second data collection technique has been semi-structured and non-structured interviews (Thagaard 2010: 89; Cerwonka 2007: 24-25). The interviews have had an exploratory and interactive character (Ellis et al. 2011) in line with the spirit of my study.

As I began fieldwork, I did not have a well-developed demographical overview of the people I was studying. Because of this, and because I did not have the ability to access specific individuals at will, informants for my interviews were recruited mainly through convenience sampling, commonly referred to as the "snowball method" (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim 2016; Thagaard 2010: 56), using my existing social network as my primary point of departure. This method comes with the risk of ending up with a research population that is not representative, but I believe that any serious skew in terms of the identities, experiences and viewpoints of my interlocutors is offset by the depth of my participant observation data. In addition to the snowball method, I have also recruited participants through the RMCA as well as my academic network at UCT.

Since this is a strictly qualitative project, and since I have considered participant observation to be my primary data collection method, I have not focused too much on the *number* of formal interviews. During the first half of my fieldwork, I focused almost exclusively on participant observation, getting to know people and identifying possible interlocutors from within my ever-expanding social network (including my network of personal friends as well as my civic network centred on the RMCA). These interlocutors later became some of my most key interviewees.

Even though statistical representativity has not been a goal in this study, I have nevertheless strived to attain a certain spread in terms of the age, gender and ethnic background of my interviewees. I ended up conducting 21 formal interviews (all in English) with a total of 18 individuals: 12 women, 5 men, and 1 nonbinary person, born between 1927 and 1998. Of these *formally* interviewed individuals, a total of 13 identify as White, while 5 do not (being either Black or Coloured South African, mixed-race Réunionnais, or Indo-Mauritian). A total of 7 of my interviewed participants fall into the category of White English-speaking South Africans (WESSAs), while 1 is a self-identified Afrikaner, 1 is of mixed WESSA and Afrikaner parentage (and self-identifies as such), and 4 are Whites of non-South African origin. As identities are always claimed and denied in relation to others, the non-WESSA participants provide valuable and indeed necessary outside perspectives to complement and nuance the

WESSAs' own reflections about themselves. All in all, I have found the sample to be a useful one in the context of this project. There is a skew in the gender ratio in favour of women,[21] but I believe this to be a very minor issue, offset in part by the duration, depth, and quality of my interviews and interactions with male and nonbinary participants.

Many of the interviews were audio-recorded, but not all, and some interviews were only partly recorded. The interviews lasted between 8 and 120 minutes, follow-up interviews being generally shorter in length than initial interviews. In certain cases where it proved difficult to meet certain participants face to face, formal interviews were conducted in writing via WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.[22]

Recruiting participants for formal interviews proved more difficult than I had anticipated. One reason for this may be that many of the people I would have liked to interview were busy with full-time work or studies, and simply did not have the time and capacity to participate in my project. It has also been suggested to me that people might have been less interested in my project due to the taken-for-granted nature of Whiteness, or that they might simply have felt that they did not know enough about the topic. Additionally, people may have had general reservations about participating in research, perhaps due to ethical concerns.

It must be mentioned that I have gained much insight and collected many valuable quotes from *informal* conversations, which some of my interlocutors preferred to formal interviews. By informal conversations I mean ad-hoc conversations that were not audio-recorded or written down in full, although some were partly written down in my participant-observation fieldnotes. These conversations, and the people who took part in them, are *not* counted among my formal interviews and interviewees.

I will be quoting extensively from interviews in this thesis, in order to allow my participants as much space as possible to speak for themselves in their own voices. Transcriptions of audio-recorded interviews have been cleaned up for readability, which means that pauses, interjections, and repetitions have generally been omitted from the quotes, except where I have interpreted them as significant to the message conveyed. Grammatical mistakes have been left uncorrected.

[21] Which has to do with the fact that I myself am a woman and therefore (A) have limited access to men's spaces, and (B) generally find it easier to get to know, and interact with, fellow women than with people of other genders.
[22] I conducted text interviews only with people I already knew in real life.

Research ethics

When studying living beings, particularly humans, nothing is more important than ensuring that one's research practices are ethically sound. Indeed, "good social research clearly demands a highly developed, ceaseless, daily engagement with ethics as a process" (Cerwonka 2007: 4). In this section I will begin this process by reviewing Anthropology Southern Africa's "Ethical guidelines and principles of conduct for anthropologists" (ASnA 2005) within the framework of Norwegian sociologist Tove Thagaard's core principles for ethically defensible qualitative research.

Thagaard's first principle is *informed consent*, which means that everyone who participates in a research project must be ensured the right to know what the project is about and how the information they provide is going to be used. Participants must consent to participate in the study with the understanding that they can withdraw at any time without penalty (ASnA 2005: 142; Thagaard 2010: 26). Informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical research, and I have striven to obtain it wherever possible. There have, however, been certain settings where this has not been practically feasible, for example during observation sessions in public spaces. Next, the researcher must ensure *confidentiality* in the treatment of the information provided by participants and strive to avoid any harmful *consequences* that might befall participants due to their participation in the project (Thagaard 2010: 29). This includes avoiding any use or communication of information that can directly harm any participant, reveal their vulnerabilities, or make them vulnerable (ASnA 2005: 142; Thagaard 2010: 27). In the case of this project, all interview notes and recordings and potentially sensitive fieldnotes have been kept on my personal USB stick and on my personal password-protected computer, and only my supervisor and myself have had access to this raw data. In this thesis I have aimed to ensure a reasonable degree of confidentiality by fully anonymizing all participants' names and other directly identifying information (such as addresses and workplaces). In some cases, I have split or merged individuals in order to ensure the highest possible level of confidentiality.

Due to the nature of this project, complete confidentiality has not been possible, and some potentially sensitive information has been made public in the thesis, such as information relating to participants' racial and ethnic identities. Participants' age and gender have also been of relevance to my analysis. However, since names and other directly identifying information has been anonymized, the chances that my discussion of race, ethnicity, age, and gender will

lead to harmful consequences for the participants are negligible. No health-related information has been gathered from the participants in this project.

In a project based on autoethnography, adherence to conventional research ethics is complicated by the fact that "autoethnographers not only implicate themselves with their work, but also close, intimate others" (Ellis et al. 2011), and the fact that autoethnographic work sometimes entails very close interpersonal ties with people in the field, blurring the distinction between participants and friends. I have tried to make this as clear as possible to my participants during fieldwork, as well as throughout the written thesis. It has also been important for me to emphasize, throughout the project, that I do not have any vested interests in the outcome, and that I wish neither to glorify nor vilify the subjects of my study. Conversely, I have been aware throughout the project that my participants might have their own agendas and reasons for engaging with *me* (cf. Bashkow 2006: 17-18).

Another point to add is that I am a lesbian trans woman, and it has therefore been important to maintain *my own* physical and emotional safety in the face of possible misogyny, transphobia, and homophobia (cf. Pearce 2020: 12). These dangers were offset from the start by the facts that (a) I had friends and acquaintances living near me, which meant I was rarely completely on my own; (b) I have several friends and acquaintances with close connections to Mowbray SAPS and GSCID; (c) I have resourceful friends in the Cape Town transgender community who, if necessary, would have been able to provide me with – or direct me to – appropriate physical and emotional support; and (d) I have since February 2018 been a member of RainbowUCT, UCT's queer organisation, which I trust would also have been able to provide some support if needed.

Racial terminology

Because this thesis explicitly deals with questions of racial categorisation, it is impossible to avoid the use of racial terminology and labels despite their problematically vague, fluid and unstable nature. Racial labels are still in common everyday use among South Africans of all backgrounds (cf. e.g. Ueland 2012: 7) and are even officially used by Statistics South Africa, a government agency. As no "objective" definitions or clear boundaries exist for any racial category (Dentlinger 2016), I have strived to label individuals and groups based on subjective

and social criteria (through individuals' *self-identification* whenever possible[23]) and to employ these labels as they are used *emically* by people in my field-site. Furthermore, I have (like Johnson-Castle (2018: 27)) chosen to capitalise all racial terms in accordance with the English language's rule of capitalising the names of ethnic groups. By writing e.g. "White" instead of "white" and "Black" instead of "black", I foreground the socially constructed nature of race and avoid the impression that being White or Black (or any other race) is something objective and incontestable. "White" as used in this thesis – with a capital W – has just as much in common with an ethno-cultural term like "Welsh" as with a more objectively descriptive adjective such as "pale".

When referring to my participants, and to other people I know, I always strive to use the terms with which they refer to themselves. However, I have also observed people with whom I have not spoken, and whose preferred terms I do not know, but whose racial categories may still be relevant to my argument. Interpreting such persons' identities from afar using South African racial categories will always contain a significant element of subjectivity, and I acknowledge that my judgement in this matter is very far from infallible. When I mention seeing a White stranger on the street, it means that I feel *reasonably* certain that this individual would be categorised by others, and refer to themselves, as White.[24] It is merely an interpretation on my part (saying more about *me*, perhaps, than about the other person), and never meant as an imposition of identity.

The term "Black" can have two meanings in the South African context. It can either refer specifically to someone of indigenous African origin, or it can refer to anyone who is not White (meaning that people of e.g. Indian or Chinese origin can also be termed, or self-identify, as Black (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 166; Erasmus 2017: 88)). In my field-site, it is the former definition – someone whose skin tone and features suggest descent from one (or more) of the indigenous ethnic groups of Africa south of the Sahara – that seems to have the most emic currency, and for this reason, that is the definition I will generally adhere to in this thesis. Statistics South Africa uses the term "Black African" (cf. e.g. Statistics South Africa 2012), which I avoid due to the vague and complex nature of the term "African" (which may refer to

[23] I have not yet met any South African who has refused (cf. Erasmus 2017: 90) to self-identify with a racial category.

[24] I avoid the term "Caucasian" due to its pseudoscientific origins and problematic connotations (Painter 2003; Erasmus 2017: 18-20). It is also not a commonly used term in my field-site.

anyone from Africa, regardless of racial classification[25]). When referring specifically to the *cultures and languages* of indigenous peoples of Africa (often informally referred to by South Africans as "Black" cultures and languages), I will use the appropriate ethnic term (Xhosa, Zulu, etc.) or, if necessary, the umbrella term "indigenous African".

Finally, when speaking about people who are not seen as "White", in terms of their relationship with White people, I will use the term "non-White". I am aware that this runs the risk of over-centring Whiteness in my analysis, and of making it seem like "people who are not white only have identity by virtue of what they are not" (Dyer 1997: 11). However, I do not believe it is possible to discuss Whiteness without always keeping in mind how it constructs its Other (DiAngelo 2011: 60). This is especially the case in South Africa, where, in the Apartheid era, such Othering was intentional, systematic and institutionalised (Schutte 1995: 75). The continuing persistence and omnipresence of racial Othering makes it necessary, in my opinion, to keep the perceived "White"/"non-White" dichotomy – categorised in socio-cultural terms – in mind in order to understand social dynamics in my field-site.

Summary conclusion

The various aspects of my positionality and my history in Cape Town have created deep and subtle entanglements between me and my field, entanglements which raise specific ethical issues and practical challenges which I have addressed one by one. Because of these entanglements, which put me at a specific, situated vantage point as a researcher, I find it impossible to view my field through a "neutral, value-free" lens (Foley D. E. 2002: 472). Rather than seeing these entanglements as a problem and an obstacle to "objective" knowledge (Méndez 2013), I have instead chosen to put them to constructive use through engaging in a deeply personal and reflexive autoethnographic journey of a kind which requires the ethnographer to "explore the self-other relationships of fieldwork critically if we are to produce more discriminating, defensible interpretations" (Foley D. E. 2002: 473).

Through my choice of autoethnography as my primary method of data collection, I position myself as part of the so-called *reflexive turn* within ethnography, and specifically the strand known as *critical ethnography*, which argues that "the road to quasi-objective knowledge

[25] In this thesis, I will sometimes use the term *classification* to refer to the social ascription of racial identity. It does not imply (as during Apartheid) that someone specific is doing the classifying, nor does it imply that the classifications are necessarily based on stable or objective criteria.

claims is through a reflexive, self-critical awareness of our limits as interpreters" (Foley D. E. 2002: 473). Such a stance is a fundamental building-block of self-critical anthropology, an anthropology that incorporates and values the perspectives of "outsiders" and "Others" (Harrison 2012, 2016) and acknowledges dynamics of power both within and outside the discipline (Harrison 2008: 45). It is a project in which I am deeply invested, as I believe it will expand the scope of anthropological knowledge and understanding. It is also a project in which I am inevitably bound up through my "outsider within" positionality.

My positionality alerts me to the importance of the ethics of claiming betwixt-and-between positions in contexts where people tend to relate to each other in zero-sum terms. My journey of gender transition, for example, is an especially good example of *incompleteness* in practice. In a worldview based on absolutes and zero-sum identities, the gender I was assigned at birth might be seen as an immutable fact of my being. My very existence as a transgender woman shows this worldview to be limited and limiting. So does my very womanhood, the embodiments and expressions of which, although not identical to that of the average cisgender woman, does not negate its authenticity; on the contrary, my ways of being a woman shows that womanhood is *diverse.* Reflecting on my own complex intersecting identities and my discomfort with zero-sum games, it dawns on me just how much I have in common with the group I study, the WESSAs, whose identities, like mine, seem to transcend locality and evade simple definitions. Inhabiting a positionality which foregrounds commonalities as well as differences between me and WESSAs puts me in an advantageous position to view them – and myself – through a lens that is simultaneously critical and empathetic.

CHAPTER 4
Suburban adventures

Introduction

When I visited Cape Town for the first time, my impression was that the atmosphere of the Southern Suburbs was very White and very British (or, more specifically, English). The notion of "White suburbia" is one I have come across in many conversations over the past few years, and now and then even in scholarly works (e.g. Steyn 2003: 4). But what exactly is it that makes a suburb "White"? Are they really as White as some claim, and what exactly does that Whiteness entail? What kind of interracial, inter-ethnic, and indeed interpersonal social dynamics are prevalent in Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch, and what might they tell us about what it means to be White and WESSA in contemporary South Africa?

The following chapter is an autoethnographic account of my experiences of living in Mowbray and Rosebank. I begin with a brief historical overview of my field-site and its surrounding areas. I then move on to describe my life in Mowbray. As a White transgender woman from a foreign country, I felt like my daily encounters with strangers on the street were forcing me into roles which were neither an accurate description of who I am, nor, more importantly, a good foundation for interaction on honest, equal terms. The perception of racial differences as essential differences between *kinds* of humans inhibited my social life regardless of the privileges I otherwise had as a White person. For this and other reasons, I decided to leave Mowbray and start over in the neighbouring suburb of Rosebank.

This leads me to the next subchapter, where I describe my life in Rosebank, a place which I found peaceful and welcoming. However, my previous experiences of alienation and Othering in Mowbray prompted some questions in my mind, and made me wonder about those who might *not* feel at home in Rosebank. Who belongs, who is out of place, and who makes the judgement? In the chapter, I discuss my involvement with community institutions, the "securitisation" of neighbourhoods, discourses about crime, and the maintenance of a "European" aesthetic veneer in the Southern Suburbs and in Cape Town at large. I argue that institutional and cultural power in my field-site as a whole is primarily vested in White people generally and WESSAs specifically, and that non-White people are Othered and marginalised in a way not dissimilar to the White Group Areas of the Apartheid era. This inequality is

exacerbated by the dominance of the English language and the social value ascribed to the WESSA accent. Taken together, my data suggests that my field-site is a place dominated and permeated not only by Whiteness, but by an *Englishness* subtly framed as embodying a universal and *complete* humanness.

On a *stoep* in the bush of ghosts

It is late evening on Sunday 18 November 2018. Slowly recovering from a period of stress, I had taken a chair outside and done a brief meditation session on the *stoep,*[26] under the open sky, to clear my mind. The sun has disappeared behind Devil's Peak, the sky is a soft turquoise, and the slight breeze is neither warm nor cool. Someone is doing some construction work nearby, and I can hear a group of young people chatting vigorously in one of the side streets. Some old plastic bags float past our house. A young Black man wearing a red cap is walking up our street singing the anti-Apartheid classic *Gimme Hope Jo'anna;* a few minutes later the same man walks back down the street with a large load of bedsheets in his arms. The muezzin begins his *adhan* from the minaret of our neighbourhood mosque, Masjid Ar-Rashideen; it is half past seven and time for the *maghrib* prayer. The prayer calls vary in intensity; a week earlier they had been very loud, but someone must have complained, because the volume had suddenly dropped the next day. Today the volume is back up.

While living on Upper Durban Road I would often sit on the *stoep* to relax, and now and then I would take notes of my observations and experiences. On Friday 30 November I am back in my chair watching people walk up and down this busy but strangely peaceful street where I have lived for the last eight months. The people passing by are all dark-skinned. One man sings a song in what sounds like isiXhosa. An older woman approaches; from her features I surmise – because when you stay long in this country, you learn to surmise such things – that she belongs to the category of people known in South Africa as *Coloured.* The woman asks me, through our wooden fence, if I have some coins to spare for her bus fare to Strandfontein.[27] She speaks English with a very thick accent which reveals her mother tongue to be Afrikaans, or, more specifically, the distinctive local dialect known colloquially as "Kaapfrikaans".[28] Being the language of Cape Town's Coloured community, it confirms my assumptions about the

[26] An Afrikaans word, also commonly used in South African English, meaning front porch.
[27] A mostly Coloured settlement on the False Bay coast, just east of Muizenberg.
[28] An often-derided dialect, cf. Nyamnjoh (2016: 151) and Johnson-Castle (2018: 57).

woman's ethnic identity. I take out a five-rand coin from my pocket and hand it to her through a gap in the fence; she thanks me and heads off down the street in the direction of the bus station.

My view of the street – the wide world beyond the *stoep* – is framed by the vertical, greenish-brown, professionally waterproofed planks comprising our wooden fence. It is tall and sturdy, but friendlier looking than our neighbour's grey metal fence. I like our fence. It allows us – my two housemates and myself – a sense of security as well as the freedom to observe our street freely without feeling like prisoners in our own home. Confined, but free. Free, but confined. I watch my street through its picture-frame, like a work of art. The crumbling tarmac with its mended patches. The plastic bags and hair extensions blowing down the sidewalks like tumbleweed. The surgeon's rooms on the other side of the street, with the neat little tree giving shade to the neat little parking lot in front. The flat, brown concrete house with the little back door where the dog barks at midnight.

A message suddenly drops on the local "alert" group on WhatsApp. A "young coloured homeless male" has been spotted in the upper Dorp, with bare feet and blue jeans; he "seems to be under the influence". The police have been notified. The Dorp was the earliest village-like settlement in the area, hence the name: *dorp* is Afrikaans for "village". It is the "old town" of our suburb, Mowbray. It is where I live.

On 5 November, just a few weeks earlier, I had been sitting on the *stoep* with a cup of coffee when I was startled by a loud *bang*. I did not know what it was – perhaps a taxi's tire puncturing; some of those vehicles look like they might fall apart at any moment. However, when the next loud *bang* came, I went indoors and locked the front door. If the bangs were gunshots, they were the first gunshots I had heard since moving to Mowbray, and I knew for a fact, through official statistics, that crime in the area had been very low for several months. Were the bangs really gunshots? My housemate Lindelwa told me she had seen police vans driving around the neighbourhood, and someone posted on the "alert" group that an alarm had gone off in Rhodes Avenue. Perhaps there had been a break-in that had ended in a gunfight between the burglars and the police.

A friend suggested to me that the bangs may not have been gunshots at all, but noises from a Guy Fawkes celebration. Coming from Norway, I was not familiar with the traditions surrounding Guy Fawkes Night – incidentally a very British celebration – and neither were my Xhosa housemates. To this day I do not know what really happened that night. Lethal bullets

or innocent festivities? It seems to me that I live in a place where everything is open to interpretation.

In Amos Tutuola's novel *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (2014 [1954]), the protagonist's sojourn in a strange land of ghosts and other supernatural beings leaves him vexed and bewildered. The beings he encounters behave in ways that are difficult to understand in terms of human logic. Dreams merge with waking life. Reality is moulded and augmented by mysterious magical forces. However, after some time, the protagonist starts to understand that in this land, this bush, it is *he* who is the strange one, and that the beings inhabiting the bush regard *him* with surprise and fear. Like the bush of ghosts, Cape Town is a place of wonder and enchantment, of "imagination gone wild" (Nyamnjoh 2017a: 63), where it can sometimes be hard for an outsider like myself to distinguish the real from the unreal. Like the bush of ghosts, Cape Town is a place of categories and opposites, where conviviality is often tenuous. And like the bush of ghosts, Cape Town is a place of *juju*, technologies of self-enhancement which may bestow temporary superpowers and transform the familiar into the fantastic – or vice versa.

Figure 2. *Devil's Peak (right) and the backside of Table Mountain proper (left) as viewed from across the Rondebosch Common, looking towards Rosebank, Mowbray, and part of Rondebosch.*

A brief history of my field-site

Successive colonisation

The area currently known as Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch lies at the foot of Devil's Peak, the north-easternmost promontory of the great mountain massif known once upon a time as Huri‡oaxa, the Mountain of the Sea.[29] Devil's Peak slopes down towards a small river along the fertile banks of which the Khoi people, the earliest known inhabitants of this area, hunted game and grazed their cattle. More specifically, these were the lands of the Goringhaicona (!uri-ǁ?ai-ǀona [30]) tribe, to which Krotoa (1642-1674)[31] belonged. Krotoa served as interpreter to Commander Jan van Riebeeck of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), and is arguably "the most famous Khoi woman in history" (Vollenhoven & Williams 2017). Van Riebeeck's Dutch settlers arrived in 1652. Noticing that the main summit of Huri‡oaxa resembled a flat table-top, they named the mountain Tafelberg – in English, Table Mountain. It was van Riebeeck himself who first named the river in the shadow of Devil's Peak, giving it the name Amstel in honour of the river which runs through the city of Amsterdam. Although this name was later to change – the river below Devil's Peak is now known as the Liesbeek – many other names coined by van Riebeeck and his companions are still current in my field-site. One "curious clump of thorn trees on the banks of the Liesbeek River" gave rise to the name *Ronde Doornboschjen*, later contracted to Rondeboschje and eventually Rondebosch (South African History Online 2019a).

Figure 3. *Signpost in the Rondebosch Common showing the area's Khoi name, Tsuiǁgoab.*

As the Dutch settlers were granted farmland in the Liesbeek Valley, starting in 1657, the Goringhaicona were gradually cut off from their grazing lands along the river by palisades and hedges (Aikman Associates Heritage Management 2002: 9). At the same time, Khoi place-

[29] The indigenous Khoi name for Table Mountain, more commonly written as Hoerikwaggo (van Dieman 2019).
[30] Spelling according to Goodwin (1952). "Goringhaicona" is a Europeanised approximate spelling, as is "Krotoa".
[31] Cf. Cape Town Museum (n.d.).

names continued to be replaced by Dutch ones in an act of symbolic violence which served to bolster Dutch claims of sovereignty and alienate the indigenous people from their ancestral lands. To my knowledge, the only Khoi name[32] in use in my field-site today is Tsuiǁgoab, a name given to the Rondebosch Common during a Khoi cleansing ceremony in February 2012 (Bester 2012). The Goringhaicona still exist as a self-identified group with their own organisation and chiefs.

The European settlers in the Dutch Cape Colony practiced slavery, and because the Dutch prohibited the enslavement of the indigenous Khoi (Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: 29, 55; Friends of the Liesbeek n.d.), slaves were imported from as far afield as India, Southeast Asia, and Madagascar, as well as other parts of Africa (Ueland 2012: 27; Johnson-Castle 2018: 39; de Wit et al. 2010: 146). These enslaved people and their descendants – often lumped together in the category "Malay" as a shorthand for "Muslim" (Erasmus 2017: 110-111) – would eventually mix with Europeans, Khoi, and others (de Wit et al. 2010: 146), giving rise to the modern-day Coloured[33] population. In 1724, three slaves of Indonesian origin were executed for the murder of two White men. Their heads were displayed, impaled on sticks, at the intersection of what is now Main Road and Rhodes Avenue in the Mowbray CBD. After this event, the area became known as Drie Koppen, Afrikaans for "three heads" (South African History Online 2019b; Rosebank and Mowbray Civic Association (RMCA) n.d.; UCT Newsroom 2011).

The British occupied the Cape from 1795 to 1803 (South African History Online 2018a), and again from 1806, this time permanently (Ueland 2012: 27). British settlers were subsequently encouraged to emigrate to the colony, which led to an increase in the British population there as well as a strengthening of British culture and the English language. These settlers – the first wave of English-speaking White people to establish themselves in a British-controlled South Africa (Salusbury 2003: 20; Watts 1976: 41) – may be seen as the earliest "proto-WESSAs". Four thousand strong (Watts 1976: 43), they were different from the already well-established Afrikaners in many ways. Ueland (2012: 27) argues that the British settlers' exposure to the budding democratism, liberalism, and industrialism of 18th century Europe had made their

[32] Although the name might look Khoi at first glance, |A!kunta Bridge in upper Mowbray is in fact named after a member of the |Xam people, who are not native to the Cape Town area.

[33] It must be stressed, especially for non-South African readers, that the term *Coloured* is generally not seen as derogatory in South Africa. It is not strictly racial in nature (i.e. not simply a synonym for "mixed-race" or "non-White") but is used as a term of ethnic and cultural self-identification. In Cape Town, Coloured identity is often (although not *necessarily*) associated with Muslim religion, a certain dialect of the Afrikaans language, as well as descent from the indigenous Khoi and the Asian slaves of the Dutch East India Company.

Whiteness more "complex" than that of the Afrikaners, whose Whiteness had been "established early", presumably (as I understand Ueland) in a more simplistic form less influenced by "international thoughts that had changed over time" (Ueland 2012: 27; my translation). The reality may be more complex than this, but Ueland's description helps explain the association of WESSAs with so-called "liberal" politics, which I will discuss later in the thesis. In any case, there were real differences in culture and power between the "proto-WESSAs" and the Afrikaners even at this early point, differences which would later lead to conflict (Steyn 2003: 217).

The second British occupation of the Cape in 1806 had brought the first of many waves of English-speaking settlers to South Africa. The second wave – and the "first organized migration of British settlers to South Africa" (Garson 1976: 18) – came in the form of the so-called *1820 settlers.* A few years later, in 1834, the Slavery Abolition Bill (which had been passed the previous year) brought an end to slavery throughout most of the British Empire. However, slaves in the Cape Colony were subjects of an exception to the Bill which required them to remain with their masters as "apprentices" for an additional period of four years. This meant that Cape slaves were not, strictly speaking, emancipated until 1838. The abolition of slavery had widespread consequences, including disgruntlement among many Afrikaners, and was part of the push factors leading to the *Great Trek*, the first major migration of Afrikaners from the Cape Colony into the interior of modern-day South Africa (South African History Online 2019c; Johnson-Castle 2018: 42-43; MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 37-38; Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: 171).

The British colonial era saw "residential, commercial and industrial development [beginning] to encroach on the agricultural landscape" of the Liesbeek Valley area; "[r]oad works grew significantly and so did the [19th century] railway network" (Aikman Associates Heritage Management 2002: 10). Around 1823, the farm Welgelegen, whose lands comprised a significant part of the Drie Koppen area (and whose main farmhouse still stands, housing a UCT office), came into the ownership of Englishmen from the Leicestershire market town of Melton Mowbray (RMCA n.d.), who renamed the area *Mowbray* in honour of their hometown. The naming and renaming of places has been a feature of power shifts throughout the history of Cape Town and South Africa as a whole, the power to give names being an expression of the power to define reality by "overwrit[ing] and/or re-inscrib[ing] meaning into the landscape" (Baas 2019: 104). Interestingly, despite two centuries of British dominance, many buildings of the Cape Dutch architectural style have been preserved in my field-site.

Cecil Rhodes and his legacy

There is one man who is by far the most prominent of all British colonial settlers in my field-site. That man is Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902). Arguably the most famous, or infamous, proponent of British imperialism in Africa, and a prime example of the *colonialist-as-hunter* type – hunting for wealth, fame, acclamation, and, perhaps most importantly, purpose – Rhodes was a great personal believer in the excellence of the "English-speaking race" (Plomer 1984 [1933]: 25-28). Johnson-Castle (2018: 52) calls him an "English supremacist". His ambition was to extend British dominion, and the railway line, from Cape to Cairo (cf. Plomer 1984 [1933]: 71). Although Rhodes' racist attitudes towards Black Africans was of the patronising kind – he is quoted as saying that "the natives are in a sense citizens, but not altogether citizens – they are still children" (Plomer 1984 [1933]: 126) – he was also ruthlessly murderous in his methods against uncooperative African peoples when necessary in order to secure the White minority's ruling position (Plomer 1984 [1933]: 105-106, 116-117, 129-132).

Rhodes is an interesting and ambiguous character, as he ended up becoming more invested, and feeling more at home, in his adopted African homeland than in his native England (Nyamnjoh 2016). Nyamnjoh shows that Rhodes, despite his pro-English views, was in many ways more of a (South) African than an Englishman at heart, and it could be argued that he had more in common with the WESSAs of today than with the average English person of his time. Indeed, Rhodes is quoted as having said that "To be in [Rhodesia] is surely a happier thing than the deadly monotony of an English country town" (Plomer 1984 [1933]: 56).

Between 1891 and 1899, Rhodes successively bought up a series of properties on the slopes of Devil's Peak, an estate known as Groote Schuur ("Big Barn") after a farm originally established by the VOC in 1667 (Cape Peninsula National Park 2002). By the time his acquisition of the estate was complete, Rhodes was at the peak of his career in southern Africa, having made his fortune on Kimberley diamonds and having served as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony for six years. Groote Schuur is a large area stretching from present-day Groote Schuur Hospital southwards along the slopes of Devil's Peak all the way down to Newlands Forest and Groote Schuur Residence. On the upper side, the estate reached all the way to the Prince of Wales Blockhouse and the King's Blockhouse. On the lower side, it included Mostert's Mill and the Welgelegen farm below the M3 expressway (Cape Peninsula National Park 2002).

Rhodes' presence as owner and occupant of Groote Schuur has had a great symbolic impact on Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch. The whole Liesbeek Valley and the Cape Flats were

engulfed in the shadow of this larger-than-life character. This would become even more literally true as memorials and statues were erected on the estate in the years following Rhodes' death, including the famous Rhodes Memorial, which is a major landmark and tourist attraction in Mowbray. Even the University of Cape Town itself has been strongly shaped by him, as it was Rhodes himself who donated the land on which UCT's main campuses – Upper, Middle and Lower – now stand. In 1928, the bulk of UCT's facilities were moved to the current "magnificent site at Groote Schuur on the slopes of Devil's Peak […] on land bequeathed to the nation by Cecil John Rhodes as the site for a national university".[34] As an acknowledgement of this, a statue of Rhodes was erected on UCT's Upper Campus.

The symbols of Rhodes – and of imperial Britishness – at UCT have been strongly contested. The *#RhodesMustFall* student movement culminated with the removal of Rhodes' statue from UCT Upper Campus in 2015 (see Nyamnjoh 2016 for a thorough analysis of this movement). The movement was remarkable in its foregrounding of "that part of South African history that implicates the Anglo actors" (Steyn 2018: 12). However, the shadow of Rhodes' statue has been painted on the stone steps below, symbolising Rhodes' lingering presence in the history, architecture, and social structures of the university and the surrounding suburbs. Some of these influences are subtle, others less so. Jameson Hall (named after one of Rhodes' closest collaborators, Sir Leander Starr Jameson) kept its colonial-era name until the end of 2018 when UCT decided to rename it Sara Baartman Hall. The post office on Upper Campus is still known as "Rhodes Gift Post Office", subtly reminding students, staff, and visitors that the ground on which they tread was a gift given by the famous coloniser. The fact that the land bought by Rhodes in the 1890s was originally *taken* from the indigenous Khoi is hardly mentioned or recognised in any apparent way by UCT officialdom.[35]

Apartheid

The Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 spurred the rise of Afrikaner nationalism (Schutte 1995: 33; Steyn 2003: 217). Despite the fact that the war was not fought in the Cape Colony, and despite the fact that "Cape Afrikaners […] were not involved in the struggle against England" (Schutte 1995: 33), the war still led to widespread polarisation among White South

[34] https://www.uct.ac.za/main/about/history (retrieved 11 September 2019)
[35] UCT's presentation of its relationship with Cecil Rhodes is arguably an example of the type of *white talk* which "mystifies the processes by which land was acquired, emphasizing such issues as current farming expertise and 'improvement' of the land" (Steyn 2003: 131).

Africans across the country, carving out "two clearly defined white camps" (Salusbury 2003: 21): On the one hand, the Afrikaners, and on the other hand, the WESSAs, now increasingly "distinct from a British South African group" (p. 21). A result of this was that "White immigrants not of British descent were forced to align themselves with one of these camps and to assimilate at least linguistically with them" (Salusbury 2003: 21, referencing Maylam 2001). Many Eastern European, Mediterranean, and Jewish immigrants ended up learning English and adopting British customs to various extents (p. 21), increasing the internal diversity within the WESSA category significantly (as evidenced today, for example, by the fact that the Jewish community of Cape Town is generally English-speaking).

From the 1930s onward, intolerance between WESSAs and Afrikaners grew, and "for many English-speaking South Africans, Afrikaners were as much 'the other' as were blacks" (Lambert 2005: 66) – a relationship reminiscent of the *grands blancs/petits blancs* rivalry discussed in Chapter 2. The relationship between WESSAs and Afrikaners is that it clearly illustrates the difference between the concepts of *race* (White) and *ethnicity* (Afrikaner versus WESSA). This relationship shows that one term cannot simply be substituted for the other, as some writers have tended to do (see Frankenberg 1993: 13). There is, of course, significant overlap between the two terms and concepts in practice, and Schutte (1995: 27-28) has argued, not unconvincingly, that White South Africans might be considered an ethnic group due to shared aspects of culture as well as a common ethnic consciousness. Even so, I believe that the distinction between race and ethnicity is conceptually useful, and I will continue to use it in this thesis. By "race", I generally mean identities (ascribed and/or self-professed) based on physical features such as skin colour. By "ethnicity", I generally mean a person's identity as part of a community in which membership is *not* – or at least not *solely* – defined by phenotype. I will discuss the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic groups later in the thesis, in relation to WESSA group identity.

The 1910s, 1920s and 1930s saw a gradual erosion of the political rights of those classified as non-White in South Africa (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 96-98). The classification endeavour itself was less than clear-cut, and policymakers ended up drawing rather arbitrary boundaries between, for instance, "White" and "Coloured" Afrikaans-speakers (Giliomee 2019: 26-28). It was the National Party (NP) who in 1948, upon winning national power, introduced the ideology known as *Apartheid.* The NP was founded on Afrikaner nationalism and emphasised "securing the future existence of the Afrikaner group" (now identified as White and as separate from the Afrikaans-speaking Coloured community), an end for which the Apartheid system

was intended as an important means (Giliomee 2019: 62). Despite the NP's focus on Afrikaners, however, the change in government did not result in a "purge of English-speakers" from their positions (p. 97).

Rather than seeing it as an offshoot of German Nazi ideology, as some have, historian Hermann Giliomee argues that "apartheid developed within the mainstream of pre-Second World War racism and social engineering enthusiasms in the West" (Giliomee 2019: 39) and that its ideological underpinnings drew upon several sources: "the Cape Afrikaner experience of slavery, with its ideology of paternalism, and British colonialism, with its stress on indirect rule and trusteeship" (Giliomee 2019: 53; MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 66).

Despite its ostensible call for equality and separate development for South Africa's racial groups, Apartheid was in practice a white supremacist system (Baas 2019: 154). Citizenship was based on colour, with Whites being citizens and non-Whites being relegated to non-citizen status (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 46; Mamdani 1996: 109) and, in the case of indigenous Africans, redefined them as belonging, by definition, not to South Africa but to quasi-independent "homelands" or "Bantustans" (Schutte 1995: 22, 77; MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 60; Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: 244-246). It was a system very much reminiscent of the colonial state, where citizenship was the privilege of those perceived (or perceiving themselves) to be "civilised", while those perceived as "uncivilised" "would be subject to an all-round tutelage" (Mamdani 1996: 17). Apartheid "nationaliz[ed] race" (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 50), depriving non-White people of political rights yet keeping them at hand as a useful – indeed necessary – supply of cheap labour (pp. 50-54), kept in place by a combination of direct and indirect rule (Mamdani 1996: 101-102). The already strong correlation between race and class was institutionalised, as the Apartheid government gave preference to White economic interests – employment, businesses, ownership of land and natural resources – at the cost of those classified as non-White and therefore as "non-people" (Nyamnjoh 2013: 318). Determining who was "White" and who was not was based on arbitrary criteria; this was the era of the infamous "pencil test", where a pencil would be stuck into a person's hair, and "[i]f the pencil slid through, you could be considered white" (Faul 2013). This classification system sometimes had the effect of splitting families apart (Schutte 1995: 74).

How can Apartheid be understood from a Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan framework? Nyamnjoh argues that in a universe where existence is defined by inherent and unavoidable *incompleteness*, humans should strive for *conviviality* and acknowledgement of interconnections, interdependencies, and compositeness of being. Apartheid, however, compartmentalised

different types of human beings according to identities that were perceived as *complete* and bounded; it denied (indeed criminalised) the mixing and blending of categories and identities, and cemented a social hierarchy with the values and lifestyles of one category of people – those classified as White – firmly on top. Apartheid can thus be seen as the polar opposite of conviviality, an opposition evident in the very etymology of the two terms, with *conviviality* meaning "living together" and *Apartheid* being Afrikaans for "apart-ness".

Prior to Apartheid's inception, Cape Town is said to have been the least segregated city in South Africa (Besteman 2008: 47; Ueland 2012: 5; Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: 258, 266-267). This would change after the 1957 implementation of the Group Areas Act (1950). Like elsewhere in South Africa, the Act (building on previous legislation and sentiments already deeply entrenched in South African society (cf. Mamdani 1996: 93-94)) reserved geographical areas for specific racial groupings. Many localities became designated White areas, with non-White residents being forcibly relocated to the "homelands" and to "townships" (Giliomee 2019: 71; Rosiejka 2017: 8) which in the Cape Town area were located east of the city proper, in an area known as the Cape Flats. As we have seen, Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch had been a racially, ethnically and culturally mixed area for three centuries. However, in 1961, Mowbray was proclaimed a White Group Area (South African History Online 2019d) and the non-White-classified people living there were forcibly removed to the Flats. A similar fate befell a number of neighbouring areas (Friends of the Liesbeek n.d.), disrupting livelihoods and severing community bonds and long-standing ties to the land of the Liesbeek Valley.

Mowbray's Muslim community – mainly (if not solely) comprised of people who would be classified as non-White during Apartheid – showed strong resilience in the face of the forced removals, continuing to worship at the Mowbray mosque despite not being allowed to live in the area. The mosque, named Masjid Ar-Rashideen, was constructed in 1891 and had already been a religious and communal hub for generations by the time the Group Areas Act was enforced in the Southern Suburbs. After the Act, the mosque remained – and *has* remained – a central gathering-point for the descendants of former Mowbray residents, and the mosque's current leader is a descendant of one of the its first Imams (Masjid Ar-Rashideen 2017). In other words, the mosque has functioned as a small but indomitable beacon of convivial resistance in an urban landscape defined by anti-convivial social engineering. Despite their best efforts, the Apartheid government never managed to completely eradicate the Coloured and Muslim presence in Mowbray. To this day, the prayer calls from Masjid Ar-Rashideen – and

the deluge of cars in Upper Durban Road every Friday – are a living reminder of the long, diverse and vibrant history of the area.

Apartheid ended in 1994. This was the year of South Africa's first democratic election, which ushered in Nelson Mandela as President of a new national government led by the African National Congress (ANC). The process leading to the fall of Apartheid, and the subsequent transition to democracy, was a complex one about which others have written at length (e.g. Giliomee 2019, MacDonald 2012 [2006]). Legal and political rights were restored to the previously disenfranchised non-White majority of the population, and overt, institutionalised White supremacy was dismantled. However, the democratic transition did not bring about social and economic equality between racial groups (Nyamnjoh 2013; cf. also Giliomee 2019: 117), nor did it extinguish racist mindsets among South Africans. As pointed out by Nyamnjoh, "[t]he economy is still dominated by white South Africans and black empowerment has only meant the crystallisation of the black middle class and a culture of *tenderpreneurship"* (Nyamnjoh 2013: 310). Attitudes toward Apartheid among various population groups in post-Apartheid South Africa can be gleaned from a 2001 survey by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (Giliomee 2019: 34, Table 2.1), which shows that 65 % of Afrikaners agreed that "the basic idea of apartheid was good", while only 29 % disagreed. A total of 36 % of "White English" South Africans were in favour of the basic idea of Apartheid, while 60 % disagreed. Additionally, a significant minority among Xhosa- and Zulu-speaking South Africans (18 % and 25 % respectively) expressed support for the basic idea of Apartheid.

In light of all this, it is hardly surprising that the spectre of Apartheid lives on in everyday life in South Africa. South Africa's particular history and continuing racialised inequalities put race to the fore with an explicitness arguably seen in few other countries (Johnson-Castle 2018: 19). As one of Ueland's participants stated, "everything here [in South Africa] is about race […] You don't choose to identify as white. But you're conscious about it all the time" (Ueland 2012: 35). And although Ueland's WESSA participants consider themselves "'South Africans' first, followed by 'White' and then 'middle-class'" (p. 35; my translation), it is their skin colour, their White-ness, which is emphasised in encounters with other people.

Mowbray: A place of tension

While the lower part of Mowbray has retained a sheltered, suburban atmosphere (similar to Rosebank which I will discuss later), the upper part of the suburb has changed to an extreme

extent since Apartheid times. My interlocutor Tessa Ford, who went to training college on Main Road in Mowbray in the early 1970s, told me that the area was totally White and specifically "British, but sort of middle-class, sort of. Yeah. *Gentile*." The shops were very British in style and included Clark's of Mowbray, a "gentile sort of department store, with British fabrics and British clothes and… so nothing like, it's completely different [from what the area looks like today]."

Starting in the early 1990s, UCT began buying up blocks of flats to turn into residences for students, a development which upset the demographic makeup of Mowbray and was met with resentment and fear by many elderly White residents at the time, as witnessed and documented by Bell (1993). Today, the Mowbray central business district (CBD) – the area along Main Road and around the bus interchange – is dominated by student residences as well as downmarket restaurants and cafés, a few chain stores, and a large number of small businesses run by immigrants from other African countries. The RMCA notes that the "African hair salons [are] particularly well-known" (RMCA n.d.) and an RMCA Management Committee member once counted 40 salons concentrated along just a few hundred metres' stretch of road.

Mowbray's total area is 2.76 km². At the time of the 2011 census, the population of the suburb was 4726, the racial composition being 44.23 % Black, 36.11 % White, 11.30 % Coloured, 4.02 % Indian or Asian, and 4.34 % others. English was by far the largest first language, spoken by a total of 67.98 % of the residents (the second and third largest language categories being "Other" at 8.65 % and Afrikaans at 8.01 %).[36]

My life in Mowbray

I first moved to Upper Durban Road on 1 April 2018. The small cottage was owned by Annette Lombardi, a White woman whom I had known since my first stay in Cape Town in 2017. Built around a hundred years earlier as a working-class home,[37] the house was a bit worn but otherwise seemed to be in good shape; it had been a hair salon for many years, and Annette had spent considerable time and money getting it fixed up for habitation. I liked it immediately, and after having lived in small rented rooms for two months, I appreciated having more physical

[36] Source: Adrian Frith's analysis of census data for Sub Place 199041027 Mowbray. URL: https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/199041027 (retrieved 26 March 2020)
[37] As I reflected later, it may well have been the home of one of the Coloured families evicted after Mowbray became a Whites-only area in 1961.

space and privacy. During the first month I lived alone in the cottage, and in the beginning of May, two other women moved into the second bedroom and became my housemates.

Vuyokazi Matunda and Lindelwa Mpepo were Xhosa women a bit younger than me, both working full-time jobs. I got along very well with them from the beginning, especially with Vuyokazi, who was very lively and jovial; we quickly developed a friendly tone and shared much with each other from our everyday lives. When one of us had bought a bottle of wine, we would often share it, and I, being very fond of coffee, would often prepare a pot for all three of us. As time went by, I got to know Lindelwa better too; she seemed a bit more introverted, or perhaps shy, and she also gave off more of an "activist" vibe. Our first proper conversation centred around racial relations in South Africa, and we shared stories about being White and Black in Cape Town. After my time with Zimkhitha, it meant a lot to me to have housemates who understood racial issues, and who felt safe and comfortable enough to engage in open and honest conversations about them with a White person like me. In short, my stay in the house on Upper Durban Road began on a very pleasant note.

I remember one of my first conversations with Vuyokazi; we were talking about house-cleaning. I told her that in Norway it is not common to employ domestic help (live-in help being practically unheard-of), and that I had grown up doing the house-cleaning myself, together with the rest of my family. Vuyokazi found this strange and proceeded to ask me if I would actually go down on my knees and scrub the floor. "Of course," I replied. Then Vuyokazi and Lindelwa laughed. I thought to myself that maybe my presence in the house would help dispel some misconceptions about White people. I would show Vuyokazi and Lindelwa that I could do housework as well as anyone, and that there might be more to a White person than meets the eye. I wanted to forefront my own open-endedness, refusing to be limited by other people's ideas of what a White person could or should be.

It turned out there were other ways, too, in which I did not fit the stereotype of a White person in the Southern Suburbs, and which reminded me of my outsider-ness. Early in my stay, I started thinking that walking is not something that White people in South Africa tend to do (unless they are doing it as a form of exercise). Ueland (2012: 52) has made similar observations. Coming from Norway, where walking is very common both as a pastime and as a means of transportation, I found the lack of White people on the streets strange and surprising. For reasons of personal economy and health, I remained determined to get around on foot as much as possible, and my many walks ended up providing me with invaluable autoethnographic data about my field site.

My experiences with my ex-partner, Zimkhitha, had conditioned me to assume that the lack of White people on the streets of the Southern Suburbs had to be due to White arrogance or racism – White people simply seeing walking as something very lowly, or not wanting to share space with people of colour. The fact that people would sometimes ask me if I had a car, and seemed surprised when I said no, strengthened this assumption. Most people in the Cape Town metropolitan area do not own cars, but I got the feeling that White people were expected to. Indeed, many do, even young people (Haffajee 2015: 114-115; Ueland 2012: 52). In Cape Town, as elsewhere in the world, cars are understood as symbols of social and economic status. At one point, I talked with a fellow UCT student about this, and she told me that "People are surprised – [by not driving,] you are lowering yourself to 'their' level."[38]

With time, however, I started to understand that things may be more complicated than simple race- and class-based arrogance. I soon learned that if you look different from the majority of the people around you, even an innocent walk in the neighbourhood can be very troublesome. In my particular corner of Mowbray – the area around Main Road, the bus station and the taxi rank – my colour and features made me stick out like a sore thumb. For me, it felt like any attempt at being convivial meant actively distancing myself from what I – based on my previous experiences and conversations with Zimkhitha and others – thought would be seen as stereotypical White behaviour:

> The stress/pain of walking around. Goffman truly comes to mind… I have to be constantly alert. I need to have my "lines" ready in case something happens. My "lines" and learned habitus which I use so that people don't think I am arrogant, scared or stupid. If I relax too much, there is the risk that I might not respond correctly, or in time, if someone talks to me. There is the risk of misunderstanding and being misunderstood.
>
> It sometimes feels like my head has a plank on either side which prevents me from looking from side to side. I need to look mostly forward, because I don't want to be caught staring at anyone by accident (this can be construed as rude, racist, etc.). […] Walking around is very stressful.

This mode – intensely minding my own business while simultaneously trying my best to avoid fitting into any negative stereotypes of White people, bringing to mind Erving Goffman's theories of impression management and the ways in which humans apply stereotypes to each other based on outward clues (Goffman 1956: 1) – would soon become my default mindset when walking anywhere in Cape Town. Although I have gotten more used to it with time, it has never truly stopped bothering me. The constant awareness of unspoken assumptions and

[38] Fieldnotes 15 March 2018.

accompanying tensions has been draining, and has resulted in me spending much more time indoors than I would have done in my home country.

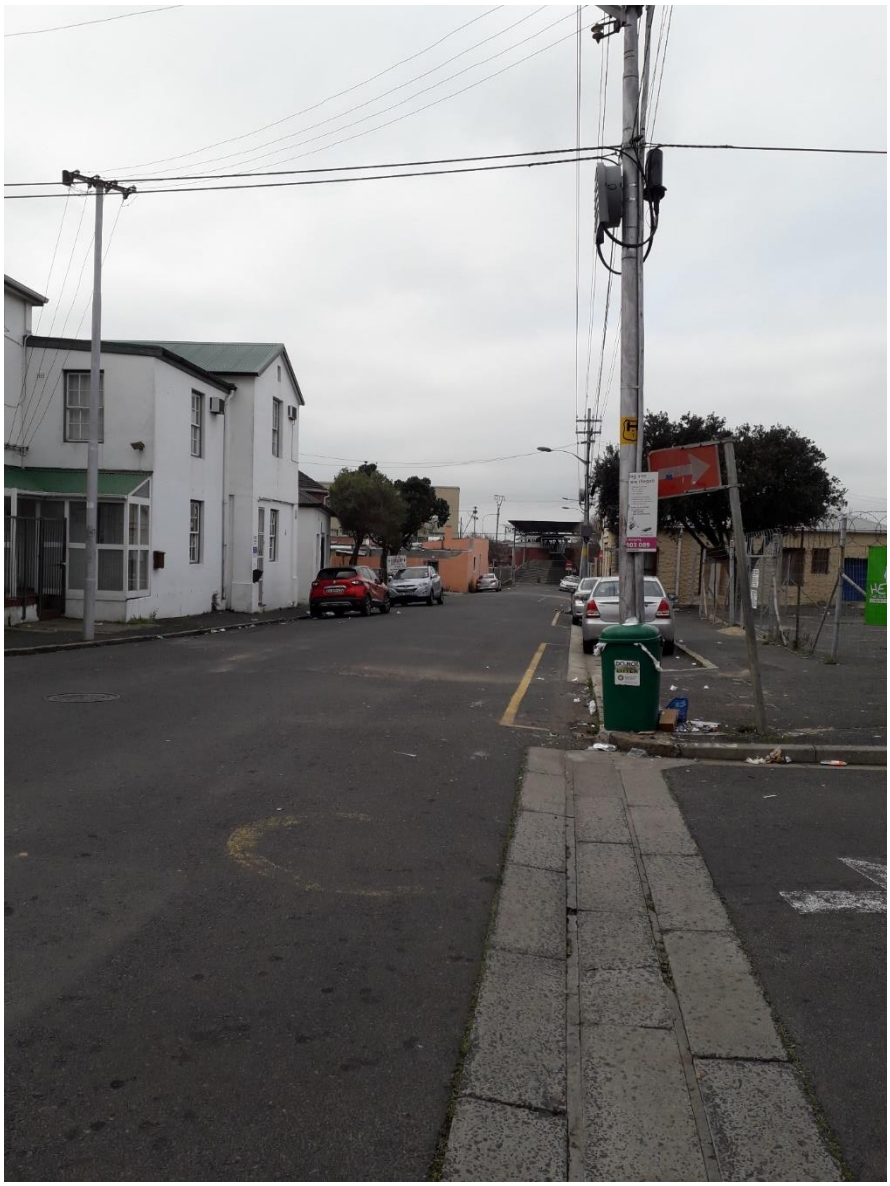


Figure 4. *A view of Upper Durban Road.*

From the beginning of my stay in Mowbray, I noticed something peculiar about the "vibe" along Main Road. There seemed to always be something in the air; a sullen silence like that of a quarrel never settled; an energy of anticipation, as if everyone you meet knows something about you, something dark and secret. It came from the way people looked at me and at each other, the way people greeted and talked to me and to each other, the way people passed me

and each other on the street. It was a very visceral feeling, difficult to capture in words. This "vibe" – for lack of a better term – seemed to be geographically concentrated in certain neighbourhoods and streets, including my home street Upper Durban Road. There came a point, in June 2018 or thereabouts, when the vibe began to influence my mental and emotional wellbeing in a very negative way, making me hypersensitive. As I walked around the suburbs, I started noticing, ever more strongly, the laughs that would often burst forth when I passed by groups of men – people just hanging out, or workers taking breaks on street corners. Were they laughing at *me?* For being White? For being visibly trans? Both? Or something else I could not see? I noticed the people staring at me as I crossed the Mowbray taxi rank, or even as I stood waiting for the Jammie shuttle at the bus station. Sitting on the *stoep* at home was no longer relaxing, as I became increasingly aware of the fast, stiff gait and stiff looks of many of the people passing by.

I knew I was practically the only White person living on my street, and certainly the only one who would regularly walk around or sit outside. Increasingly conscious of people's reactions to everything I did, I concluded – without really knowing, and thus possibly unfairly – that people's laughs and comments were deliberate attacks because my colour made me a symbol of injustice and oppression (Nuttall 2001: 121) and because I was an easy target. As I vented on Facebook on 28 August 2018:

> Is it at all possible to be an individual human being in this country? Is it at all possible to be anything but a symbol of something else? This is a country where people don't need to get to know you; they cast one look at you and they already know everything they need to know.

My perception was given more nuance after I texted with a friend of mine. Nomsa, a Black Zimbabwean UCT student, had lived in Mowbray before and knew the area well. In a WhatsApp conversation which took place on 28 August 2018 – the same day as I wrote the above Facebook post – she told me that she, too, had been affected by the bad vibe; so much so, in fact, that she had made the decision to move to a different suburb further south. This revelation was a great psychological relief to me, primarily because it suggested that the hostility or negativity I was feeling from the people on Upper Durban Road, and Mowbray in general, had nothing specifically to do with *me* as an individual.

I suggested to Nomsa that perhaps it might have to do with class rather than race, since the presence of the taxi rank and the railway and bus stations means that Upper Durban Road is always busy with people travelling from their homes on the Cape Flats to work in the suburbs or the city centre, or back again. Local homeless people also frequent the street from time to

time. Then again, Mowbray also has its share of upmarket apartments and large garden-enclosed villas, and expensive cars are often seen cruising on Main Road. The area is a meeting-place for people of all walks of life, a social intersection where people from disadvantaged segments of society are reminded of their position. Nomsa agreed with me that the hostile atmosphere probably had to do with disadvantaged people feeling out of place in a mostly middle-class areas like the Southern Suburbs, and perhaps assuming me to be someone with more inherited wealth and privilege than is actually the case.

As will be shown, however, class dynamics in South Africa are never detached from race. In Nyamnjoh's words, "the intersection of class and race in South Africa seldom hides for long" (Nyamnjoh 2016: 201). Indeed, when I first came to this country, I may have underestimated the effects of colonialism and Apartheid on social dynamics and people's perceptions of themselves and of each other.

A theatre of power

One of the things I noticed even from my first day in Cape Town, and especially in upper Mowbray, is the way White people – including myself – are constantly treated with a formalism bordering on deference. For instance, I am universally called "Miss"/"Ma'am" or "Sir"/"Boss", depending on whether or not I am correctly gendered. I realise, of course, that honorifics like "Sir" and "Ma'am" are common throughout the English-speaking world, and that I take note of them mainly because I come from a country where such titles are practically never used. Additionally, their connotations of social stratification and master-servant relations serve to make them rather unpalatable to me personally, my ideals being strongly egalitarian. Even so, I have had a persistent feeling – all the more vague because these things never seem to be talked about openly – that there is something deeper going on than just a somewhat stiff show of respect.

The people who address me very formally are almost always non-White and usually visibly poor, and often approach me from a position of needing help. There are many homeless people, for example, along Main Road in the busier areas of my field-site, who ask passers-by for money or food. I sometimes say yes, provided I can give people what they ask for (usually cash), but although the interactions themselves are usually pleasant enough on the surface, they often have an uncomfortable undertone. To me, the formalistic styles of address – often combined with a very humble or stiff demeanour – make me feel like I am being put on a pedestal, either as someone with limitless wealth and power, or as someone whose social status

demands subservience from others. The fact that I am sometimes addressed as "Boss" is especially interesting (and uncomfortable) since it is a relic of Apartheid times and evokes both White supremacy (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 119) and patriarchy.

I once asked my housemate Lindelwa what she thought about all this.

> ME: It often seems to me that white people in Cape Town are treated like some sort of nobility. It's always "Sir" and "Ma'am", and people on the street are almost deferential sometimes, even to me, who doesn't even look particularly distinguished or important. It feels very weird. Is my observation correct? Is this a specific thing that happens to whites, or are people in this country just extremely formal with each other?
>
> LINDELWA: I think it's the history of the country itself. Apartheid still leave behind features of itself in differ t ways in different parts of SA. More so Cape Town. (WhatsApp 26 February 2019)

I took this as a confirmation of my suspicion that the overly formal and stiff demeanour does, indeed, reflect people's assumptions of me as a White person – or, perhaps more accurately, their ideas of what my White-ness *stands for* in the South African context. And after all, the more everyday or "petty" manifestations of Apartheid did include such things as "making blacks give way to whites on the street or wait until whites were served at a store" (Parks 1987).

On several occasions I have encountered homeless people who, rather than asking for money from every passer-by (or a random selection, or everyone who looks wealthy or middle-class), have made a beeline straight for me. Since there is usually little that sets me apart from other pedestrians except for my skin colour, it is obvious that these people have targeted me specifically because I am White. In other words, begging is not simply about money, but also about race. While I have gained an increasing understanding of the historical context informing these interactions, I nevertheless find them painful because they seem to reduce the participants to their racial category, and because it feels like the person views me not as a fellow human who might lend a hand, but as a *different kind of being* altogether.

One telling incident happened on 12 January 2019, when I was heading home from the Rondebosch Craft Market, walking along Cecil Road from Rosebank to Mowbray. Passing Cecil Park, I was approached by a young man who looked like a student and was wearing clothes suggesting middle-class-level income. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> He looked like he was crossing the road to the other side, but then turned back and continued walking on the road next to the sidewalk on which I was walking. I was a bit embarrassed by the fact that he seemed to prefer walking on the road rather than sharing the sidewalk with me.

Just as I passed him, he started talking to me, addressing me as "my brother". He spoke very fast, introducing himself in a way which sounded to me, at the time, like an introduction to a financial request. Simultaneously, a Black family was getting in or out of an expensive-looking car on the other side of the road. I was very casually dressed in an old t-shirt and overalls and well-worn shoes, carrying a Shoprite bag. When I had first spotted the young man, it had looked like he was on his way to talk to the Black family with the car – a sensible thing to do for someone looking for financial help, since the family seemed well-off. Yet as soon as I showed up, he turned in the middle of the road and headed straight for me instead, a not particularly fancily dressed pedestrian his own age. I cut the man off with a "no" and walked on.

My reaction undoubtedly came across as rude and arrogant, which, in hindsight, I regret. Furthermore, even *if* I was right about his intentions, I will not argue that those intentions were not legitimate, nor that he would be wrong in assuming that White people are generally affluent (the economic upliftment of Whites was an explicit objective of pre-Apartheid and Apartheid governments alike (Fredrickson 1982 [1981]: 228-234, 245-246)). What upset me so much about this little exchange, apart from the misgendering (which soured my mood and did its part in setting the tone for the encounter), and what I take away as the most ethnographically significant part of it, was the fact that the man was so obviously aiming specifically for the only White-looking person around, implying that our interaction would have its primary meaning in terms of racial difference. *Inherent* difference. Apartheid difference.

To me, situations like this often end up feeling like a script being acted out, where the other person positions themselves as a specific stereotype of a Black or Coloured person (poor, powerless, even subservient) and simultaneously puts *me* in the role of what they think a White person is supposed to be (wealthy, powerful, and used to being served). It feels like a kind of bizarre theatre – one might call it a theatre of power – where the social dynamics of colonialism and Apartheid are celebrated and reproduced.

Interactions of this type obviously serve a purpose for the "weaker" participants, or else they would not have instigated them. For people begging on the streets, being overly respectful towards people they presume to be wealthy may simply be a strategy to get money by making the giver feel magnanimous and appreciated. Since they stick to this strategy, it is apparently an efficient one, which suggests that White people in my field-site tend to *accept* the

stereotypical roles they are given in these encounters. I find this highly interesting, as it would suggest that such interaction may be an expression of a "passive essentialism" (Spiegel 2020: 150-151) based on *shared* assumptions about reality – in this case, assumptions about the inherent characteristics of racial categories.

There is also the need to avoid making people angry. On 23 January 2019, while having dinner with my friend Charné Jordaan – a White trans woman of Afrikaner background – I was venting about being misgendered by waiters and other service professionals who, I thought, *must* see that I am not trying to conform to traditional standards of masculinity – yet they would still call me "Sir". Charné's response was enlightening. The mainly non-White people who work in service professions, she explained to me,

> intuit that it is safer to call a woman "Sir" than it is to call a man "Ma'am". If a woman is misgendered, the worst thing that will happen is some awkwardness. If you misgender a man, you might get punched. […] I responded that I don't want to look like someone who might punch someone. [Charné] said: *You're white, and that's just the way it is in this country.* (Fieldnotes 23 January 2019; emphasis added)

In other words, according to Charné, safety would be an important reason behind the way White people are treated by people of colour in South Africa, the assumption being that all interactions with White people (and men!) contain an element of risk.

June and July 2018 were a tough time. I had been out as trans only for about six months, and I had been dealing with a lot of fear, worry and dysphoria related to my gender expression and the discrepancies between my inner identity and the way my physical embodiment was read socially. I was struggling very hard to be read as female, frequently being not only casually misgendered but *actively* and *overtly* addressed and treated as male, possibly because the ambiguity of my appearance at the time made people feel a need to put me in a clear category (and as Charné had pointed out, "male" was the safest bet). The frequent misgendering exacerbated my general aversion to being misinterpreted by other people, and helped make *interracial* dynamics feel distinctly painful as well. It was as if my "outsider within" positionality (Harrison 2008) was becoming amplified in all its facets, foregrounding sharply intersecting social hierarchies and power dynamics in painfully vivid ways.

By this time, I had been living in Cape Town just long enough to attain a rough understanding of the dynamics between the city's various social groups, and I had become keenly aware of the ways in which my own prescribed social role in the South African racial configuration clashed with the facts of my background and lifestyle as well as my image of the kind of person

I wanted to be (cf. Warren 1990: 622-623). I was highly reluctant to adopt "the *habitus* of being white in South Africa" (Nyamnjoh 2016: 132), in which I thought I detected a certain level of complacency with unjust privileges. Still, as my level of stress and anxiety increased, it became difficult to maintain an objective distance to my surroundings. The environment – including the unpleasant "upper Mowbray vibe" – had started to get under my skin, especially the ways in which everyone, Black and White, seemed to quietly perpetuate social hierarchies and to accept the perceived *completeness* and naturalness of race and class identities.

On 28 August 2018, I attended a seminar on the Black Tax, the social obligation (in South Africa as well as other countries) for Black people in highly paid positions to take care of less well-off family members financially. The presentation, although based on very insightful work, reinforced my impression that the general perception of a White person in South Africa is that of an aristocrat. As Mayihlome Tshwete puts it, "White isn't race, it's wealth" (M. Tshwete, interviewed by Haffajee (2015: 113)). It made me reflect. Coming from a majority-White country where class is not explicitly racialised, I have found it difficult to *personally identify* with this image of what it means to be White. My own family background is divided between upper-middle-class on my father's side and working-class on my mother's side. I have always identified strongly with my mother's values of collective solidarity in the family and in society – a concept which, according to Haffajee, is more "Black" than "White" in contemporary South Africa (Haffajee 2015: 19-20). At one point, my grandmother worked as a domestic cleaner, a profession seen as quintessentially "Black" (and female) in the South African setup (Steyn 2001: 52-53; Gaitskell, Kimble, Maconachie, & Unterhalter 1983: 88, 93; Dinkelman & Ranchhod 2010: 8).[39] Indeed, my mother and her sisters have had to assist their parents financially during periods of hardship in a way not dissimilar to the Black Tax.

I am the first generation on this side of my family to enjoy intergenerational privilege, made possible by the efforts of my mother. In my experience of my South African field-site, however, such a background is construed as not only *unlikely* for a young White person (which may or may not be true), but as almost *incompatible* with being White. What does that make *me?* To what extent is a White Norwegian the same as a White South African? A discussion about this could fill a thesis of its own. Suffice it to say, here, that while Whiteness is global, my "White

[39] It is worth mentioning that my grandmother's self-identification as part Romani would, according to some, make her not fully White; cf. https://www.quora.com/Are-gypsy-people-considered-white ; https://dalefarmsvanner.wordpress.com/2011/11/07/kristallnatten/ ; http://www.jimchines.com/2016/11/racism-and-the-romani-people/ (all retrieved 12 March 2019).

experience" is situated and often seems *incomplete* by South African standards, which illustrates the situatedness and incompleteness of *any* identity, chosen or imposed.

The continuing friction between the perceptions of White people in South Africa and my own identity and history indicate that in South Africa, Whites are seen not only as middle- or upper-class by definition (Salusbury 2003; Salusbury & Foster 2004; Ueland 2012; MacDonald 2012 [2006]), but also, on a very fundamental level, as beings of a *different kind* than those who are not White. My experiences – of being treated deferentially and Othered by people whose skin tone is darker than mine but whose family backgrounds are not *inherently* different from my own[40] – support the argument that the view of racial differences as immutable and unbridgeable is widespread across South African society, not only among Whites (Schutte 1995) but also among people who are not White (Haffajee 2015). It is a mindset similar to what Ruth Frankenberg (1993: 138) terms "essentialist racism", and the fact that this way of thinking makes me so uncomfortable reminds me, more than anything, of my foreignness.

Home life deteriorating

In the midst of the intensity of life in upper Mowbray, my cottage had always been a safe haven. When I felt tired, I could always go home and relax. I could lock myself in my room and retreat from everything for a while, or I could simply hang out in the kitchen and talk with my housemates and just be *me.* Sometimes I would jog up to Rhodes Memorial, enjoy the peace and quiet and the natural surroundings for a while, and come home to enjoy a cup of *mageu*[41] or Milo while observing the people on the street outside.

The place also had its problems, though. Not long after I moved into the house, I noticed white spots on one of my bedroom walls and black spots in the bathroom ceiling. The spots in my bedroom turned out to be mould growth coming from inside the wall – one of the outer walls of the house – due to a leak in the roof which had allowed rainwater to seep into the gap between two layers of bricks. The spots in the bathroom belonged to a different fungal species, but probably originated from the same leak. I had seen the spots in the bathroom at an early stage and proceeded to wash them off with bleach, but no matter how much I scrubbed, they always came back. My housemates Lindelwa and Vuyokazi did not seem to notice this, and as time

[40] This is not, of course, meant as a denial of the fact that our histories have been shaped by our different positionalities within the system of Whiteness. Being White – in South Africa, Norway, or elsewhere – does cancel out some of the disadvantages of belonging to the working class (Çankaya & Mepschen 2019: 629).
[41] A traditional Southern African drink made from fermented maize meal.

went by, I started to suspect – rightly or not – that they were wilfully ignoring it and leaving the dirty work to me. After several rows, we set up a cleaning roster system which worked rather well, at least for a while. Around the same time, the bathroom ceiling was re-painted with white road-paint, through which the black mould never again penetrated. It was still there, though, behind the paint in the ceiling chipboards and inside the attic-space.

The mould in my bedroom was a different and much graver matter. The leaks in the roof were serious, and rain started dripping in through my ceiling before it finally got sealed shut. It would then take about a year for the walls to dry up properly, during which time I would have to clean one wall with bleach or fungicide once a month. I was happy with this. My relationship with my landlady Annette was amicable and trusting. We had had a damp specialist come in and look at the damages, and I trusted his expert assessment. The bleach cleaning would be a relatively small job, and the problem would be solved soon enough.

In August 2018, by which time I had lived on Upper Durban Road for about four months, I was sitting at my desk in my room typing up some notes. Suddenly I felt an almighty jolt; it was as if the whole house shook on its foundations. What was happening? Was there an earthquake? I went outside and saw a minibus taxi standing in the middle of the road. The taxi had a huge, triangular dent on its front; it had crashed straight into our little complex. The jolt had been felt throughout the complex, frightening myself and my neighbour, an elderly White man who, as he told me, had been working from home just like myself. Traffic in Upper Durban Road was, and is, extremely dangerous; just like the taxis, Golden Arrow buses would also speed down the street, barely clearing the sides of houses and parked cars. I felt like I was practically waiting for the day when one of the many schoolchildren – mainly Black, many of them Thandokulu Secondary School students from townships in the Cape Flats – walking up and down the street every day would get hit by one of the reckless vehicles. The traffic problems were reported to the RMCA, which applied for speed bumps to be built. This request was declined by the city.

By and by, my housemates started neglecting their housework again, regularly leaving me to clean up weeks' worth of dirt, mainly residue from their extensive cooking, which made it feel even more unfair. I tried to bring the issue up in a friendly way, but it did not help. The new year made things worse; the summer holiday had created a gap between the 2018 and 2019 cleaning rosters, and we never really managed to get back to our old routine. The windows were starting to get visibly filthy from dust coming from the street and the bus interchange, and while I was happy to do my part in cleaning them (and in fact cleaned most of them myself), Vuyokazi flat-out refused to contribute. *She* was not cleaning any windows, she told me on

WhatsApp during one of our quarrels. Although punctured by periods of peace, a deep conflict was building up between my housemates and me.

The combination of the difficult social vibe in the neighbourhood, the dangerous traffic, and, more than anything, the increasingly unbearable atmosphere in the house, ended up draining my energy and patience. My home longer felt like the safe space it had once been, neither physically nor emotionally. I had a sit-down with Annette, telling her about the situation with my housemates and explaining why I could no longer stay with them. She was very understanding. At that point, I was already looking for another place to live, and fortunately I found one rather quickly through the online grapevine. On 1 March, I said goodbye to the cottage on Upper Durban Road for the last time, packing my belongings into my friend Hannah's car, helped by her and by my fiancée. I realise that being able to move away from a difficult situation is itself a privilege denied to many, but at the time, I was just happy to be starting over in a new place.

Rosebank: An uncanny oasis

Summer is ending. The air is light and crisp, and there is a slight breeze, not quite cold, but somewhat chilly. After several months of sweltering heat, I welcome the change. The sun sets noticeably earlier now; it is not setting just yet, but from our gate I can see it hanging low over the slopes of Devil's Peak. The shadows are long on the tar of Liesbeek Road. The tops of the trees in our front garden are swaying in the wind, and the leaves are fluttering. The sunlight gives them a green shine, like painted glass. Far away I hear the noise of the traffic on Liesbeek Parkway, Main Road, and the highways further off. Our street is perfectly quiet, except for the sound of trees in the wind and the chirping of a bird. A lone car passes by our house almost inaudibly. It is perfectly peaceful.

The above is from my fieldnotes on 1 April 2019, standing outside my new home. A month had passed since I had moved from my room in the cottage on Upper Durban Road in Mowbray. In Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (2014 [1954]), the protagonist's travels take him to various places and towns, each one stranger than the next; in some of these places he stays only briefly, whereas in other places he ends up living for longer periods. After about a year in Upper Durban Road in Mowbray, my journey through my own bush of ghosts – Cape Town – had taken me to a new location: A cottage all of my own in Liesbeek Road in the suburb of

Rosebank.[42] My new place was located between the lower (eastern) side of the Liesbeek River and the Rondebosch Common. It was owned by Elize Botha, a woman of Afrikaner heritage who, having distanced herself somewhat from her community of origin, had become deeply immersed in endogenous African spirituality. What would I find in this new place? Could it tell me something about the people I was seeking to study, the elusive middle-class WESSAs?

My first reaction to moving to Rosebank was relief – a relief so strong it manifested itself physically as soon as I lay down on my bed for the first time. I immediately felt deep-seated tensions in my lower back starting to let go. I did not sleep, but lay down for an hour or so, in a kind of meditative trance, not thinking, just feeling, just *being*. I could finally breathe. Having put the broken friendship with my Mowbray housemates behind me, I was now finally living completely on my own with no more conflict in sight. I did not fully realise, until I moved, how much stress it had caused me to live in upper Mowbray.

My home in Liesbeek Road was a cottage in the back of a larger house where Elize lived with a few other tenants (people moved in and out during my stay, and the number of tenants in the main house varied between two and four) as well as three dogs and two cats. We had an outdoor common area, a large and beautiful garden with lots of trees and bushes, which was a welcome change after a year of looking out the windows at concrete and tar in Mowbray. Our fig tree in Upper Durban Road had provided some greenery, but even that tree was squeezed for space and felt out of place in the concrete jungle in which it grew. In contrast, the property in Liesbeek Road was a veritable green sanctuary. It was also the only property on the street without a high wall surrounding it (there is only a very low fence as well as some hedges and bushes), and thus felt like a welcoming oasis in a sea of white and grey.

To my surprise, it was relieving to find myself in a space where I was no longer the only White person around, as several of the tenants in the main house were also White. I no longer felt like I was constantly on display, and I no longer felt like a walking symbol of all the stereotypical things that a White person in South Africa may or may not be. I was suddenly less of an Other and more of a regular person again. My colour was suddenly less strange and exotic, making me feel less defined by it, less reduced to it. I could blend in. I could be *me*.

I never expected my new home to feel so different from my old one. After all, Mowbray and Rosebank are neighbouring suburbs, and Liesbeek Road is only ten minutes' walk from Upper Durban Road. Despite the short distance, however, the two streets feel like they are located on

[42] My descriptions of my home in Rosebank and its location have been approved by Elize.

different planets. I spoke with Tracy Turner – a Rosebank resident and WESSA who works in the local real-estate business – about the matter a few months after the move, and she agreed:

> ME: [...] it's almost like you feel it's not even the same suburb, it's so different, Little Mowbray [and Lower Rosebank] versus, like, Upper Durban Road.
>
> TRACY: Absolutely. As soon as you get in the apartments and the high-rise block of flats, the whole demographic changes.
>
> […]
>
> ME: I used to live there, I used to live on Upper Durban Road […] and moving to Rosebank […] from there, it was *really* like a huge, huge, huge difference.
>
> TRACY: No, it's totally different.
>
> ME: Completely different world. Different planets.
>
> TRACY: And yet it's… yet it's maybe a kilometre away.
>
> (Interview 1 August 2019)

When I was living on Upper Durban Road, I was convinced that my experience of living in Mowbray was representative of the Cape Town experience (assuming – wrongly – that such a thing could even be said to exist in the singular). In hindsight, I would characterise it as a tough experience in terms of social relations, and a middling experience in terms of material standards. I believe my skewed perception had a lot to do with my own internalised ideas about race and privilege. I had been constantly "told" – directly by Zimkhitha and through my reading of South African history, and indirectly through interactions with strangers on the street – that to be White was to be inherently wealthy and powerful. This idea influenced me in subtle, subconscious ways even despite my inner refusal to accept the naturalness of White success. For a long time, it seemed to me to be all but impossible for a person classified as White to *truly* have a tough time in Cape Town, even as I myself was facing problems on many sides. Although I would often *say* that the South African racial setup is detrimental to everybody, regardless of colour, I did not truly *feel* it until I moved away from Mowbray and realised I had ended up almost internalising an idea that being White is *in itself* an offense, an "unforgivab[le]" one (Besteman 2008: 118), and that White people *deserve* to suffer. As I bought into illusions of *completeness* (in terms of what it means, or should mean, to embody a "White" identity), my life on Upper Durban Road had, slowly and insidiously, started to erode my sense of my own *humanness.*

After a while, I started to think more critically and constructively about my time in Mowbray and the significance of my experiences there. In Mowbray I had met and mingled with people

of all colours and backgrounds on a daily basis, yet I nevertheless became partly blind to the diversity of experiences within Cape Town. What, then, happens to Capetonians who are used to more segregated spaces? What becomes, for instance, of those who grow up in a sheltered, mainly White, mainly WESSA area like Liesbeek Road, where WESSAs and other White people are rarely if ever challenged on their positionality at all, and where the pain of racialised socio-economic inequalities, for them, is all but absent from daily life? I began to see that my experiences in Mowbray, unpleasant as they may have been, were in fact of great ethnographic value. Life on Upper Durban Road had taken me out of my comfort-zone and given me a real taste of the experience of being out of place, of being Othered. This realisation provided me with a new lens through which to examine Rosebank. To *me,* the place signified tranquillity and peace, but I could not help asking myself: If I am now "in", then who is "out"? Who is *Rosebank's* Other*?* And what, if anything, might that tell us about the people who claim Rosebank as their own?

Situating Rosebank

Rosebank is located immediately south of Mowbray. Like Mowbray, Rosebank is centred on the Liesbeek River, with one part of the suburb situated on each bank. The two suburbs share the same view of Devil's Peak and the same history of displacement of the Khoi by the Dutch and the subsequent subduing of the Dutch by the British.

Just like Mowbray, Rosebank has in recent times been profoundly shaped by its proximity to UCT. A number of student residences (and private flats rented by students) are located in upper Rosebank, including the large and prominent UCT-owned residences Graça Machel Hall and Tugwell Hall. In this respect, Rosebank resembles Mowbray. However, unlike in Mowbray, there is very little business life in Rosebank, and Rosebank's short stretch of Main Road is very quiet compared to both Mowbray and Rondebosch. Rosebank has a much more residential and suburban feel to it, even along Main Road, with the lower part between the Liesbeek River and Rondebosch Common being almost entirely residential. Additionally, Rosebank does not have a bus station or taxi rank like Mowbray does, which contributes to the impression of Rosebank as a predominantly White and middle-class area.

The area in which Liesbeek Road is located is geographically the *lower* part of Rosebank, and that is how I think of it, because it comprises the lower part of the suburb relative to Devil's Peak. However, my interlocutor Tessa Ford tells me that among locals, the area is known as

upper Rosebank. She believes this has to do with the fact that "in this little area we don't have businesses." If she is right, the word "upper" might be a reference to someone living "up in the hills", away from the hustle and bustle of the village centre. For the sake of geographical clarity, however, I will use the term *Lower* Rosebank for the area located east of the Liesbeek River and away from the mountain. In the following sections, it is this area I will be focusing on, an area with a very different feel to it than the upper part of Rosebank around Main Road, which, in the words of Tracy Turner, is "more diverse, a lot more apartments, a lot more affordable" – in other words, a lot more like upper Mowbray.

The total area of Rosebank is 1.10 km². At the time of the 2011 census, the population of Rosebank was 4963, the racial composition being 44.79 % Black, 37.88 % White, 8.66 % Coloured, 5.54 % Indian or Asian, and 3.12 others. Just like in Mowbray, the largest first language was English, spoken by a total of 64.72 % of Rosebank's residents (the second and third largest language categories being "Other" at 11.81 % and Afrikaans at 9.35 %).[43]

Tessa Ford is in her mid-sixties; her family background is British, and her mother traces her ancestry back to the 1820 Settlers. Tessa moved to Rosebank in the early 1980s, at a time when the area was populated mostly by intellectuals connected with the University of Cape Town – in Tessa's words, "it wasn't a very moneyed group". As time moved on, wealthier people moved into the area, changing its character and internal dynamic. Very few local residents are now connected with UCT, and "the sort of academic ethos has changed". Tessa observes that the cars have become larger and more expensive – "big SUVs et cetera" have taken over for the "Toyota type cars" that were common in earlier decades. The people moving into the area now are "younger people who are very much the sort of materialistic yuppie types".

Tracy Turner, the real-estate agent, confirms that those who currently buy homes in the Mowbray-Rosebank area are mainly young White couples, while the second-largest category (and the most significant category of non-White homebuyers) are Muslim families. Tracy explains that there are not a lot of Black house-owners in the area: "I'm sure apartments are a mix, but not houses. And that's just a cost thing. That's just income factor. To get a bond and all that." There is also the fact, pointed out to me by Tracy, that many of the residents of Rosebank are elderly people who do not sell their houses (which would create opportunities for

[43] Source: Adrian Frith's analysis of census data for Sub Place 199041028 Rosebank. URL: https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/199041028 (retrieved 26 March 2020)

new residents to move in) but leave their homes to their children as they pass away. “The Rosebank integration of residential homes”, says Tracy, “is going to be a long while.”

When I asked Tessa Ford how she would describe the average person in lower Rosebank today, she replied: “White. 40 to 60 age-group. Well-educated. Fairly insular in their social group. Very set in their way of thinking.” And when I asked her to describe the area in terms of ethnic groups, she replied that it is “very much predominantly English”. It appeared, then, that my journey in search of the WESSAs had taken me to the right place.

Community institutions

GSCID and LMRID

During their first years in Rosebank, Tessa and her husband took part in the establishment of the Friends of the Rondebosch Common as well as the local Neighbourhood Watch, which was an informal, no-fee neighbour network originally started by a member of the community who had read about something similar in England. The police, according to Tessa, were “useless”, and residents were very reliant on private security companies. Ironically, in the early 1980s, some of the police stations were themselves protected by private security. This being during Apartheid, the police force, as Tessa explained,

> was very, very… it was predominantly White. But the resources went to maintaining the status quo of the Apartheid system. So I think most things went into pulling people out of flats if they… so that’s where it seemed to be. Not really fighting crime.

According to Tessa, since there was quite a lot of crime at the time – in her words, “not serious crimes, but a lot of break-ins and that type of thing” – the community began to rely on private security instead. “You just didn’t bother about the police, because they appeared to be absolutely useless.” By the early 1990s, however, the situation had improved, and Tessa’s impression of the police changed when an police inspector told her and her pupils that “we are no longer a police *force,* we are a police *service.* We are here to serve the people.” That was around 1994 and the start of democracy.

The Rosebank Neighbourhood Watch became a powerful and quite dominant group. As Tessa explains, it used to be a small group;

> then it started to get bigger, and then they started to have a newsletter once a quarter […] and then they started asking for voluntary contributions, of say, just 30 rand or something, which

> was fine, to cover printing costs. And then the RMCA became, not prominent […] it was a little group of people consisting of […] retired old people doing their bit for the community. […] It was a small group of about 4-5 people, and they met in a little Catholic church, and it was the same little group of people that's still there today, the dominant ones.
>
> And then in came GSCID. GSCID changed the whole dynamic. […] That whole concept was, uhm, top-operating special ratings areas, I think they'd found it from the American system. Your businesses, it's usually in a business zone that is degenerating, you get your money, and you top up security services, cleansing, beautification, and social welfare type of thing. So GSCID came in. GSCID and the RMCA then formed bonding. […] There became this, like, powerful bond. Like, the meetings […] then moved to the GSCID offices.

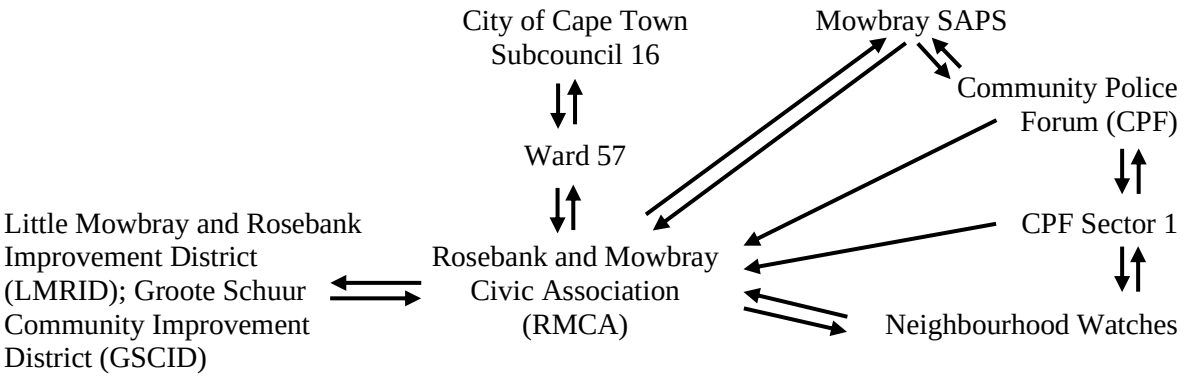
On its website, the Groote Schuur Community Improvement District (GSCID, pronounced *jeesid*) currently describes itself like this:

> The GSCID in partnership with UCT, commercial and educational institutions in the area, aims to create a safer, cleaner and rejuvenated environment for all by providing 'top up' services to those provided by the City of Cape Town (CCT). (Groote Schuur Community Improvement District 2020)

Its stated vision is to "improve its public environment to make it a sought after, attractive and pleasant destination in which to live, work and shop", and its stated mission is to "create a partnership between UCT, the Groote Schuur Community, and the City of Cape Town, to improve and upgrade the public environment for the benefit of all" (Groote Schuur Community Improvement District 2020). For a normal resident such as myself, GSCID is visible mainly through its uniformed security patrol cars which supplement SAPS.

In about 2012, some of the residents in the GSCID/RMCA network decided to start a Special Ratings Area (SRA) in Rosebank and Little Mowbray, because, as Tessa explained, of an increase in crime. This was the start of LMRID (pronounced *limrid*), the Little Mowbray and Rosebank Improvement District. In an SRA, a special rate is imposed on residents which is added to the municipal rates every month to be used for the community by a non-profit organisation established for the purpose. LMRID was created to fill this role. Like GSCID in upper Mowbray, LMRID patrols the streets of Little Mowbray and Rosebank with uniformed cars, supplementing SAPS, Fidelity ADT, and the Rosebank Neighbourhood Watch. Together they keep the area very well patrolled indeed.

Figure 5. **The institutional landscape of Rosebank and Mowbray,** from the perspective of the Rosebank and Mowbray Civic Association (RMCA). Arrows indicate direction of reporting.



After many informal conversations with Tessa, Elize, and my fellow members of the Management Committee (abbreviated MC, formerly known as the Executive Committee) of the RMCA, it gradually became clear to me that the community of Rosebank and Mowbray is somewhat divided on the issue of LMRID. One segment – which includes most of the RMCA MC – finds LMRID to be an important and efficient supplement to local law enforcement and other community organisations. The other segment resents being forced to pay for services which they do not feel are needed in the community, as crime has been very low, policing has been good, and those who want private security already have it. Additional issues have also been raised, such as the problematic nature of keeping homeless people out of the neighbourhoods, the ubiquitous "securitisation" of the whole area, the outsourcing of cleaning work to a company that pays its employees very low wages, and the fact that the Rosebank Neighbourhood Watch bicycle patrol was dismantled without consulting the community. It seems to have become an emotional issue among the engaged parties, and those who are against the SRA and LMRID are *very* much against it. To my knowledge, however, the LMRID issue has never been brought up within the local civic institutional framework during my fieldwork, possibly because the opponents view their cause as lost.

The RMCA

Besides GSCID and LMRID, one of the most central institutions in the Rosebank and Mowbray communities is the Rosebank and Mowbray Civic Association (RMCA). This is by far the community institution I know best. I put myself up for the position of Secretary of the RMCA at the suggestion of a friend who was already active in the Association, and I was duly co-opted

in August 2018. At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 23 October 2018, I was formally elected as a Management Committee member. I remained Secretary for a full one-year term. The job consisted of managing ingoing and outgoing correspondence as well as taking minutes at the monthly Management Committee meetings and the yearly AGM. I saw the post both as an opportunity to learn about my field-site and as a way of giving back to the community where I was living.

The RMCA is an arena where residents of Rosebank and Mowbray can voice their opinions about local issues, raise concerns, and discuss various goings-on in the local area. The Association is especially significant as a forum for discussion about proposed construction developments and it oversees a largely autonomous subcommittee called the Rosebank and Mowbray Planning and Aesthetics Committee (RAMPAC). Since the RMCA is directly linked to the city council, it has important lobbying power and real influence over political decision-making. The local Ward Councillor is a regular attendee of RMCA Management Committee meetings, and the Councillor's report is a regular item on the agenda.

In many ways, the RMCA serves as a hub for local civic engagement. Many of the people on the RMCA Management Committee are also involved in other community organisations, either as office-bearers or as grassroots members. For example, the Chairperson of the RMCA during my fieldwork also chaired the Community Police Forum (CPF), which serves as the connection point between the neighbourhood watches, Mowbray SAPS, and the community at large. I had a strong sense from the beginning that there is an "inner circle" which, to a large extent, calls the shots in the Mowbray and Rosebank community. Many of the people who were active in the RMCA during my period as Secretary had been there for many years, some for more than two decades.

I came to notice a common assumption that the RMCA is an organisation for homeowners and ratepayers only. While this was true in the past, non-ratepayers (such as tenants and students) are nowadays considered full members and are welcome to join RMCA meetings and run for Management Committee positions. However, property owners still have significant say within the Association. There also seems to be a strong atmosphere of Whiteness, and specifically WESSA-ness, at the management level of community organisations in Rosebank and Mowbray. When I asked Adam Ciobanu, a civically active White Rosebank resident of foreign origin, whether he felt there is an English-speaker dominance in civic life in the area, he replied "I'd think so yes". Although WESSA office-bearers in South Africa have historically been outnumbered by Afrikaners (Watts 1976: 71), grassroots civic engagement is a long-standing

tradition among WESSAs, stretching back at least to the 1840s (Garson 1976: 24-25). The RMCA itself was founded in or around 1886, and Cecil Rhodes is said to have been a member.

The RMCA and the CPF are both White-dominated, and the working language at their meetings is always English. To my knowledge, during my period as Secretary, the RMCA Management Committee was 12/14 White (86 %) including myself, which is not a very good representation of the actual diversity of the community. As we have seen, according to the latest census data, White people comprise only about one third of the residents in Mowbray (36.11 %) and Rosebank (37.88 %). At my first-ever RMCA meeting in August 2018, one of the active members of the association had invited a young Black man, hoping he would become active, but he ended up being absent from the Association for most of my fieldwork period. My two Xhosa housemates in Upper Durban Road also never ended up becoming active in the Association. In other words, although there is a certain will to make the community organisations more diverse, it has proven difficult to pull it off in practice.

Religion

On the topic of institutions, one important aspect of my field-site is the relative inconspicuousness of religious faith in everyday life, particularly among WESSAs. It took me a very long time to notice this, having myself grown up in a secular environment[44] and being accustomed to the absence or invisibility of religious symbols and practices. One would perhaps assume that religious institutions would play a central part in the communal life of WESSAs in Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch, but this does not seem to be the case. This is especially notable when compared with other groups in South Africa, for instance the Afrikaners, whose identity and communal life was for centuries strongly shaped by the Dutch Reformed Church and its theology (Crapanzano 1985: 101-107; Schutte 1995: 90).

Never once has religion been brought up in my conversations and interviews regarding the topic of WESSA identity. This suggests that WESSA-ness does not have a specific religious component to it, which has also been argued by Butler (1976: 10) and which makes perfect sense considering that WESSAs belong to a variety of faiths and denominations. In my field-site I have encountered WESSAs who are Christian (Catholic and Protestant), Jewish, and

[44] My home country Norway is "often characterised as the world's most secular country", and while around 70 % are members of the Church of Norway, only 2 % of the population regularly attend church. Cf. Christiansen (2018).

nonreligious. Similarly, religion has not generally been brought up during meetings in the RMCA Management Committee or at any other civic meeting I have attended in my field-site. In other words, WESSAs in my field-site seem to maintain a strict separation between religious and civic life, and the community as a whole is not organised around religious institutions. The only public expressions of worship I have experienced in my field-site are the muezzin's daily calls from Masjid Ar-Rashideen mosque in Mowbray, and the polyphonic hymn-singing emanating from the primarily Black-attended churches along Main Road on Sundays.

As a trans woman, I have had mixed experiences with religion in South Africa. While many observant religious people have been nothing but open and welcoming towards me, others have been blatant in their disregard for my personhood. Some have argued that I am being influenced by Satan and that being transgender is against the will of God, and one person even tried to convince me to "convert back" to presenting as male. A young trans man whom I met through the Cape Town LGBTQ+ community told me an especially painful story: He and his cisgender boyfriend were given an ultimatum by the boyfriend's father, on biblical grounds similar to the ones mentioned above. If they did not break up the relationship by a certain date, the father would cut off all financial support for his son – which is what eventually happened.

Stories like these are not uncommon in South Africa. There have also been violent attacks against queer spaces in Cape Town (Igual 2018), and based on my own and other people's experiences with queerphobic attitudes among fundamentalist religious believers, I have generally gravitated away from religious life and houses of worship in order to preserve my own physical safety and mental and emotional well-being. Although this does not seem to have affected my project much or skewed my data material in any significant way, there may still be valuable insights to be gained by conducting a closer study of WESSA religious life in the Southern Suburbs. This, however, is a task for other ethnographers.

The "securitisation" of the suburbs

It seemed to me during my first stay in Cape Town in 2017 that many Whites lived a willingly self-segregated, "bubble-like" existence, deliberately closing their eyes to the extreme racialized inequalities still permeating the city. The more affluent inhabitants of suburban Cape Town give the additional impression of actively separate themselves from the world around them not just in mental and emotional ways, but also physically (cf. Ueland 2012: 51-52; Junck 2016: 31). This manifests through a strict structuring and division of geographical space by

means of high concrete walls, barbed wire, electric fences, and "armed response" signs. It is done in the name of security – a legitimate concern in a country that has some of the highest crime rates in the world – but as I will show in this section, it comes at the cost of interaction with people of other socio-economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Elize's property, my home in Rosebank, was the only house on our street which did *not* have walls or gates. This fact made the house rather conspicuous. However, during my entire stay we never had a single incident of crime on the property. Elize is a trained *sangoma*, a traditional healer, a fact which is well-known in the area and which may have provided a certain amount of protection through respect and awe. Elize herself believes that the lack of crime is due to her general open attitude:

> Of course the safety here may not be linked to sangoma (who knows?) but to the fact that I protect by openness, in stead of closeness.
>
> That is then by honesty, realism iso royalty, open engagement, which can also be politically incorrect, in recognition that political correctness is just another damn wall. (WhatsApp 14 September 2019)

All around us, the general tendency seems to be towards *more* walls and barriers. My interlocutor Emily Armstrong, who is originally from Australia but has lived in Rondebosch for many years, observes that

> in our neighbourhood, I've watched the fences get higher. Everyone is now electrifying their fences. And in fact, we might be one of the few ones on our road that *isn't.* […] I've watched other houses become more and more fortified, so now ours is potentially… attractive to break into.

As Emily's remark illustrates, securitisation is not just an issue for each individual homeowner or family; it is a community issue in which the actions of some (in this case, those who are electrifying their fences) are seen as interlinked with the status of others (in this case, Emily, who perceives her home to be more vulnerable to break-ins as her home is relatively more accessible). Every addition to the security measures protecting an individual property – every wall, electrified fence, or alarm system that is set up – thus ends up contributing to the overall spiralling trend of increased securitisation in the neighbourhood as a whole.

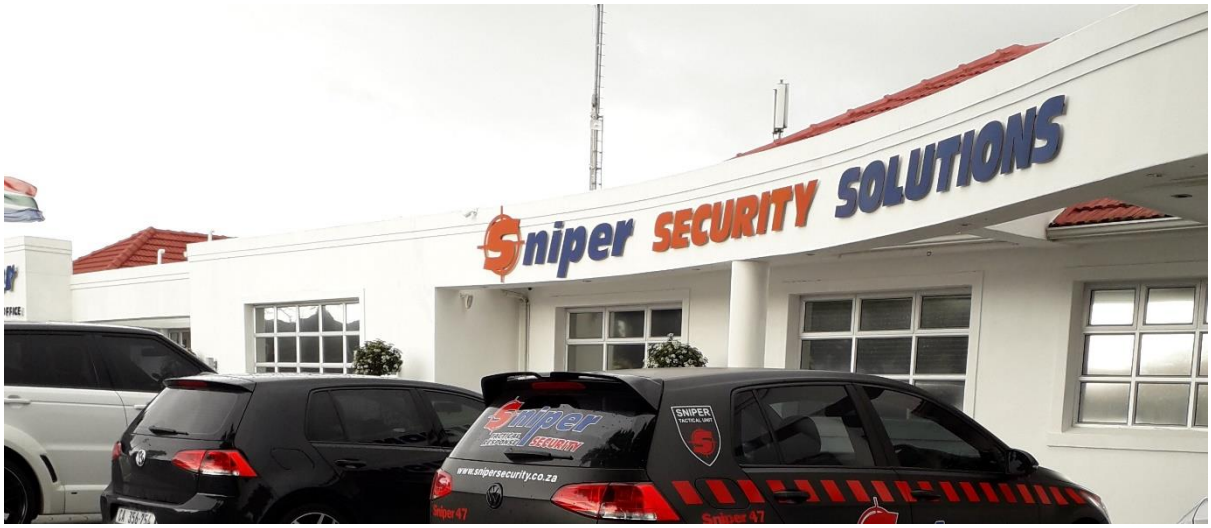


Figure 6. *Security firms. Many of the security companies operating in my field-site have names that signal aggression.*

Figure 7. *LMRID is watching. Corner of Pillans Road and Campground Road, Rosebank.*

The crime situation in Rosebank and Mowbray

At the Mowbray Community Police Forum (CPF) Sector 1 sub-forum meeting held at the Mowbray Police Station on 9 April 2019, at which I was present,[45] a Mowbray SAPS sergeant reported a total of 135 crime cases in the whole precinct, noting that "Woodstock is probably 800 or 1500 or something like that", and that "You're lucky you don't have informal settlements [in the Mowbray/Rosebank area]". There had been 21 thefts since last meeting, 14 out of motor vehicles. There had been 5 cases reported of malicious damage to property, one in Long Street and one in Durban Road. Of robberies in the precinct as a whole, there had been 7 common robberies, 5 aggravated robberies (robberies with a weapon other than a firearm) and 2 armed robberies (with firearm). 5 cars had been stolen in the precinct, and there had been 2 house robberies. Finally, it was reported that whereas there had only been 8 house breakings in the precinct in all of 2018, there had already been 19 in 2019 by 9 April.

At the all-CPF meeting held at Mowbray Police Station on 13 May 2019, at which I was also present, Mowbray SAPS reported that their biggest concern was robbery, with the Station Commander referencing two incidents where armed robbers had made their way into properties. The LMRID representative reported a relatively quiet period with "house break-ins and the odd theft, but 'relatively restrained within the community'". A community member reported on two dramatic muggings which he had witnessed near the subway in Alma Road. Some of the riskiest areas in Mowbray and Rosebank in terms of muggings have been the subways,[46] especially the one in Alma Road, which was brought up several times at RMCA meetings. The victims have often been UCT students.

All in all, while there is definitely a crime risk in Mowbray and Rosebank, during most of my fieldwork the incidence of crime was significantly lower than in neighbouring precincts such as Woodstock. A recurrent problem throughout my fieldwork period was a chronic understaffing of Mowbray SAPS. The fact that crime in Mowbray and Rosebank is generally at a stably low level has meant that the government has not considered it necessary to allocate further resources to our area.[47]

[45] CPF and sub-forum meetings are public meetings.
[46] The South African (and British) term for a pedestrian underpass, e.g. beneath a railway line. "Subways" in the sense of underground railways do not exist in South Africa.
[47] Cf. minutes of the RMCA MC meeting on 11 September 2019. The issue was also the subject of a Southern Suburbs Tatler article (Wentzel 2019).

Security and racial profiling

Early in my fieldwork, I was added to a community "alert" group on WhatsApp. I was added to the group as a member of the community and not as a researcher, and I did not specifically ask for informed consent to use quotes from the group in my research. For this reason, I will anonymise the group completely, and I will not even mention which suburb it covers.

The WhatsApp group helps the community keep each other informed about the comings and goings of individuals who are known to cause havoc in the area, for example known drug addicts, persons who are known to harass people on the street while drunk, persons who scream and shout in the streets, or persons who masturbate in public. During my fieldwork there have been several incidents where the WhatsApp group has helped SAPS catch criminals, sometimes in the very act of running away from the scene. It is thus clear to me that groups like this have done a lot to keep communities *alert,* to solve crimes, and to deter potential criminals.

The group does, however, have a problematic side: At no point during my fieldwork have I seen anyone flag a White person as suspicious. It is always a "young coloured homeless male" (30 November 2018), a "bravo" (radio phonetics for "B" meaning Black, 18 January 2019), an "African male" (22 January), or a "suspicious African male sitting in bench [in a certain park] […] Well dressed." (26 January).[48] I myself have often spent time walking in and around the *very same park* mentioned above, even sitting down on a bench doing nothing. Nobody asked me what I was doing there, and I was never the subject of a discussion on WhatsApp. It soon became evident to me that skin colour has a lot to do with who is seen as suspicious (cf. Ueland 2012: 57), and that what the group is doing is arguably a form of racial profiling. Emily Armstrong has noticed the same tendency in *her* local WhatsApp group too:

> EMILY: *I* deliberately stay off any of those neighbourhood watch groups, but my partner is… but he's also a security officer, it's his job, he's just wired that way. But he said… he doesn't tell me certain things, 'cause he knows I would get really, really angry. But he says every second WhatsApp message is… there's a suspicious-looking man on such and such a road.
>
> ME: And the man is not usually White?
>
> EMILY: No. (Laughs) No, it's never White.
>
> […]

[48] These examples are drawn from a specific period in time and are meant as an illustration, not as a comprehensive overview of what was said in the group during my fieldwork.

EMILY: *I* think it's another form of exclusion. Especially in terms of hiding… White fears. Ehm… So… I think the WhatsApp groups becomes, yeah, it becomes something like, well, here goes a person that I'm interpreting as suspicious, and I need to go and tell everybody else. And then somehow everybody's on high alert.

[…]

Look, my problem with the neighbourhood watch guys is they target certain people. And the one example I had was… my youngest daughter had… eeh, a little friend, Tadiwa, who was originally from Zimbabwe. And she was at our house for a playdate, and her aunt came to pick her up. And… before I could even answer the door, the doorbell… and I walked out, and ADT was sitting there, talking to her. And I was just so embarrassed. And… I actually… I actually deliberately gave her a hug. […] I guess what I was trying to show to the… the ADT guys is… she is so welcome in this neighbourhood, what are you doing? And I actually looked at them and said, "What are you doing?" And afterwards I talked to her and I said, you know, "What's going on?" And they said, "They wanted to know why I was here". Now, at that point in time, she drove a vehicle that was better than mine, because she was a lawyer, she was well-dressed, uhm, *I* looked like the slob. And I was really, really horrified because if you're going to profile people, she's not someone whom I thought should have been profiled. She was well-dressed, I mean, maybe it runs under the guys that anyone can potentially rob your house whether they're well-dressed or not. As long as they're Black then they're suspicious. I don't know. But that was one incident where I was just… I was really, really embarrassed. For being White.

At one point, on 11 October 2019, someone in the WhatsApp group raised an "Orange alert", flagging "2 Charlie Male characters" ("Charlie" being radio phonetics for "C" meaning Coloured) in a certain street as suspicious, apparently for no other reason than the fact that they were Coloured and "wearing caps & backpacks". It turned out that the two men were actually there on legitimate business, working for a local homeowner who wrote on the group vouching for them.

The racial profiling adds to my general feeling that securitisation – whatever its merits – often ends up having the effect of keeping non-White people out of predominantly White spaces. The same phenomenon has been observed by Junck (2016: 19, 30) in the suburb of Observatory, immediately north of my field-site, and Steyn has argued that "[t]he race/crime link is a mainstay of white identity here [in South Africa], as elsewhere" (Steyn 2003: 189). I am reminded of the fear of racialised Others illustrated through Marlene van Niekerk's short story *Labour* (2004), and I am furthermore reminded of Bell's observation from the early 1990s that "[elderly Mowbray residents felt] 'blacks' were criminal, and as increasing numbers of 'blacks'

were now residing in Mowbray, they felt especially threatened" (Bell 1993: 195). Even today, some of the older residents of Mowbray and Rosebank apparently associate Blackness with crime and disorderliness. As Tessa Ford tells me,

> I think they just want it to be *exclusive.* And, uhm, exclusively White. And […] I'm incredibly pleased to see that more and more kids from the Flats are coming and taking ownership of this public-owner space. Because it *was* regarded as very much a White area.

Security and insecurity

Among the residents, the high walls and fences are an obstacle to interaction. It is something that the residents themselves are very much aware of, as real estate agent Tracy Turner explains:

> ME: So what I felt living in Upper Durban Road with a- in a house that didn't really have any gardens or fences to speak of… I mean, there was a lot of interaction with very different people. And that's something I don't see at all in Rosebank. Or at least not that much.
>
> TRACY: So in… so in most South African suburbs, even in Johannesburg where they're fairly diverse, people don't… if you've got a fence, or a wall, that's it. You just… it's… *that* forces you not to… engage with each other.
>
> ME: A physical barrier, yeah?
>
> TRACY: 'Cause there's a physical barrier, that's the only reason. And it's all to do with security.

It seems that some suburban residents find the lack of social interaction and the increased isolation to be a fair price to pay for increased physical security.

> TRACY: So if you've been hijacked, and had a home invasion, which most of us have, ehm, you become very security-conscious, 'cause you become quite terrified.
>
> ME: Obviously.
>
> TRACY: So, unfortunately you're forced to do it. You're left to go… or you can go live in Swellendam, you can go live in Ceres, and you've got no problem. But the minute you're close to the city… um, and where there are people who haven't got jobs, and it's got worse in the last… twelve years, but it's because of what's happened with the government, I mean… it's just no… there's no drive to help people get jobs, from the current government of the day. So… And you can see it's got worse. Yeah, so you're forced to, you're forced to put security into your homes. Young families who are coming to see properties, no matter who they are, where they come from, what colour they are, if they cannot secure that home, they don't buy it.
>
> ME. Exactly.

TRACY: They're not interested.

ME: And then it becomes a vicious cycle in terms of… interaction.

TRACY: Everybody. Yeah.

ME: Exactly. So… No, I just… I just feel it's sad.

TRACY: It's very sad. We would all love to not have to live like that.

(Interview 1 August 2019)

The increased securitisation and fortification of homes and neighbourhoods is seen as both a problem in and of itself (because it diminishes people's quality of life) as well as a symptom of a deeper problem (crime – which, of course, has its own causes). Within my field-site there is a spectrum of ways to look at the issue, with two extremes: Like Tracy, one might focus on the crime itself, emphasising poor, unemployed people as the problem and blaming the government for not creating enough jobs. Alternatively, like Emily Armstrong, one might see the problem as rooted in the attitudes of the wealthy suburban residents. It seems to me that both angles have a certain merit to them, and that they address two different sides of the problem. The unemployment rate in South Africa is severe (it reached an 11-year high in October 2019 at 29.1 % (Statistics South Africa, 2019b; Omarjee 2019; White 2019)), and although unemployed people do not automatically become criminals, *some* might be driven to commit unlawful acts out of desperation. On the other hand, in a country like South Africa with its Apartheid history and still sharp social divisions, it would probably be unrealistic to assume that suburbanites' attitudes towards crime – and their ideas of how to spot a criminal – would be completely unaffected by old stereotypes related to race and class. Some of the fears may also be rooted in simple ignorance stemming from living isolated, fortified lives. Emily gives an example:

> EMILY: I remember [my partner's] mom saying, "Oh my word, Emily, you would *never* let your child walk home." And I'm like, "Why not?" "Ouff, Emily, all those paedophiles out there, you know, children are getting kidnapped!" And I'm like, "But… not little White children in the suburbs of Rondebosch. *They're* not getting kidnapped." Like… I don't understand the ways in which a situation in one area is then reproduced in another, without any kind of critical thinking. Little White kids are not being snatched from Rondebosch.

Gang violence in the Cape Flats is indeed a huge problem, and there were times during my fieldwork when people were killed more or less every day in certain areas. The situation for the people living in these areas – and I have discussed the topic with some of them – is often very difficult. However, these are, by and large, localised issues within specific townships and

neighbourhoods. A serious spike in crime in my field-site in August 2019 was said to be largely due to spill-over from areas further east due to a government crackdown on the Cape Flats, where military forces had been deployed to fight crime (BusinessTech 2019). The discourse of danger in my field-site is reminiscent of Junck's observation that the "constant and endless retelling of particular stories become the 'measure of a traumatized citizenry transcending its differences'" (Junck 2016: 13, citing Comaroff and Comaroff), and that "[h]igh levels of fear and notions of insecurity cannot always be adequately explained by measures of exposure to risk" (Junck 2016: 30).

It is important to underscore that the fear itself is not without reason. In late August 2019, towards the end of my fieldwork, 19-year-old UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana was raped and murdered (Lyster 2019) in a post office in Claremont, more or less within walking distance from my home in Rosebank. The murderer was an employee at the post office, a stranger to Uyinene. The tragedy felt close for everyone at UCT, especially for women and those of us who lived near the scene of the crime. After all, although atrocities of such magnitude will not happen to *everyone,* the randomness of Uyinene's murder tells us that it could happen to *anyone.* Increased securitisation, then, is an understandable response. The problem is that the *ways* in which security measures are designed and deployed in my field-site often end up doing more harm than good. It is a security paradigm which creates isolation and *in*security among residents, and by consistently framing non-White people as suspicious, it perpetuates race and class segregation.

As one of the seemingly few White people in Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch who regularly goes for long walks in the local area, I have seen and felt some sides of the security paradigm that most White and affluent Capetonians are probably less likely to experience. Walking along Strubens Road from Mowbray to Observatory, for example, can be truly scary, as many of the homeowners keep large dogs who tend to bark aggressively at any passer-by. It makes me feel like a trespasser even though I am walking on a public road, and as someone who has had several unpleasant run-ins with aggressive dogs earlier in my life, it makes me worry about my physical safety. "Security", then, is not always simply a matter of keeping oneself secure within one's own property; it can also send a very strong message of hostility and *in*security to people on the outside. In Cape Town's Southern Suburbs, it is less wealthy people and people of colour who bear the brunt of this, since they comprise the majority of pedestrians. In the following, I look more closely at the worldviews informing urban

architecture in Cape Town, and some of the ways in which social interaction is shaped by the aesthetics and layout of the built environment.

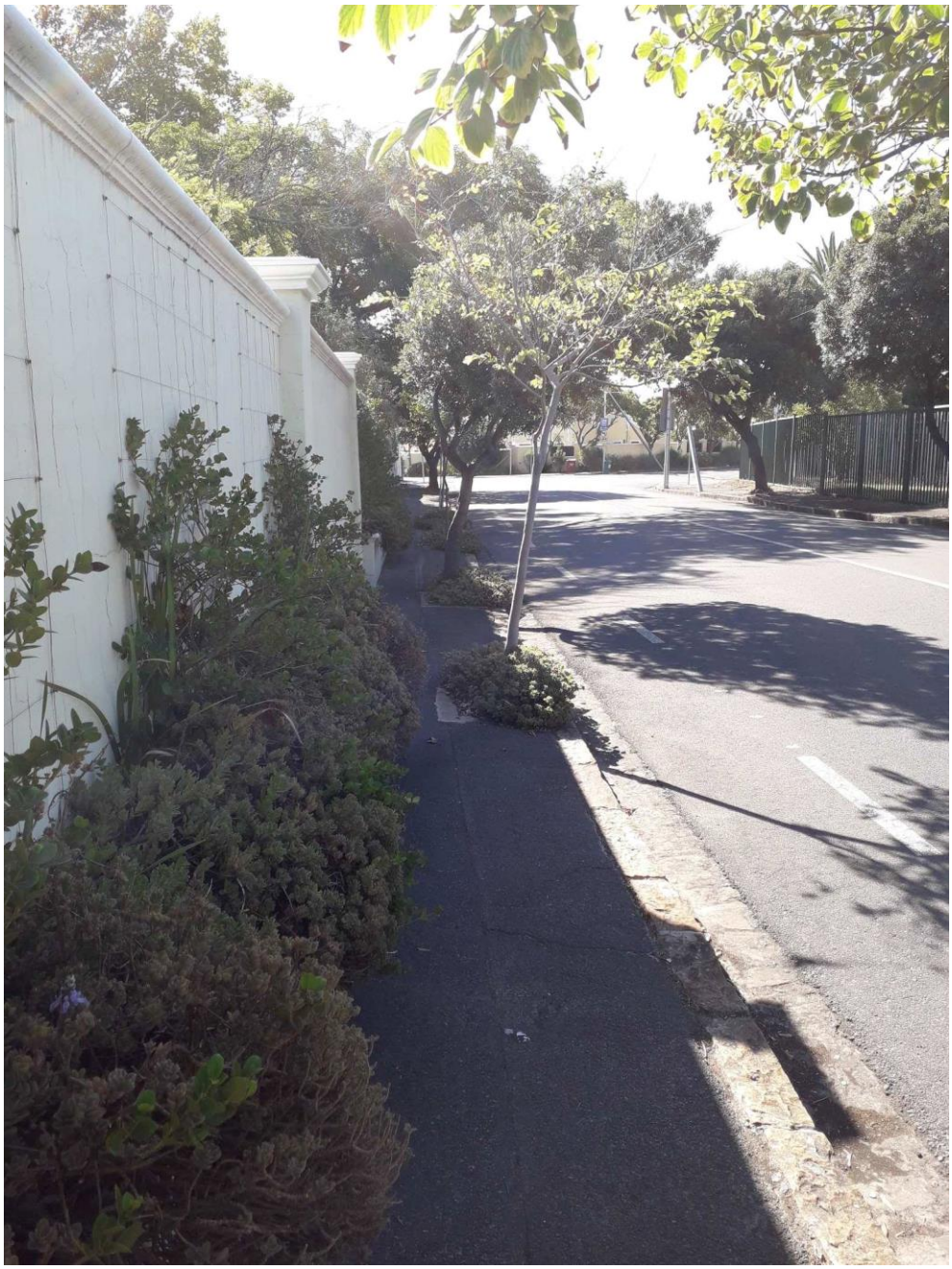


Figure 8. *Typical architecture in Rosebank (Campground Road): High walls and fences, and a sidewalk that seems to be designed for decoration rather than functionality.*

Maintaining Europe in Africa

For Christmas 2018, I was visited by my mother, stepfather, and younger brother. We stayed together for two weeks in a flat in Green Point, not too far from the V&A Waterfront, where we spent considerable time. One of the main shopping centres on the Waterfront is called Victoria Wharf, and the first time I went there was with my family. The experience felt strange to me, as I noted in my fieldnotes on 31 December 2018:

> As for the place I've been told is the top tourist site not only in CT but in the whole of SA – the V&A Waterfront – it is a nice place in many ways, but essentially a European style shopping and dining area which is not too dissimilar from what one might find in a large Euro/American city. As my mother said, "it's the place that looks the most like what we've got at home". Interestingly from a WESSA perspective, several V&A landmarks are distinctively British, such as the Cape Wheel (similar to the London Eye), the Hamley's toy store (Hamley's is a famous London store), as well as the very name V&A itself, which refers to Queen Victoria and her son Alfred. The Victoria Wharf does not hide its queenly connection, and, with its high vaulted ceiling, brick walls and iron reinforcements, reminds me almost of a British railway station. Not to forget the red double-decker tourist buses which look like London buses. It seems as if the area that Cape Town most wants to show off to tourists is also one of the most unapologetically British areas of the city!
>
> The signs at Victoria Wharf are completely in English, reinforcing the British impression.
>
> As I sit at a café on the ground floor of Victoria Wharf, I look up and notice "The Old'e English Shaving Shop" run by "Mr Cobbs the Barber".
>
> "AmericanSwiss" jewellery shop... there is an English feeling, but also a more generalized "international" feeling to this Wharf. Feels like a hyperspace akin to an airport.

The last few sentences reveal something important. "British" can mean many things, as the British Isles contain several nations, countries, and regions with distinct histories, cultures, languages, and traditions. Even though I tended to use the word "British" in my fieldnotes, the symbols I noticed around the Waterfront evoked not just the British Isles, but specifically the United Kingdom's largest and most powerful constituent country: *England.*

I asked my mother how she would describe the V&A Waterfront in one word.

> She said: "It's a place for people with a lot of money, where they come to meet like-minded people and experience things they are used to". And "If you want to see Africa, you can't hang around here. Coming here doesn't challenge the views of any Westerner". My stepfather said

> "It's a very boring place to be if what you want is to experience South Africa". (I've translated their comments from Norwegian to English.)
>
> My mother especially reacted – as we all did – to the lavish European-style Xmas decorations. Baubles, glitter, Xmas trees and even reindeer! The "Out of Africa" souvenir shop had reindeer on display, and a larger-than-life-size glass bead statue of Nelson Mandela was standing next to a lavishly decorated plastic Xmas tree with colourful flashing lights.

The reindeer felt like a faint echo of my home country; I spent part of my early childhood in a Sámi reindeer-herding area in Finnmark in the extreme north of Norway, where these animals are a regular sight. We soon got even more reminders that the European atmosphere of the Waterfront can indeed assume guises other than the ubiquitous Britishness or Englishness:

> A shop in Alfred Mall is called "Solveig Cape Town". Solveig is a Norwegian name (common enough in Norway, but a very specifically Norwegian name), and when we asked, my mother and I were told that the founder was born of Norwegian parents. Even Norwegianness can be rebranded as "authentically Cape Town", which I find very interesting!

The V&A Waterfront is a central tourist attraction in Cape Town and South Africa as a whole. Photos of the Waterfront are in every Cape Town tourist brochure, and aerial photographs of the city often face east or south-east, giving a prominent view of the Waterfront and Cape Town Stadium, the football stadium built for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This, then, is apparently the Cape Town that promoters want tourists to see. Conversely, I remember reading a guidebook to Cape Town before my first visit in 2017, curious about the famous township of Khayelitsha where I was to do my internship. To my shock and surprise, I found that the name Khayelitsha was not mentioned once in the entire book.

On 2 January 2019, a couple of hours after my family had boarded their flight back home to Norway, I went to watch the Tweede Nuwe Jaar parade in the city centre. Tweede Nuwe Jaar, meaning Second New Year, has its roots in Cape slavery; while slaves had to work on New Year's Day itself, they were given the day off on 2 January to have their own "second" New Year's celebrations. The event is marked by an enormous parade of minstrel groups known as Kaapse Klopse, locally rooted in specific suburbs and townships, who "don colourful suits, face-paint, hats, and parasols [and play] brass instruments and drums, in the traditional ghoema musical style" (Cape Town Travel 2020). As I was watching the parade, I made some reflections:

> Many roads in the city are closed, a lot of people are camped out in tents along the roads. Almost all Coloured and Black, although there are whites they are quite few. I hear some whites

> speaking Afrikaans and others speaking French and Swedish. So there are at least a few tourists around. I try to google for info about the parade schedule, but it is literally impossible to find anything other than lists of which streets are closed and which bus lines are not operating.
>
> It looks like the city of CT is not at all trying to promote this event to tourists, which is very interesting and also strange, considering the historically significant and peculiarly Capetonian nature of the celebration. I think of the V&A Waterfront, which is highly promoted, and the fact that while the V&A has a very European feel to it, the Tweede Nuwe Jaar is specifically Cape Coloured. It feels as if the CT tourism promoters care very little about telling the world about the city's non-white / slave heritage?
>
> I stand in Wale Street, and St George's Mall just a block away is full of white tourists. I find it all very strange.
>
> Waterfront = overhyped. Tweede Nuwe Jaar = underhyped.

A couple of months after Tweede Nuwe Jaar, on 19 February 2019, I chanced to meet a visiting priest from Norway[49] who expressed his surprise at how much Cape Town resembled Sydney in Australia, and how the place made him feel like he wasn't in Africa at all. Another Norwegian, who had stayed in Cape Town for four years, tried to tell him that Cape Town is more diverse than just the CBD, and that the city is in fact on the African continent, but the priest still wasn't convinced: "It's not *Africa*, is it?" Even one of my South African interlocutors – a WESSA woman from Johannesburg who had lived in Cape Town for four years – said that she found it "quite fascinating to think that we live in Africa", especially when you are surrounded by places that are "completely English. Behaviour and everything".

Curious juxtapositions of Europeanness and Africanness are part and parcel of Cape Town's urban and suburban landscapes. It often seems to me as if someone has brought random bits and pieces of Britain and the Netherlands to the slopes of Table Mountain and placed them around the area in a rather haphazard fashion. Indeed, in the words of Francis Nyamnjoh (personal communication 2 September 2019), the European colonisers "travelled with their worlds", bringing with them their aesthetics, building techniques, and ways of structuring their environment.

However, as Crapanzano says about his own field-site: "For me the mountains were a constant reminder that despite its declared Europeanness, the valley is very much an African valley" (Crapanzano 1985: 14). I feel the same way about Cape Town. Table Mountain itself, the ever-

[49] He was working with the Norwegian Church Abroad, which collaborates closely with the Norwegian student association ANSA, and I met him at an ANSA meeting.

looming Huri‡oaxa which dominates the skyline no matter where you are in the city or its suburbs, always makes me think of the city's deep Khoi history and the first colonial sailors for whom the mountain served as a navigational landmark. Apart from this backdrops, a plethora of small impressions abound to remind us that we are indeed in Africa: Everyday things such as the minibus taxis, the tuck shops, the plants and trees along the roads and in the parks, the music sounding from passing cars, the smell of certain types of food being cooked, the very faces of the people on the streets, a South African flag, or the heads of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela painted on the sides of high-rise buildings. Last but not least, one is constantly in the presence of indigenous African languages – be it isiXhosa, chiShona, Lingala, or others – which, although not structurally dominant in my field-site, are always there if you just know when to stop and listen.

South African author Rian Malan once said that "my African childhood […] wasn't really African at all. It was a more or less generically Western childhood unfolding in generic white suburbs" (Malan, cited in Steyn 2003: 4). Such statements should not be taken as gospel truth, but should be read against the backdrop of specifically South African *imaginaries* and *mythologies* of life in "the West" – a concept which in itself is a problematic generalisation. I sometimes reflect that if the predominantly White suburbs of South Africa had been identical copies of Europe, I would never have noticed the things that made me embark on this study in the first place.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism refers to a particular European imaginary and presentation of the so-called "Orient" (Said 1978). Drawing on Said's work, James Carrier defines *Occidentalism* as "the essentialistic rendering of the West by Westerners" (Carrier 1992: 199). The lens through which Europe and "the West" is viewed in South Africa – by South Africans and visitors alike – seem to contain a significant dose of Occidentalist imaginaries, and reminds me of the argument that "diasporic groups construct the homeland in ways different from the people of the homelands themselves – often in purist, even racist and reactionary terms" (Mishra 1996, cited in Steyn 2003: 33). According to Narayan, "[t]he colonial self-portrait of 'Western culture' had […] only a faint resemblance to the moral, political, and cultural values that *actually pervaded* life in Western societies" (Narayan 1998: 89). My observations support Narayan's argument. Indeed, Cape Town seems to have much in common with what Baas, with reference to colonial Namibia, calls "dreamworlds". Baas argues that "[t]he collapse of the 'real' and the fictional creates a new space in which desires, fears and, most importantly, dreams can find a home", which in the case of Namibia (and perhaps

Cape Town) were "*white* dreams" which ended up having very "real consequences for the people" (Baas 2019: 15). Building on Baas' thinking, I would argue that just as "[t]he metropole […] serves as an engine supplying the theoretical framework creating the *imagined* colony" (p. 25), the inverse seems to be equally true: Colonial realities contribute to the construction of the imagined metropole, a construction based on fantasies of purity and social distancing through a bounded, *complete* European homeland drawn upon by Europeans and their descendants as a source of *jujus* of self-activation and self-extension in their encounters and relationships with others.

Furthermore, it is all too easy for a tourist in Cape Town to think of the city's allegedly European atmosphere as a universal given, as something that just *is*, whereas in reality it is carefully cultivated (cf. Besteman 2008: 42) and painstakingly maintained (while aspects perceived as non-European are silenced, as in the case of Tweede Nuwe Jaar or Khayelitsha). Nowhere is this more evident than in my field-site in the Southern Suburbs. The quaint little gardens of Strubens Road in Mowbray need angry guard dogs to keep them safe; the spacious villas of lower Rosebank are hidden almost completely from view behind their painted concrete walls with disconcerting warning signs on them. The fact that such plots of (allegedly) European-style peace and quiet are surrounded by fortifications that embody the very antithesis of what they are supposed to protect, is a discrepancy which continues to strike me every time I walk through the residential areas of Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch. There is something about these areas that seems out of place, or, in the words of my Norwegian friend Tobias (newly arrived in Cape Town for his semester abroad), "like an organ transplanted into a body where it doesn't belong".[50]

The more energy and effort it takes to maintain a certain environment, the more artificial that environment starts to look and feel. If it takes walls, electric fences and private security companies to maintain a semblance of peaceful, small-town Englishness in the suburbs of Cape Town, then this Englishness begins to seem somewhat contrived. The "suburban" atmosphere of the Southern Suburbs does start feeling like a transplanted reality. Keeping in mind the history of the country and the area, it might perhaps not be too much of a stretch to call it – even today – a *colonial* reality. Indeed, the area and the people who inhabit it has been described as "colonial" by several of my interlocutors, including one who works in the local real estate business. By insisting on holding on to "exclusive" styles of living – and an image of what a

[50] Informal conversation 27 February 2019.

complete European or White existence is supposed to look like – it may be argued that wealthy (White) Capetonians themselves create the need for "security" and thus contribute to perpetuating the class- and race-based spatial segregation that permeates the city.

Keeping Africa at bay

A lot of the "whitening up" of the Southern Suburbs – the actual work of policing neighbourhoods and maintaining their European outer veneer – is often done by marginalised people of colour, ironically the very same types of people who are often seen as suspicious by suburban dwellers. Security guards and car guards, for example, are usually Black or Coloured men from the Cape Flats townships. The gardener whom a local WESSA resident employed in July 2019 to clear away undergrowth in the Rosebank village green in order to deter homeless people from sleeping there, was a Black man who did not look particularly well-to-do. In short, suburban residents employ marginalised people to keep other marginalised people out of suburban spaces (cf. similar observations in Junck 2016: 64).

The ubiquitous presence in my field-site of security guards, gardeners, and domestic workers (with houseworkers/cleaners usually called "maids" and childminders usually called "nannies") in and around wealthy households was one of the main culture shocks for me when I first came to Cape Town. The workers in question are invariably Black or Coloured, and the fact that many of them work in White households adds a racial component to the already deep class divide between employee and employer (cf. Gaitskell et al. 1983; Schutte 1995: 181-185). Also, while the employers are not always White, I have never seen a White person employed in the position of a domestic worker or manual labourer. Regardless of how philanthropic one's motives may be for employing someone from an economically disadvantaged background, the strong correlations of White=boss and Black=labourer contributes to perpetuating racialised social hierarchies on the ground, and making these hierarchies seem natural and inevitable, even if this is not explicitly intended (cf. McKaiser 2014: 10; Ueland 2012: 53). Furthermore, domestic workers have typically been "poorly remunerated" and have had little power in the negotiation of wages (Dinkelman & Ranchhod 2010: 9). Although the 2002 implementation of a minimum wage did lead to improvements (p. 31), during my fieldwork I heard of workers still receiving wages barely at subsistence level,[51] which implies that at least some suburban

[51] One worker complained that he was once paid R150 for eight hours' work, which translates to R18.75 per hour. Another acquaintance of mine, who lives in a working-class community which is home to many people who work in suburban homes, told me that workers sometimes get paid as little as R1500 per month. This

employers expect workers and their families to *remain* poor, lower-class and confined to the townships.

The racialised boss/employee distinction is especially evident in the more residential parts of my field-site, such as Rosebank. Seeing a Black person in any part of Rosebank who is not obviously an UCT student, a domestic or manual labourer, a security guard, or a homeless person is so rare that when it happens – when I see a Black adult just going about their business in the suburb on their own terms, just like any other resident – I find myself surprised (and embarrassed at my surprise). On 3 September 2019, I wrote the following in my fieldnotes:

> On Friday (yesterday), I went out for the first time since Monday [after having been ill and bedridden for a week]. I met with [a colleague] at Vida and we talked and worked. On my way home, in Hope Street, I saw a Black woman dressed in a traditional dress and carrying a child on her back. I reflected that this is a very uncommon sight in the Southern Suburbs.

The woman's dress, comprised of printed cloth dominated by the colours blue and yellow, stood out among the subdued greys and browns of residential upper Rosebank. The way the child was wrapped in that very same cloth spoke of cultural habits very different from what one usually sees in my field-site, where babies are not carried but pushed in prams, often by a woman whose skin colour differs from that of the child. The woman in Hope Street was clearly a presence out of the ordinary. Whatever she was doing there, and regardless of whether or not the effect was intentional, she was defying a number of unspoken suburban norms.

Indeed, the presence of indigenous African cultural expressions within the Southern Suburbs is rare, haphazard and seemingly contested. On Saturday 25 May 2019, my landlady Elize had decided to throw a party to celebrate Africa Day and her own birthday. The party was organised on short notice, but Elize had made sure that a notice had been sent out to the local community through the Rosebank Neighbourhood Watch. The turnout was huge; our lawn was full of people, mostly friends – and friends of friends – of Elize. She had invited two highly respected musicians to perform for us, one of them being the famous traditional musician Latozi Mpahleni, known by her clan name Madosini.

An elderly woman (I have seen various dates of birth ranging from 1922 to 1945), Madosini showed surprising vigour as she danced on the makeshift "stage", and her performance on the

translates to R50 per day or R6.25 per hour. For many people earning such low wages, well over half of their earnings would be spent just on getting to and from work, as a taxi ride between the Mowbray Interchange and Khayelitsha Site C costs around R15 each way. The profit that these workers would earn every day – around R20 – would be just enough to buy one cup of americano coffee at a lower-range café in the Southern Suburbs.

uhadi and *umrhubhe* musical bows[52] was amazing. Madosini is also known for playing a third instrument, the jaw harp (known as *isitolotolo* in isiXhosa), an instrument which I myself have been playing for fifteen years in its Norwegian incarnation (*munnharpe*), sometimes performing at larger gatherings just like Madosini. To me, the sounds of Madosini's signature instruments, with their distinct vibrations and overtones, evoke *ubuXhosa*[53] and Norwegianness simultaneously, and serve as a reminder of the common humanity inherent in the art of music.

Before and after the event, Elize and I reflected that Madosini's type of music is probably not heard very often in Rosebank, and we joked about our neighbours who were probably very baffled as to what was going on. I had never before seen such a mixed crowd in Rosebank, in terms of ethnicity, colour, and style. Especially visible was the fact that there were people in all sorts of clothes, including several *sangomas* wearing the traditional beads signifying their status. It was a very pleasant gathering.

The next time I heard about a similar event in my field-site was on the morning of Sunday 11 August 2019, at 10:30 AM, when a resident of upper Mowbray complained on a social community group on WhatsApp about "commotion and constant hooting". It was assumed to be a wedding celebration. One person agreed that the noise-making was "totally selfish", to which the original complainant replied, "So selfish they dancing in the street like a festival and none of them consider other people I feel like calling the authorities". Another person, "W", responded to her by saying "Some kindness can go a long way. Go and wish them well". Another person, "N", responded that although "one always wants to be kind", he felt that "in a residential suburb on a Sunday morning it's a little unreasonable". "N" said that if the residents had received an advance warning, it would have been okay. There was a bit more back and forth, and then the original complainant said that "if it would be in your street you would have a different view trust me". To which "W" responded, "Trust me. I won't. It's time to embrace our different cultures".

These examples suggest that indigenous African cultural expressions may be *tolerated,* but are not necessarily universally *welcomed* in the Southern Suburbs. Before her party in May, Elize gave written notice to the local community in advance. The people who organised the wedding celebration in August apparently had not done this. Would Elize have faced the same kind of negativity if *she* had forgotten to give notice? The reactions to the August celebration suggest

[52] "While the two instruments have a deep-rooted history in Xhosa traditions, Madosini is arguably the only remaining master of playing them" (Magazi 2017).
[53] "Xhosa-ness", the Xhosa culture and way of life.

that indigenous African cultural expressions are seen as alien and intrusive by many residents of the Southern Suburbs, and that their presence – as "guests", so to speak – requires asking "permission" through specific channels. This further bolsters my already strong impression that Black people are seen as "matter out of place" (Douglas 2001 [1966]: 36) in my field-site, and that even though counter-discourses do exist, the suburbs of Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch are in fact spaces of hegemonic Whiteness. The precarious way in which many Black people inhabit my field-site makes the area seem strongly reminiscent of an Apartheid-era White Group Area.

The politics of suburban geographies

There are people who believe that the Western Cape government works *consciously* to maintain race- and class-based spatial segregation. On 21 August 2019, I was made aware of an opinion piece published three days earlier, written by former Democratic Alliance (DA) member Mark Rountree. He argues that former National Party members are taking over the DA and pursuing policies that are having the effect of perpetuating "the National Party's apartheid planning legacy". Rountree mentions that "in some lower income households in Cape Town, as much as 60% of household income is spent on the direct costs of commuting. Poverty, by design." He also bashes the DA for "stall[ing] or stopp[ing]" "all projects promising the provision of affordable housing in former whites-only areas of the city" over the past 10 years. (Rountree 2019).

While I personally find this analysis to be somewhat too conspiratorial to ring true without further supporting documentation, the political neglect lamented by Rountree certainly does seem to affect geographies of inequality in Cape Town. Furthermore, no matter what the politicians' actual intentions are, the fact that their policies can even *seem* like a conscious perpetuation of Apartheid is a grave matter in itself. Put bluntly, it does not make the DA politicians in the Western Cape look good.

Some of my WESSA interlocutors blame Cape Town's social problems not on the DA-led provincial government, but on the *national* government led by the ANC. Tracy Turner, as we have already seen, complains that the current government does not do enough to create jobs. It is likely that both sides of this argument have a point, since overcoming the architectures of Apartheid in the Cape Town area would no doubt require a well-coordinated effort at the national *and* provincial level in terms of both funding and planning. What is rarely mentioned,

however, is the role of community politics and grassroots activism. When residents of suburbs like Mowbray and Rosebank object to proposed housing projects, it shapes the progress of these projects and often ends up reducing their scope. I have seen several examples of this during my period as Secretary of the RMCA. At the RMCA AGM on 23 October 2018, the Chairperson summed up the civic association's sentiments in the following statement:

> Major changes have been happening in development on both the residential and commercial fronts. The civic is concerned that this takes place in a way that does not undermine the ethos of suburbs and does not damage the infrastructure. There seems to be a development juggernaut that enjoys the sanction of the city council; a manic determination to densify at all costs and allow license for untrammelled development. […] We are not against development, but we want *appropriate* development that coexists and complements what should be preserved and sustained.[54]

The big question, which does not seem to have been fully answered yet, is what "appropriate" development would entail and what exactly would be seen as worth preserving. As one RMCA Management Committee member put it, "What would we like to see our neighbourhood look like? […] We must have an approach with a vision for our area, so the developers have to conform to what we want the area to look like."[55] At the time I am writing this, no such vision has been formally proposed, to my knowledge, for either Mowbray or Rosebank.

The suburbs comprising my field-site contain many important historical and natural landmarks including the Rondebosch Common and a number of smaller parks, the Liesbeek River, Mostert's Mill, the Mowbray Town Hall, the Mowbray/Rosebank Fountain, and Rhodes Memorial (remembering, of course, its problematic symbolism as a tribute to Rhodes). One might also add UCT's Upper Campus to the list, and indeed Devil's Peak itself. Some neighbourhoods, like Mowbray's John Street with its colourful cottages, have preserved an atmosphere reminiscent of the famous Bo-Kaap area in the Cape Town city centre. There is much beauty, both natural and architectural, to be enjoyed and preserved in the Southern Suburbs.

However, in a metropolitan area with a housing and transport situation as dire as that of Cape Town, preserving status quo simply for the pleasure and convenience of current suburban homeowners (most of whom are wealthy – at least in relative terms – and many of whom are White), and to the detriment of those (poor, Black and Coloured) people who are forced to

[54] Source: Minutes of the RMCA AGM 23 October 2018.
[55] Source: Minutes of the RMCA Management Committee meeting 13 March 2019.

commute to town from informal settlements on the Cape Flats, seems ethically questionable. Furthermore, and significantly, in suburbs with long histories of White settlement and domination it is a logical necessity that preservationist policies will serve to maintain a colonial European atmosphere – an atmosphere which, as we have seen, may end up alienating those who do not identify with European culture, history, and aesthetics. In short, a preservationist line, if too relentlessly pursued, runs the risk of contributing directly to continuing race- and class-based segregation. This is an issue which a coherent development vision for any Capetonian suburb must, at the very least, acknowledge.

In an area where many houses have very spacious gardens, some even large enough to hold swimming pools, densification might not necessarily be such a bad thing. As my interlocutor Emily Armstrong told me,

> I remember [my daughter] saying, "But mommy, we've got all this garden space, why don't we just let people build their shacks here?"
>
> [I]f the government incentivised me, and gave me the ability to build a modest little house on my property, then I would, I think.

Indeed, the spaciousness of the houses and gardens of the Southern Suburbs stands in sharp contrast to the situation in the townships. On 25 August 2019, I attended a party at the house of an acquaintance in the township of Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay, just outside of Cape Town. I was one of 21 adults and four small children in a shack with a floor area of three by three metres, an area smaller than the average Southern Suburbs kitchen and less than one third of the size of my own cottage in Rosebank.

The development of the Southern Suburbs is a difficult balancing act between preserving the area's historical heritage and natural beauty versus fighting the enduring legacies of Apartheid. No matter where one stands on the issue, it is clear that community residents and civic associations like the RMCA have significant power in deciding the future of Cape Town's suburban geographies. Blame games between the DA and the ANC seem especially meaningless considering that much of the decision-making happens at the grassroots level, independently of party politics.

Language and power

The previous sections have shown how specific policies related to security, aesthetics and urban planning contribute to a general impression of hegemonic Whiteness in my field-site. As time

went by, however, I realised that another important part of the distinctly "English" or "British" atmosphere of the Southern Suburbs is the fact that the English *language* is so dominant in the area, including – and perhaps especially – in the three suburbs comprising my field-site. As I noted in my fieldnotes:

> As I sit at Vida looking out at the hustle and bustle of Rondebosch CBD, I feel I need to note down what I find so very *British* about Rosebank/Rondebosch/Mowbray. Firstly, it is the names of the places and streets. Almost all the streets have English names, and even though almost all the street signs say "Rd/Weg" as a symbolic nod to the Afrikaans-speaking community, many of the street-names only make sense in English, such as "Broad Road" ("Broad Weg", of course, is not proper Afrikaans). The English language is ubiquitous everywhere in South Africa, which gives the whole country a certain "Englishy" feel ([…] Language is *perhaps* the most important of WESSA *jujus*). (Fieldnotes 29 November 2018)

Johnson-Castle observes that "English is not a politically neutral language, although it has become naturalised in many places as such. English came to Africa as a colonial imposition through the power of the British Empire" (Johnson-Castle 2018: 61). Today it is the "Master language" (Johnson-Castle 2018: 47) *par excellence* in South Africa.

In 2007, Prah observed that

> In the decade after Apartheid, what has in fact happened is that the public dominance of English, one of the smallest languages in the country, spoken as a home language by only about 8% of the population, has been strengthened at the expense of all the other languages. (Prah 2007: 16)

This is a very significant and interesting development, and centrally relevant to any study of WESSAs. In what way (or ways) does the dominance of the English language influence, or reflect, the position and self-understanding of WESSAs in contemporary South Africa?

As early as 1985, Crapanzano noted that "The English South Africans are […] conscious of their language in a way that the Australians and Canadians are not. They stress correct pronunciation and usage" (Crapanzano 1985: 38). Fiona Ross elaborates further, pointing out that "South Africans are generally acute in their attention to linguistic codes. Hints carried in tone, gesture, intonation, vocabulary, forms of speech are read as indicative of a person's social rank and put downs consequent on the reading may be cruel" (Ross 2010: 151-152).

Many of the people I've met whose first language is not English have been highly self-conscious about their English accent (cf. McKaiser 2014: 69). Elize Botha, for example, my landlady in Rosebank who has lived in that suburb for many years and speaks fluent English

with only a hint of an Afrikaans accent, says that when she speaks to WESSAs, "it's like they don't hear me". Elize says she finds their facial expressions hard to read, and she often ends up having to "rephrase and repeat". To be sure, I have met people from other parts of South Africa whose experiences have been very different, and Elize herself believes that the attitude she describes might be specific to "the Cape". "This is Rosebank," she says. "Most of the people here are English. They don't even know about Afrikaans."

One of my interlocutors, Thomas Finlayson, illustrated to me how South Africans categorise each other based on accent:

> THOMAS: Somebody can speak perfect English with an Afrikaans accent, but then immediately they are, eh, different from you. Whereas [my Black friend] would speak English with a Black accent, but, like, with a well-off, White-area Black accent. […] And there's far less of an internal, "oh, are we something different", than there would be with somebody who speaks in a very thick, like African or Afrikaans language or accent. […]
>
> So, if somebody opens their mouth, and they have a very thick French accent, like, that's the same thing. It's just further from home, right? So, the only difference between a thick French accent and a thick Xhosa accent is that the guy with the Xhosa accent is from South Africa. But it's still like it's a flag that says we have completely different identities or backgrounds. (Interview 16 March 2019)

My own mother-tongue is Norwegian. Despite the fact that Norwegian and English both belong to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family (Norwegian being a North Germanic language and English being a West Germanic one), their grammar and phonetics differ significantly.[56] Early in my stay in Cape Town, I suffered from an inferiority complex related to the way I expressed myself in English. This was not the first time I had stayed for a longer period in an English-speaking environment, but it had been many years since I had gone to school in the United States or worked in Kenya, and my ten-week-long first stay in Cape Town in 2017 had not been enough to polish my English back to its old shine. I returned in January 2018 with a noticeable Norwegian accent, and I would, on occasion, make grammatical mistakes in my daily speech. My mistakes did not go unnoticed, but during the early phase of my stay I was so embarrassed that I chose not to take detailed notes of the small incidents that happened. Instead I only noted down general thoughts and impressions after the fact, going out

[56] To a South African audience, the difference may be illustrated by the fact that Afrikaans is also a West Germanic language, which makes English historically more closely related to Afrikaans than to Norwegian.

of my way to absolve my South African friends and acquaintances of any guilt in the matter. At times, I would go as far as brushing my impressions off as delusional.

In hindsight, I have reflected that my language issues were my first real confrontation with the primacy of not only Whiteness, but *Englishness* in South Africa – "the pre-eminence of western, *particularly English*, cultural constructions" (Steyn 2003: 124-125; my emphasis). Regardless of my skin colour, my accent immediately marked me as Other (albeit a different kind of Other than, say, a Black South African). By August 2018, after having lived in South Africa for seven months, I had formed an opinion about what was going on:

> People who don't have English as 1st language – like me – are reminded of their accent, people ask them to repeat, etc. But people with English as first language are "allowed" the "luxury" of speaking fast, speaking dialect, almost mumbling. It seems to me that whenever a Brit or WESSA enters a space, it's "their space". Complete confidence, "of course I'm entitled to be here, speak my mind, etc." I feel this strongly because of my own (often) lack of self-esteem and self-confidence.
>
> It makes me speak less, because I feel that there is a judgement about language and articulateness that places me as inferior. And that those who master the "correct" way of talking are seen as "they can do it, why don't you try harder?" I understand the black South Africans who are afraid to take up space, for the same reason… Accent, way of talking, being, body language, etc. I sometimes wish I could put on a "British façade", which would make me seem more serious, smarter, etc. (Fieldnotes 28 August 2018)

When I first moved into the cottage on Upper Durban Road in April 2018, it was something of a relief in terms of the language issues. My housemates Vuyokazi and Lindelwa, whose first language was isiXhosa, did not give me the kind of reactions that I sometimes thought I got from native English-speaking South Africans (and the fact that I noticed this difference suggests that these reactions *did* happen and were not simply figments of my imagination). My housemates and I shared the disadvantage of being outsiders – or, perhaps more accurately, "immigrants" – to English. Indeed, from an intersectionalist perspective which sees privilege and disadvantage as products of "interlocking systems of marginalization" (Stewart 2017: 286) with "dimensions of violence" (Crenshaw 1991: 1242) based on identities like race, class, and gender, it may be argued – as Crenshaw (1991: 1249) has done – that *language* is its own intersectional identity.

By May 2019, I had started worrying that my hearing might be deteriorating. It seemed to me that I had difficulty hearing what people were saying to me, and I had noticed that I often had

to ask people to repeat, especially in settings with background noise or when several people were speaking simultaneously. Having grown up with close family members struggling with hearing loss, I thought I might as well get checked and have the problem solved sooner rather than later. I wrote about the experience in my fieldnotes on 22 May 2019:

> I booked an appointment with an audiologist […] on Wednesday 22 May. She did many tests on me, and she could find no problems at all. My hearing is perfectly normal.
>
> She suggested that my struggles might be related to two factors:
>
> 1. I speak English in my daily life. However, English is not my first language, and I don't have a lot of practice with lip-reading in English. When the audiologist mentioned this, I realised that I don't usually have "hearing issues" when someone is speaking to me in Norwegian, so she might very well be correct.
> 2. I am constantly surrounded by different English accents: WESSA, Afrikaner, [my partner]'s more British/Kenyan accent, Tobias' Norwegian accent… This means I have to make constant "switches" when I listen to different people, which may of course affect understanding.
>
> I find this interesting in terms of my project. Here I was, thinking there was something physically wrong with me, and then it turns out the problem is simply one of language and context. One might say that the problem is more "anthropological" than "medical"!
>
> And the crux of the matter is the fact that my first language is not English.
>
> Put differently: The fact that I'm not a native English-speaker made me feel as if I had a medical problem.
>
> One might say that only native English-speakers are truly "healthy" in South African society, while everyone else is "sick"!

South Africa has eleven official languages, and the Western Cape Province has three of its own: English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa. During my time in Cape Town so far, I have never been tested on my knowledge of either Afrikaans or isiXhosa. I communicate in English, and I am judged solely on the basis of my perceived proficiency in that language. Only on one occasion have I been addressed in Afrikaans anywhere in or around Cape Town.[57] Even when visiting Xhosa-dominated areas like Khayelitsha, I am consistently addressed in English and *never* expected to speak isiXhosa.

[57] It did, however, happen several times when I took the train from Johannesburg to Cape Town in July 2018, so I know I can pass for an Afrikaner in my outward appearance.

To me, all of this serves to underscore the hegemonic power and position of English in Cape Town: English is "the" language, the only one you really need to know in order to get by. As Steyn summarises it, "The position of English is unassailable. Flaws in the use of English language discredit the speaker, and overrule all other assets" (Steyn 2003: 126). English-speakers' mistakes in other languages do not seem to count in the same way. To me, this is reminiscent of the colonial renaming of places in South Africa, with each conquering group assuming the power to define the identities and realities of those seen as vanquished, subordinate and/or Other (it even happens to me, in a small way, when my surname is incorrectly anglicised to *Pederson*[58]). In Cape Town, reality seems to be defined so as to position the English language as the standard and the norm from which others deviate. I know many Capetonians with little or no knowledge of Afrikaans and isiXhosa, yet all the native Afrikaans and isiXhosa speakers I know can also speak English very proficiently. This situation seems to be generally taken for granted both by these people themselves and by their English-speaking counterparts.

English, of course, has become a *lingua franca* not only of South Africa (Butler 1985: 168-169), but of the world in general (cf. Nyamnjoh 2016: 151); it is history's first truly global language. However, despite this, English *does* remain the native language, the home language, of a specific group of people. English-speaking South Africans – no matter their colour or cultural background – have a distinct privilege in that they *have* English from the start and do not need to spend extra time and effort *acquiring* it as a second (or third, or fourth) language in school (cf. Nyamnjoh 2016: 98). Using English as a medium of instruction, as most South African schools do (Uys, van der Walt, van den Berg, & Botha 2007: 69), gives native English-speaking learners a head start over non-native English-speakers.

Many WESSAs do recognise their linguistic advantage. My interlocutor Lawrence Powell puts it this way: "As English speakers, we're… I'm very pleased that *that* is the home language and that we're able to talk better than some." My interlocutor Thomas Finlayson observes that "[being a native English-speaker] is definitely an advantage in the sense that education mostly happens [in English]". This weakens the argument put forward by Banning that WESSAs have somehow forfeited their ownership of English (Banning 1989: 19-21). They may *share* it with English-speakers of other colours and backgrounds, but it remains *theirs*, too.

[58] A specifically English form, as the *-son* ending is not that common in Afrikaans surnames.

The supreme position of English in South Africa, and the linguistic privilege of its native speakers, has gone largely (though not completely[59]) overlooked and unproblematised. The widely publicised anti-Afrikaans protests at the University of Pretoria (UP) in 2015-2016, for example, ended with the university proposing "a single language policy where *English will be the only medium of instruction language*, with SePedi and Afrikaans being used in tutoring" (South African History Online 2018b; my emphasis). One might wonder how and why the fact that the history of English in South Africa is just as colonial as that of Afrikaans, and the fact that "Serious English proficiency among African language mother-tongue speakers does not count more than 12 %" (Prah 2007: 16), were forgotten or deemed irrelevant. One might also wonder why sePedi, one of the major indigenous African languages spoken in Pretoria (and "one of the official languages of communication of UP" [60]), did not merit the honour of being used in lectures. In a country with eleven official languages, it does not seem obvious why the alternative to Afrikaans has to be English and English only. As Nyamnjoh (2016: 151) remarks, "one could argue that it boggles the mind for black South Africans seeking […] decolonisation to celebrate replacing one colonial symbol of oppression, Afrikaans, with another, English". UP's decision speaks not only to English supremacy, but also to the neglect of indigenous African languages in South Africa and across the continent (Phillipson 1996; Bunyi 1999; Prah 2007).

In a piece in *Independent Education*, Lebogang Montjane observes that "there is a perception among black African parents that their children must jettison their home language if they are to receive a sound education." (Montjane 2016). A rare example of public criticism towards (British) English was seen on 18 February 2019, when the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB)[61] advised parents to "be concerned if children often speak in the adopted British accent from the popular animated TV series *Peppa Pig":*

> There is the perception that people have that if you have a better accent than the traditional African accent, that it is a sign of intelligence. That is not an indication of it. You can continue speaking in your African accent. (Sekhotho 2019)

There may be much truth to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's argument in February 2019 (with reference to Kenya) that "British colonists socialized the natives to accept that their culture was inferior and backward, hence the obsession with the Received Pronunciation (RP) English and other

[59] Cf. e.g. Banning (1989); Steyn (2003); Prah (2007: 16-18); Johnson-Castle (2018).
[60] https://www.up.ac.za/african-languages/article/17921/faqs (retrieved 6 March 2019)
[61] Homepage: http://www.dac.gov.za/pansalb (retrieved 11 March 2019). PANSALB has a history of actively promoting indigenous African languages; cf. e.g. Maseko (2018).

exotic languages and culture" (Standard Digital 2019). My experience in South Africa, however, is that it is not only indigenous African languages and accents that are seen as inferior and backward, but *any* deviation from the yardstick of Englishness.

Summary conclusion

In this chapter I have, in autoethnographic fashion, recounted my life in Rosebank and Mowbray, using my personal experiences to illustrate the social dynamics in my field-site. I have shown that there is a strong interplay between ethno-racial, socio-economic and physical environment factors which gives the area a distinct atmosphere. Rosebank in particular is a place where White people have economic, institutional and cultural hegemony, but where the very Whiteness or Europeanness of the physical environment is kept up by the cheap labour of people of colour – people who do not live in the suburb, but commute from the townships in the Cape Flats. Racialised social and socioeconomic hierarchies are thus kept in place, ostensibly in the name of economic opportunity and heritage preservation. Although crime is a real grievance for the residents of Rosebank, the high walls, electric fences, threatening signs, and lack of pedestrian infrastructure combine to convey a fortress-like impression and a message of hostility, which is given an explicitly racial dimension through the focus on non-White people as objects of suspicion.

One point I have not discussed is the possibility that there may be a gendered dimension to the culture of securitisation. For example, Junck argues that "[b]eing able to protect oneself is particularly tied to notions of vulnerable masculinities and gendered ideas of power and weakness constitute an everyday concern for many South Africans" (Junck 2016: 31). This dimension, however, has not been ethnographically evident to me. Both private and public security in my field-site has strong female participation and leadership. The Rosebank Neighbourhood Watch, for instance, was chaired by a woman for the duration of my fieldwork, and the visible police presence in Rosebank and Mowbray was largely thanks to a female officer who regularly patrolled the area in a uniformed SAPS vehicle. If the apparent "toughness" of many women in my field-site is a "mechanism[…] to counter-act their victimisation and thus inherent vulnerability" (Junck 2016: 31) – which may well be true, considering the risk of

gender-based violence in South Africa[62] – it seems to have efficiently bolstered women's agency within the local security paradigm in my field-site. Alternatively, the impression of "toughness" may simply be due to coincidence or to incomplete data on my part, or it may express a real cultural difference between Junck's Observatory and my own field-site in Mowbray/Rosebank/Rondebosch, despite the two field-sites being located directly next to each other. This is something to follow up in future studies of the Southern Suburbs.

To me, race and class stand out without question as the two main organising factors of social life in my field-site as a whole. These two factors take on profoundly different – even *opposite* – guises and meanings in upper Mowbray versus lower Rosebank. Whereas public-space interactions in upper Mowbray forefront the grievances of poor, Black and Coloured South Africans, lower Rosebank communicates sheltered affluence and brands visible poverty and visible non-White-ness as matter out of place. Despite the differences, in both suburbs the interplay between race and class serves to reinforce the incorrect notion of race as essence, and of racial groups as *essentially different* from each other. Although different groups may experience different levels of it in different areas, race-based Othering and dehumanisation are all-pervasive phenomena across my field-site and make open and honest intergroup interaction difficult. It could be argued that this racial essentialism reflects a general worldview in which identities are seen as *complete* and bounded; where common humanity is given less importance than being a certain *type* of human. This worldview is the opposite of the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan perspective which sees all identities as inherently interconnected, interdependent and *incomplete.*

While all groups may experience Othering and dehumanisation, the WESSA identity seems to possess more power and currency than others within the economic, institutional and cultural landscape of my field-site. The language situation strongly suggests that it is not simply Whiteness, nor even Britishness, but *Englishness* that South Africans aspire to. Other languages than English are spoken in the British Isles, and there are many groups indigenous to the British Isles besides the English. In contrast to the English, none of these other groups (like the Scottish or the Welsh) seem to figure with any particular prominence in South African social hierarchies. It is in the realm of language that I most clearly observe the social penalties, on the personal as well as the structural level, that a person invokes by failing to live up to an "English" ideal. In

[62] The rape and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana sparked extreme uproar and several large protests in Cape Town and elsewhere (BBC News 2019); cf. also Francke (2019). For a more in-depth analysis of the causes of gender-based violence in South Africa, see Gqola (2007).

Tutuolan terms, the language situation exposes Englishness as an extremely powerful *juju* in the search for power and completeness in my field-site, a *juju* – or perhaps a complex of *jujus* – that is fundamental to social and economic success and is recognised as such even by small children. I will explore these *jujus* of Englishness in more depth in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5
Conversations on identity

Introduction

In the previous chapter I gave an account of my life in the WESSA-dominated area of Mowbray and Rosebank in an attempt to provide an "outsider within" perspective on life as a White-classified, English-speaking person in my field-site, and I devoted a separate section to exploring the position of the English language. My conclusion was that my field-site is socially and spatially split along lines of race and class, and dominated by Whiteness and Englishness. In the following, I dive deeper into the *discourses* concerning what it means to be and become WESSA, focusing on the lived experiences of individual people and examining how WESSAs see themselves as well as how they are seen by others, including myself, as I inhabit the Southern Suburbs "bush of ghosts" in my WESSA-seeking adventures.

I begin this chapter by going through in-depth interviews with two of my WESSA interlocutors, Lawrence Powell and Thomas Finlayson, two men who belong to very different generations and have quite different views on contemporary South Africa and their own positions in it. Following this, I go through some of my interviews with non-WESSA English-speakers as well as non-English-speakers of different ethnic, racial and national backgrounds. Viewed against the background of my participant observation, these verbal data provide valuable insights into the complexities as well as the common denominators of WESSA identity, and the relationships between WESSAs and other South Africans. Lawrence, as I will show, uses the *language* of conviviality, but gives an impression of being biased in favour of British or WESSA culture and tends to generalise about other groups. Thomas, on the other hand, seems to be in a rootless limbo; pained by feelings of non-belonging, he does not seem to know how to constructively deal with his positionality as a White South African, and gives an impression of being uncomfortable or perhaps frightened of facing his own *incompleteness.*

Through discussions with and about WESSAs of different backgrounds, as well as a comparison with Black English-speaking South Africans, I argue that WESSAs can be seen as a Barthian *ethnic group,* and I demonstrate that being and becoming WESSA is contingent on a combination of Tutuolan *jujus* that can be collectively summarised as "Englishness". By wielding the *jujus* of Englishness – which include, among other things, language (accent) and

certain cultural values – a person may approach a state of WESSA-hood. I argue that unquestioned WESSA-hood can only be attained by people read as White, and especially those of British descent. Those who embody all these aspects of being WESSA – a category I have dubbed "Rhodes WESSAs" – comprise the highest tier of Whiteness in South Africa and are the sole possessors of the "royal substance" which allows them to bend the rules of Whiteness on behalf of themselves and others. On the South African social chessboard, these WESSAs are the queens, both figuratively and functionally. Even so, their powerful *jujus* do not lead to the *completeness* that they seek. Non-WESSAs employ *jujus* of Englishness to great effect, blurring the line of Whiteness as well as WESSA-ness and foregrounding the *incompleteness* of human identities, including the WESSA identity.

Lawrence's story: "My roots in Africa are not terribly deep, but they're very strong."

Lawrence Powell[63] is a self-identifying WESSA whose background seems, at a glance, to be almost archetypal of this category. Lawrence was born in the 1930s to parents who worked for the British colonial government in various parts of Southern Africa at a time when, in Lawrence's own words, "the British Empire was still going strong as an empire".

> LAWRENCE: I'm what you call a first-generation English-speaking South African […] I'm South-African born, of English mother and father, who came out working for the British government in the 1930s. I was schooled in South Africa, in Cape Town, and I attended university [in another South African town]. By profession I'm a journalist, I was in mainstream journalism in South Africa, I did some journalism– I learned my trade, so to speak, in Britain, working on a small paper there. But for the last… since the late sixties I've been a mainstream journalist reporter, a sub-editor, an assistant editor and, at the end of my career, editor of a number of publications. […] I'm now just a freelance journalist working on commission.

Lawrence has no doubts about his primary identity:

> LAWRENCE: I'm a South African. And I contribute as a South African. I accept South Africa's diversity as a strength, not a weakness. I'm certainly not a "little Englander".

He traces his strong feeling of South African-ness to a decision made during his childhood. Rather than sending the children to school in England, Lawrence's mother – who, in his words,

[63] My interview with him in my house in Mowbray on 6 December 2018 lasted about 59 minutes and was recorded.

"became an African, very much", decided to send them to school in Cape Town. As Lawrence puts it,

> That sort of changed our lives, in the sense that we became committed to Africa rather than going back to England. I still have some family in England, but there's no connection. Both my brothers stayed on in Africa, in South Africa, and my four children are all here. […] My roots in Africa are not terribly deep, but they're very strong.

This is an interesting statement which conflicts with claims that "the English-speaking South Africans never regarded themselves as Africans" (Mda 2001, cited in Steyn 2003: 4). It also contrasts somewhat with the experience of Tessa Ford – fifteen years younger than Lawrence – who told me that "Most of us were brought up like English children. It only struck me when I was in my twenties and thirties that I was an African." What, then, does it really means to be "English"/"British" or "African"? For Lawrence, the categories seem to be open-ended and not necessarily mutually exclusive. Being the child of English parents, and being, in his own words, "a South African-born, but a Southern African by experience", Lawrence draws on cosmopolitanism as a strength: Rather than being rootless, he "comes from" many places, his main points of belonging being Southern Africa and Britain. Even though Lawrence never ended up staying in Britain permanently, he did go there for five years to learn his trade as a journalist, forming a direct personal connection to Britain far stronger than a mere ancestral tie. Lawrence may not label himself explicitly as British, but Britishness is certainly part of his lived experience. For Lawrence, however, this compositeness of being does not seem to imply divided loyalties. While acknowledging his various roots and ties of belonging, he remains firmly committed to South Africa, not just through lip service, but through active participation and positions of leadership in several community associations in his suburb.

Lawrence acknowledges that Afrikaners have deeper roots in South Africa than WESSAs do, but this does not, to him, imply that WESSAs belong less. The difference in "rootedness" is simply an outcome of historical events outside the control of anyone alive today. And Lawrence knows his country's history well:

> LAWRENCE: I think one of the big differences between, shall we say, the Afrikaner, the Afrikaans-speaking White South African, and the English-speaking White South African is that the root, the *rootedness*, of Afrikaners goes right back to 1650, to van Riebeeck arriving. Not that there weren't English-speaking people arriving as well – I mean, they were sailing ships and so forth – but the point is, the first *settlements* were Dutch. And the first farmers, the first people who broke out of the confines of the Cape and started spreading into the… as farmers,

> *trekboers* they're called, were Dutch. The first big incursion of English… *stock*, shall we say, on a sort of immigrant basis, was the so-called 1820 Settlers, where a whole bunch were brought out and settled mainly in the Eastern Cape. The English-speaking connection to South Africa was basically a result of the Napoleonic Wars. The Dutch and the French got allied in the Napoleonic Wars and the British seized the Cape, they seized it twice […] Of course, the decline of the Dutch East India Company and so on, and the dominance of England, the relative decline of the Dutch saw the Cape become British, but it never colonised to the extent and for the duration of the time.

As Lawrence continues, he emphasises British liberal-mindedness and the abolition of slavery, which almost seems to provide a justification for British presence and rule in South Africa:

> LAWRENCE: The British abolished slavery [in the 1830s]. Slavery played a very important part in the South African history. And of course, the Dutch element had slaves and always had had slaves, and of course the Coloured community came from the slaves, who were brought in from all over, by the way. […] Slavery, of course, was rampant in the 18th and 19th centuries. And the English, if you like, influence was much more governmental than this of… domestic stock. […] The Dutch didn't want to be anglicised. And part of the reason for the Great Trek, which was sort of round-about the early 1830s, was the abolition of slavery, and the oppressiveness of British– rather arrogant British rule, with, you know, "you will become English".

In this telling of South African history, it is the "Dutch element" who had slaves, while the British came in as emancipators. Of course, the British, too, held slaves for hundreds of years and profited immensely from the trans-Atlantic slave trade prior to abolition (Mohanram 2007: xviii), which complicates the British saviour narrative. We also remember, from the history section in Chapter 4, how the British forced slaves in the Cape to remain in bondage for four years longer than those in other parts of their Empire. In other words, while Lawrence has a great knowledge of history, his understanding and interpretation of it seems to be shaped by a certain pro-British bias. He sets a scene in which it is easy to interpret British "arrogance" and oppressiveness towards the Afrikaners as a necessary evil in the name of freedom and human rights. Indeed, Lawrence sees liberalness and individualism as fundamental – and fundamentally – British values, as opposed to those of other South African ethnic groups, White and Black alike:

> LAWRENCE: I think one of the key influences that the British connection had was to ingrain into the tapestry of South Africa, to ingrain a very, very strong liberal motif. […] And as an English-speaking South African I am quite proud of that – the English tended to be on the liberal side, and to be on the side of the individual, in terms of political philosophy. And I think that's one

> of the great influences that the English have had. You know, I don't think South Africa is a radical society. I think it is a much more moderate society. There's no question that if you had to compare the English and the Afrikaans and maybe even the Zulu, the big difference is that English thinking was much more moderate, liberal and geared towards the rights of the individual, whereas the others tended to be more autocratic or dictatorial and more right-wing. Patriarchal.
>
> What the English-speaking people in general did quite well was to do business. So if you trace the history and achievements of the English-speaking people it's not so much in politics […] It is largely in business. I myself represent one of the, if you like, legacies of English-speaking or even English world, which is that it brought the newspaper as a… and South African newspapers have been very good. They're not very good at the moment, unfortunately; they've rather gone down the chute. But at its height, South African newspapers were very, very good. They set a very high standard, and they based themselves *very* largely on the practices and norms of the British press. And not just Fleet Street, but the whole British press. And, so, again, one of the legacies that the English-speaking…*ness* or the English-speaking had was this professional array of newspapers. And at one time there were two very large groups in South Africa, both based on exactly– both English-speaking and both essentially funded by the mines, by the big mining companies, but ran on a professional, objective and perfectly high standard of journalism. And I am the product of that particular– that's where I ended up.

Lawrence's pro-British sentiments manifest themselves strongly in these views of British journalism. To be British is to be "professional" and "objective" and to have a "very high standard".

On the topic of Afrikaner identity, he has this to say:

> To call them White is not strictly speaking correct […] You know, one of the ironies of Apartheid is that they strove to be pure White when most Afrikaners were not pure White at all. They were actually proportions of Coloured. So, it was a complete aberration, in every sense, ethnic sense, historical sense. They never recognised the reality of the situation, which was that the country was a melting-pot of different races for different reasons. […] All around the world [you find] pockets of purist thinking, fanatical purist thinking, that tries to unscramble eggs and so forth, and not with any great success.

Lawrence's stance in this matter comes across as one of inclusivity; he sees diversity and mixing as a fact of life and something to be welcomed. This comes across as a *convivial* attitude based on acknowledgement of human incompleteness. However, it is specifically the *Afrikaners* – the "Other" Whites in Lawrence's narrative – who are not "pure" or "properly"

White (Falkof 2016: 6). The Whiteness of British South Africans is never questioned. This implies that the only "pure" White South Africans – if any exist – are those of British heritage. Lawrence implicitly sets himself up as a member of the Whitest group in South Africa, as well as a gatekeeper of a Whiteness which is understood to be *complete.*

At one point in the interview, Lawrence says that "That was one of the problems with the British; they thought they were so damn good". He himself, however, seems to harbour rather similar opinions, as in his claim that "What my Englishness gives me is a sense of moderation, [or] *acceptance* of the good of diversity." When Lawrence says that "A society has got to absorb the talents of the different people [that comprise it]", it makes one wonder on whose terms this is to happen, and into which society talents are to be "absorbed". Despite his cosmopolitan African identity and his apparently convivial embrace of cultural diversity and interracial interaction, throughout Lawrence's narrative there is one culture, one ethnic group, which always looms larger than others. The virtues of objectivity, individualism, moderation, liberalness, and tolerance all seem to be concentrated in one ethnic group: The British.

"My suspicion", says Lawrence,

> is that, were a referendum to be held today on whether South Africa should remain a part of the [British] Commonwealth, and *everybody* voted, I would be inclined to think that the vote would be overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining the connection. […] Many of the Blacks regarded the Queen as something quite good; you know, she was benevolent, and a lot of people– Helen Zille got into trouble for saying that colonialism did some good things. Well, Helen Zille is right. It might not have been politically correct to say that – I mean, have you followed that? She was pilloried for saying colonialism brought good things, and she's right! It brought roads, railways, trains, sewers, hospitals, that was part and parcel of British rule and British standards. And a lot of it was directed at the lot of the local people.

These views are somewhat reminiscent of the Eurocentric colonialism-as-charity thinking of the 19th and early 20th century; the "White man's burden" of civilising the non-European peoples of the world (Kipling 1899). The only time Lawrence really goes into some detail about the cultures of South Africa's Black population, it is to talk about the difference between Black South Africans and WESSAs. In doing so, he sides with what he perceives as a "very English" culture of individualism as opposed to what he perceives as a "Black" or "African" culture of collectivism:[64]

[64] This binary stereotype has been criticised as problematic; see McKaiser (2014: 64).

> LAWRENCE: I think that a key difference between, uh, basic Black philosophy and basic, uhm, English-speaking philosophy is that, I think, English-speakers are… individuals, and they stand for the rights of the individual. Government is there to serve the interests of the individual. In many Black cultures and Black philosophies and Black approaches, it's the other way around. The individual is there to serve the interests of the government. And on that issue, I am for protecting the rights of the individuals. […] I think the individual comes first. And community and what follows comes next. And that's essentially a very English thing.

Somewhat contrastingly, to my question of whether there is such a thing as a WESSA community, Lawrence responds:

> I wouldn't call it a community. It's an *affinity.* […] English-speakers, through language, through culture, through philosophy, through political affiliation, uhm, are a community. And I would definitely see them as one of the sections. Of course, *within* that community are huge differences, but I think it's perfectly fair to talk of English-speakers… there was someone coining a phrase some years ago, talked of "Anglokaners", as in Afrikaners, "Anglokaners". It's not a phrase that actually caught on, because you don't see it bandied about. Instead we talk about, rather clumsily, "English-speaking South Africans". But I think the straight answer to your question is: There's definitely a… a… *national,* because it's everywhere, it's not isolated geographically to this area or that area, it is a national, uh, strain, uh, of English-speaking South Africans whose culture, roots, thinking, all go back to the English roots, their British roots.

In other words, although Lawrence seems highly invested in the concept of British culture, his conscious affiliation to a WESSA collective is vague. The way he fumbles a bit with his words suggests he may not have reflected deeply on his ethnic affiliation before, and perhaps that he views British culture as something detached from ethnicity, something more akin to the concept of "civilisation", a lifestyle and set of values which is *universal* in nature. If so, his loose relationship with ethnic identity indicates that he himself, as a WESSA, sees himself as a representative not of a particular, situated identity, but of that very universalness or *completeness.*

Thomas' story: "Semi-sarcastically, but in good humour, we kind of carve out a home for ourselves as White South Africans"

Thomas Finlayson[65] is a 30-year-old man who self-identifies as a WESSA ("one hundred per cent", in his own words). He grew up and still lives in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. I began our interview by asking Thomas what it means to be a WESSA in South Africa today:

> THOMAS: I come from a middle-class background in the sense that my dad studied art… My dad's parents were poor, my mother parents were… relatively well-off, but my mother, after studying medicine, worked for NGOs while my dad kind of like made a paint business. So I mean, like, when I was very young, I think my parents were, like, pretty… skint. So in that sense I am from a middle-class background, although over the years my family has become what I would consider well-off, but what other, more well off people would consider middle-class.
>
> I think in South Africa, I kind of have the view that White, uhm… English… I think White people are in a place where we're, like, losing relevance, slash not at all relevant, politically. Although obviously economically we are. But from a cultural perspective, like, Afrikaans-speakers have this, like, very specific cultural heritage and identity. Whereas English-speakers like myself certainly don't really have – I mean, we have Heritage Day, right. Like, a public holiday. But we don't… there's no part of my heritage that I can identify, you know. So I think as an English White… uh, White English-speaking South African, I kind of feel a little bit like I don't have a *cultural* home in South Africa. Although, with that being said, we, I think I can speak for White English-speakers generally when I say we kind of, uuh, try and… semi-sarcastically, but in good humour, we kind of carve out a, like, a home for ourselves as White South Africans, you know.
>
> But certainly I don't think that we have a voice in… in the country, necessarily. […] I think, like, if I look at South Africa as a nation, uhm… and as a society, I don't think that Whites… White English-speaking South Africans really, eh… contribute meaningfully to the momentum of that nation or society, you know. […] We do… we do obviously, like, economically it's a completely different thing, right? All the wealth, most of the wealth, significant portion of the wealth does reside in… *with* White people. But… but ja, I mean, like, I mean I've had, I've been, like, *really* ripped into, for instance on social media, for having *an* opinion about anything, kind of, anything related to gender or race. So I've kind of learnt to just hold my tongue and not say anything. As a White male, you know what I mean? Which I think is safe, and probably a

[65] My interview with him in my house in Rosebank on 16 March 2019 lasted about 25 minutes and was recorded.

> lot of the time a good idea anyways, but it kind of does leave me in this space of… like, either not *having* anything to say, or not *wanting* to say anything, or, like, it being a good idea not to.

Lawrence Powell claims his Africanness as well as his Englishness and is proud of both. Thomas, however, claims neither. He does not feel like he has a "cultural home" in South Africa, but he also feels little connection to his ancestral heritage in Europe. Indeed, like many White South Africans, Thomas comes from a culturally mixed background: One of his grandfathers was an Afrikaner, and the rest of his grandparents were Scottish and White English-speaking Zimbabwean. Unlike Lawrence, then, Thomas does not have a strong tie to one single country, and the ties that he does have are more distant and tenuous than Lawrence's.

When I ask Thomas if he finds that English-speakers have a different outlook on Apartheid than Afrikaners, or other White people, he responds as follows:

> The stories that I've heard have been about, not so much stories, but… from my parents it sounded like there was this feeling of, like, what the government is doing is wrong, but what exactly, like there wasn't an obvious way of… of… doing anything about it other than taking up arms, you know? Or joining the ANC, or, you know what I mean. So I think my parents felt like there was a limited way that they could really make a difference. But I also think that, you know, there were people who were racist and thought that Apartheid was a good thing, and there were people who were not necessarily racist or *actively* racist, but, I mean, who doesn't like having an advantage, you know? So I think there were a lot of people who were prepared to just kind of disagree with Apartheid, but be… happy with the benefits.
>
> Now, twenty-something years on, it's really easy for White people to […] reject the idea that they have benefited from Apartheid. Whereas to my mind it's fairly easy to go, "where is the average Black person who works hard, versus the average White person", you know. But that being sad, like, how much blame do *I,* for instance– well, I'll tell you, I don't carry any *blame* for Apartheid, but there is this question of […] do I have the responsibility to right the wrongs, or how do you, like how do you address that, you know? Without giving away money, or… […] I think it's difficult for White South Africans to answer this question, because there's no easy answer. […] There's a lot of advantage that we get from being White South Africans, not so much institutional, but the result of generations of advantage.

I asked Thomas if he feels that English-speakers have more advantage than others, to which he replied:

> I don't think that English-speaking people have more advantage. I think in some ways we have less, but that's… I think that's because there's such a distinct and more easily identifiable kind of… culture within Afrikaans South Africans. I think it's easier to plug into that culture if you

> are Afrikaans. And I don't think that being Afrikaans, I think being Afrikaans is English setting is less of a divider, you know. And that's partly language, right? Like most Afrikaners can speak English, but a lot of English people speak really bad Afrikaans. So I've been in meetings in, like, the corporate setting where I'm the only guy who speaks English. The meeting will be in English, and no one has a problem with that, but there's a distinct kind of separation that Afrikaans people don't have, because they can speak English.

Here, Thomas is pointing at something interesting, namely the fact that having a certain type of privilege in *one* setting might in fact confer disadvantages in other settings. If you are a native speaker of the dominant language in your country and have never had to learn other languages to get by, being in a setting where another language is spoken puts you at a distinct disadvantage and can even be felt as exclusion. It is a situation which illustrates the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan idea that there is no such thing as the perfect *juju,* and that even the most potent *jujus* (such as native-speaker fluency in English) need the right context and connections to other *jujus* in order to be properly activated.

In terms of advantage more generally, Thomas emphasises the feeling among many contemporary White South Africans that they are disadvantaged and marginalised:

> THOMAS: There's a big thing in South Africa which does affect me to a lesser extent, but I think I'm lucky it doesn't affect me as much, is… is affirmative action, and I think a lot of White people are quite resentful and bitter and angry when they are, like, badly affected by affirmative action. So I think there's this feeling, I wouldn't say I *share* this feeling, but I think there's a feeling of, like, that White people are disadvantaged and treated unfairly in South Africa.

Even though he says he does not share the feeling, he does admit that he feels affected. In the context of his earlier remark about lacking a "home" in South Africa and feeling "ripped into" as a White male for having opinions about race and gender, Thomas' comment on feeling disadvantaged and unfairly treated *might* perhaps be read as referring not only to other White people, but also, at least in part (and perhaps subconsciously), to himself and to his own feelings of non-belonging.

I asked Thomas about his opinions about the coherence of WESSAs as a group.

> ME: Do you feel that English-speaking South Africans, or White English-speaking South Africans are a *community?*
>
> THOMAS: Ehm… I don't think, uhm… So, like growing up, we were friends with neighbours on one side, right. And we kind of knew the neighbours across the road from us, and we didn't know the neighbours to the other side of us. Ehm… and I feel like living in a place and not

> knowing your neighbours is a very *White* thing. If you go into… I don't want to say Coloured or Black areas, but if you go into poorer areas, it's more of a necessity to know the people around you.
>
> ME: So it's not only a White thing, it's a class thing as well?
>
> THOMAS: Yeah. Yeah. So it's more, for me, an economic thing than a race thing. But because there are such clear lines or overlaps between race and economics, I think it ends up being that, like, White people are far happier living next to somebody where you don't even know their name. Uuhm… So, in that sense I think White people are, like, typically bad at community.

Here it seems like Thomas understood my initial question as pertaining to "communities" in the sense of "neighbourhoods". His observations reflect my own observations during my fieldwork in the Southern Suburbs (as well as those of Ueland (2012: 50-51)), and bring to mind the kind of individualist thinking expressed by Lawrence – or, as phrased by Charles Prempeh in conversation with the works of Amos Tutuola and Francis Nyamnjoh: "liberating self from the community and the giving of rights to individuals over the community" (Prempeh 2019).

It is interesting that while my question was about WESSAs specifically, Thomas' response was about White people in general. It is also interesting how Thomas, in his response to this question, used "White" almost as a synonym for "middle-class": He contrasts the term "White" not with terms "Coloured" or "Black" (he *almost* does, but corrects himself immediately), but with the term "poorer". The implicit equation revealed in Thomas' response – *WESSA = White = wealthy* – mirrors the extant literature as well as my autoethnographic findings where Englishness seems to be at the top of the South African social hierarchy, and where a person who looks White is automatically assumed to be wealthy.

When I clarified that I was talking about "community" in the sense of an ethnic group with an internal cohesion, Thomas said:

> I don't walk around feeling like I'm different from each others, but I also don't feel like I necessarily *belong* to a group. Certainly not a group that's defined by any kind of heritage, like, what is my heritage, like, England. I don't have *any* affinity to England. […] So my grandfather was Afrikaans. My grandmother was Scottish. My other grandmother was, um… from Zimbabwe, I think. And my grandfather, I actually don't know where he was born. But they were basically South Africans. White people from Zimbabwe are basically South Africans. […] Very similar dynamic. More English, because Zimbabwe was a colony. […] So, I don't look at another White South African and go like, "oh, that's my people". […]

> When I think of what makes me South African, or what about South Africa that I relate to, it's… it's very hard to put my finger on what that is. I have far more affinity with Cape Town than I do with South Africa.

Thomas' WESSA identity seems to be fundamentally different from that of Lawrence. One might even say they are polar opposites. While Lawrence is proud of his English heritage, culture and values, Thomas feels no connection to England at all. And while Lawrence is proudly South(ern) African, Thomas feels only a tenuous connection to South Africa and claims belonging only in a "semi-sarcastical" way. Lawrence evokes the image of the *soutpiel* with one foot in South Africa and one foot in Britain. Thomas, however, has one foot in South Africa, but the other is dangling in the air; he is standing on one leg, struggling to maintain his balance. He is in a painful state of limbo, and seems to lack the will, confidence and/or *juju* to change his situation. In a way, Thomas is like Tutuola's Skull, stripped down to the bare bones of existence and belonging, and it seems likely that his discomfort with limbo – rather than seeing it as an opportunity for insight and growth – stems from an uneasy relationship with his own *incompleteness* of being.

A Jewish WESSA

Cape Town has a large and vibrant Jewish community, some of whom live within my field-site. Cape Town's Jews are mainly English-speaking, European-descended and classified as White (cf. Ueland 2012: 34), which makes them part of the WESSA category. However, their faith, culture, and history (including centuries of experience with racism in the form of anti-Semitism) define them as a very distinct and unique category of WESSAs. How do Jewish WESSAs feel about their identities as WESSAs, their positionality within the South African nation, and their relationship with other WESSAs?

My long-time neighbour **Amy Greene**,[66] a 24-year-old White South African of Jewish descent from Lithuania and Russia, emphasises ancestral ties as an important factor dividing WESSAs into distinct groups. "I think descent is probably the main thing that kind of divides us," they[67] said, pointing to cultural differences between themselves and someone of Dutch descent as an example. Amy is one of very few people I have met who emphasises descent and family history as important to their identity. Their viewpoint is very different from that of Thomas Finlayson,

[66] My interview with them in my garden in Rosebank on 2 May 2019 lasted 30 minutes and was recorded.
[67] Amy is gender-nonbinary and uses the pronouns *they/them/their*.

who feels *dis*connected from his countries of origin. Amy's viewpoint is, however, similar to that of another interlocutor of mine, Barry Watts, a 22-year-old WESSA whose family background is "mostly Afrikaans with a bit of Welsh, Irish and German too", and whose Welsh and Irish ancestors were *not* English-speaking.[68] Barry wrote to me[69] that although "language makes a huge difference [to feelings of community]",

> I think that family roots is something more unique to a persons identity as language can be learnt and spoken by many. There are so many people speaking various languages that I don't really consider english as really part of ones identity. That may be different for some people for example Swedish to Swedes or isiXhosa to Xhosa people because their language and origins are much more interrelated

Amy Greene believes that people coming from more underprivileged backgrounds and "difficult histories" may feel a greater need to identify with their family histories. This would include Amy themselves, whose great-grandparents came to South Africa fleeing the Holocaust. In contrast, Amy told me of a friend of theirs who is of British and German descent and who "is not really, like, aware of her history that much". Unlike Thomas Finlayson, Amy believes that South Africans of British descent *are* more privileged than other Whites: "People of British descent, kind of… you know, they've taken over the world […] English is the language that supposedly connects everyone". Amy especially emphasises the fact that some British-descended South Africans have British passports, a powerful *juju* which gives the holder the power to "travel anywhere in the world" and "live in Britain". In Amy's experience, it is quite common for South Africans of British descent to have dual citizenship, and as Amy puts it, "having a passport to another country is kind of a huge advantage". While the topic of dual citizenship among WESSAs is important in Ueland's (2012) thesis (and has been noted by Garson (1976) and Salusbury (2003: 28)), it has figured less prominently in my own fieldwork and has been mentioned only a handful of times by my participants. It is difficult to say if this has to do with my participant sample, or if there has been a change in the general discourse of national belonging in the decade that has passed since Ueland did her fieldwork in 2010. Both factors might play a role.

Amy is a first-language speaker of English and thus part of the WESSA category, even though they have no ancestors from Britain. When I asked them whether having English as their first

[68] Both Wales and Ireland have their own local Celtic languages, Welsh *(Cymraeg)* and Irish *(Gaeilge).*
[69] My interview with him was done via WhatsApp on 23-26 May 2019.

language made them feel a tie with other English-speaking South Africans, Amy agreed that there might be something to that notion:

> AMY: I've never thought about language as something that would tie people together, but I definitely think it's […] something that would tie me together… […] when I was overseas, I would relate to people who would speak English more, because, you know, it's a way of communication.

This sentiment is echoed by Barry Watts, who thinks that having English as your first language "means that you are more likely to understand other English speaking people better than you would someone who speaks a different first language".

When Amy was growing up, their parents

> tended not to, um, not, like, not associate with [Afrikaners], but… um… ja, there was a definite kind of *divide* between, like… ja, me as an English-speaker and then, like, Afrikaans sort of… culture and that kind of stuff.

In other words, Amy is a bit of an "outsider within" in the WESSA community. On the one hand, their Jewishness makes up the most important part of their ethnic and cultural identity, which makes them feel different from WESSAs of other ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, Amy does admit to having *some* significant commonalities with those other WESSAs, and at one point during our interview they referred to the WESSA category as "us".

BESSAs: Caught in the middle

As explained in Chapter 2, White English-speakers comprise about 2.8 % of South Africa's population. Since English is the home language of 8.1 % of South Africans (Statistics South Africa 2019a), it follows that the majority of South Africa's English-speaking population are *not* White. The fact that non-White people in South Africa have increasingly been adopting English has been acknowledged for decades (Butler 1976: 10; Garson 1976: 17; Watts 1976: 86; Nkanjeni 2019), but as I showed in Chapter 2, early scholars of WESSAs tended to take for granted that the category "English-speakers" was by definition a White one, and would often write about "English-speaking South Africans" when they really meant WESSAs (cf. Barker & De Kock 2007: 22).

In South Africa, adopting English as home language has often been seen as part of the process of "passing for white" (Watson, cited in Teppo 2004: 94). For some families, however,

speaking English has been a purely practical matter. **Lillian Atieno** is a 21-year-old Black woman who grew up in a multicultural Black household in South Africa.[70] She is a student at UCT, has lived for several years in a student residence in Rosebank, and is currently living in a student residence in a different suburb. Lillian's family background is East African, but she was born in South Africa and raised by her stepmother who is a South African of Xhosa ethnicity. Since her parents hailed from different ethnic communities and spoke different mother tongues, Lillian and her siblings spoke English as their first language as an intra-household *lingua franca*. She is one of South Africa's Black English-speaking South Africans, henceforth referred to as *BESSAs*.

I asked Lillian an open question about what it means to her to be a native English-speaker in South Africa. She responded by highlighting the diversity within the category of English-speakers, pointing specifically to the differences between her own experience and that of WESSAs:

> LILLIAN: I feel like there are different types of native English-speakers. […] Especially as a Black South African, a native English-speaker is something different from what you'd mean […] like, a White English South African. Because we still sort of have our own slang and stuff that I feel like White South Africans will not necessarily understand even though it is… English. And I also think that, even at home, English was not the only language spoken, like, it is my first language and my native language, but it's never been the only language that I've been exposed to primarily.

To Lillian, language does not define who she is. "I don't associate much with the English culture," she explains, so "it's not really my identity." Nevertheless, being an English-speaker has strongly shaped her relationship with her family and her cultural heritage. "Sometimes", she says, "I wish that my first language wasn't English or that it was some other African language, so that I feel more, uhm, in touch, with like, someone who, say, in my stepmom's family who's Xhosa or my dad's family who's Kenyan." Lillian seems to view her BESSA-ness as a complicating factor rather than a positive addition to her identity as a Black South African. When I asked Lillian if she feels like English is something external to her, something coming from outside, she responded "Yeah, I do".

I asked Lillian if her being an English-speaker makes her feel closer to WESSAs than to Afrikaners or people from other parts of the world, and whether there is a sense of community

[70] My interview with her in my house in Rosebank on 31 March 2019 lasted about 22 minutes and was recorded.

among English-speaking South Africans. She responded in the negative: "I don't think so. It's more than just the language, I mean, everyone knows English. […] If your first language is English doesn't mean you're automatically part of the community."

In Lillian's view, WESSAs are different from non-White English-speaking South Africans in that the latter often retain connections with their non-English-speaking cultures of origin,[71] while WESSAs have *only* English and belong only to one community, the WESSA community. Indeed, in Lillian's view, and contrary to the opinions of Lawrence and Thomas, WESSAs most definitely *are* a community, a "them" versus "us":

> LILLIAN: I feel like [WESSAs] live in their own world. I mean, we interact with them, I mean, not *them*, but… [she laughs] *them*. We interact with them, but I sort of feel like… I feel so different to them. I feel like every time I have to, like, interact with White English-speaking South Africans I sort of have to change the way I speak English. Or… like *code* differently, or something […]
>
> I just find myself saying, like, "ja" a lot, or, like, "oh, sure thing," or like, I don't know, it's just… things that I wouldn't normally say […] certain phrases that I just speak more often when I am in an environment with White English-speaking South Africans.

I asked Lillian what would happen if she would interact with WESSAs and speak the way she normally speaks. "I'd feel uncomfortable," she replied.

> LILLIAN: I don't think they would regard me… I think- *I* think they would regard me differently, as someone… *other*. I feel I need to… be accepted by them? […]
>
> The moment someone speaks, like, you just infer so much about them, it can be like totally wrong, you know, things… you know, like, if someone speaks with a certain accent, you're like, oh, they probably went to, like, you know, like model C,[72] or, like, private school, or they probably had this type of family, you know, middle-class family, you know, like… rich family. It's just things you infer about them. […]
>
> If you hear a certain type of English accent, you're like, oh, they come from a rural school, you know, they're probably lower-income, or… I mean, just from accent. And that's just like… it's… many times, I think, a lot of times, especially I feel like in UCT, it's… the inference is wrong, but I also think that many people try and change their accent when they're here.

[71] Or, as Lillian added in a later informal conversation (March 2020), they might congregate with other non-White English-speakers and form distinct sub-communities within the ESSA category.
[72] A "Model C" school is a formerly Whites-only state-run school.

Lillian fully confirms my autoethnographic findings and the observations of my WESSA interlocutors: In South Africa, people are socially categorised according to their English accent.

"So what do they try to change their accent *to?"* I asked. "What do they want to aspire to?"

"I think White English-speaking South Africans," said Lillian. And she admitted that she, too, does it:

> LILLIAN: You know? I also think that the way I speak English is sort of… become… is a result of me sort of changing the way I speak English, to sort of become… you know… uniform. When compared to, sort of, White English-Speaking South Africans.

Lillian's response did not surprise me. I have known her for a long time, and others have commented on her accent before. When my family visited me during Christmas of 2018, my mother (who has worked as an English teacher for many years) met Lillian and noted her perfect British English, "almost RP",[73] in contrast to the WESSA accent which my mother found very unfamiliar and exotic. In fact, my mother found Lillian's English to be more English[74] than the English of WESSAs, which to her sounded Australian!

Lillian and other BESSAs are living proof that White people have no monopoly on Englishness, and, from a Tutuolan point of view, that English-speakers of colour may actually wield the *juju* of Englishness more proficiently than their White counterparts. More fundamentally, the example of Lillian shows that this *juju* is very valuable as social currency in South Africa, even for people who are otherwise proud of their non-English heritage and do not aspire to be assimilated into WESSA culture. To BESSAs like Lillian, Englishness is the very definition of a Tutuolan *juju:* A tool for self-activation, to be worn and discarded according to context and need.

This is a fundamental difference between WESSAs and other South Africans. To WESSAs, the English language is an inherent part of who they are. They do not *consciously* employ their WESSA accent as a *juju;* it is just "there", invisible to and unnoticed by them. In contrast to Black South Africans, whose RP or WESSA accents can be seen as a mark of cultural border-crossing and perhaps a certain "worldliness", WESSAs speaking in a WESSA accent evoke, in Lillian's mind, an image of parochialism and ignorance:

[73] "Received Pronunciation", the sociolect of British English which was chosen by the BBC as their broadcasting standard in 1922 and used as such "for a considerable time" (Robinson 2019).
[74] In the sense of being "from England".

> LILLIAN: I always assume, I think, wrongly. I mean I try to change my… I sort of always assume that [people speaking in a typical WESSA accent] probably… are… ignorant of… everything besides their own culture. Or their own environments. That's not always right, but it's the first thing that comes to mind. […]
>
> I always assume that they sort of come from, like, a middle-class family, you know, I always assume that they're sort of like, *nice people,* you know… Like, nice, ignorant people, you know? Like… like, oh, they probably don't know any better, type of people.

I asked Lillian if there is a general assumption that being White and first-language English-speaking means being middle-class. She replied in the affirmative: "There is this assumption that they're probably from a sort of well-off family, or… you know, they can get by life without too many worries." When I followed up this statement by asking Lillian why it is specifically White English-speakers who have less obstacles in life, she replied, "It's just a product of who they are".

> LILLIAN: It's a product of the country's history. Like, they've all probably gone to – I mean, none of them go to rural schools. They probably all go to like, Model C schools, or like really good schools, you know? That sort of middle-income school… They just… they don't have to deal with the… like, home environments that I feel like a lot of people in other races have to deal with. Specifically, Coloured and Black people. I feel like they have more stable homes, you know… two parents, you know, a dog, a cat… you know. That sort of life.
>
> I think a lot of Afrikaans-speakers have had more of… an experience with life. I always assume that they've had more, like… that they're more in touch with other people, not just their own community – a lot of Afrikaans people have farms or they live in rural areas, so they're not like, isolated in their own communities. […] By virtue of who they are, I think they have more interactions with people outside their own communities.

Lillian elaborated on her view on WESSAs as a community:

> I think they are a community, but I also think there is this whole other class of English-speaking Africans who would be more wealthy, who sort of, like, integrate themselves into that class. Especially people who are about 25 and younger, you know, because they grew up with these people. They're sort of very integrated in these communities. Yes, [WESSAs] are a community, but I don't think they are a community […] just with White people. […] I think there are very few, like, group of people who aren't White, you know, Black, Coloured, Indian, you know… that *do* form a part of this community, by virtue of, you know, their class, and how much they earn, and things like that, where they live… Like if you live in Constantia or something, and you're an Indian family. This is your community. This are the people you sort of *know,* interact

> with. But I think people like that usually have [ties to] other communities which make them different to White English-speaking South Africans. […] They have other communities as well, outside that community.

English-speakers of colour, then, seem to be spread on a wide spectrum of assimilation into WESSA culture. Lillian, who grew up with Kenyan and Xhosa culture, places herself at the "less assimilated" end of the spectrum. On the opposite end are those who may be said to have one foot in the WESSA community and another foot in their communities of origin. What all South African English-speakers of colour have in common is the fact that they usually have ties to other ethnic groups, a certain multiculturality and hybridity that WESSAs lack. Born with the *juju* of Englishness, WESSAs have no *need* to hybridise themselves. One young WESSA acquaintance of mine, Johnny Lumden, summed it up very well when he told me that during his life in Cape Town, he as a WESSA had "never had to change to fit in anywhere".[75] Conversely, no matter how well a BESSA integrates herself into the WESSA community in contemporary South Africa, it seems she may never truly, *completely,* own the "royal substance" of WESSA-hood (cf. Warnier 2007) nor be able to bestow it on others.

WESSAs' position at the top of the hierarchy implies that non-English cultures and languages are, in one way or another, seen as inferior. It is therefore not strange that Lillian has mixed feelings regarding her BESSA identity and finds it difficult to talk about the fact that she has "changed the way she speaks" in order to emulate a WESSA accent – "leav[ing] [her] blackness at the door", as Danielle Bowler (cited in Haffajee 2015: 58) puts it. While Lillian may be argued to possess significant Whiteness (in fact, I once heard a Coloured woman tell her that she considered her to be a "White girl"), her relationship with this Whiteness is fraught with tension and ambiguity. For a person with strong pride in her indigenous African origins, employing Anglocentric *jujus* – even if just for convenience in an Anglocentric society – might feel like a betrayal of one's roots. Lillian's story shows that for non-WESSAs, and perhaps especially for non-WESSAs of colour, being successful in South Africa while remaining true to oneself can be a difficult balancing act.

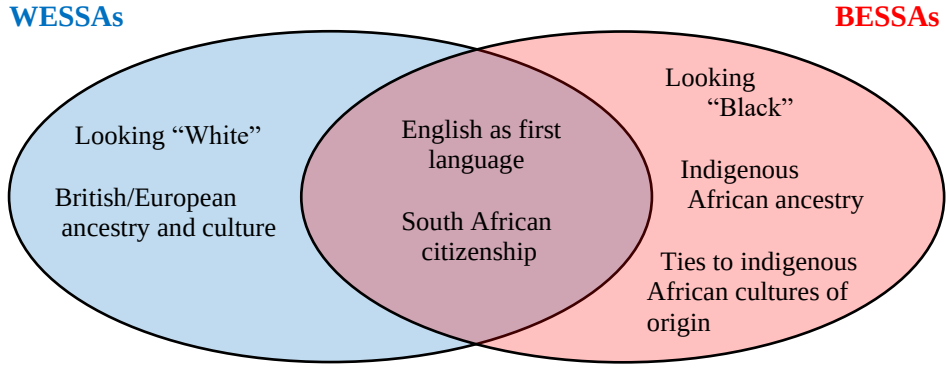
Salusbury observes that "If middle-class status is an ideological position, and is congruent with the ideology of whiteness, then the assimilation of blacks into the middle-class entails an adoption of this ideology" (Salusbury 2003: 73). Black people who acquire wealth and education are seen as "'trying to be white' rather than trying to be middle-class" (p. 77). Such

[75] Informal conversation 2 December 2019.

people are often derogatorily referred to as "coconuts" (Distiller 2012: 97-98; Erasmus 2017: 67), an allusion to being black on the outside and white on the inside. Lillian's English language and RP accent are associated with education, middle-class-ness, and, by extension, Whites and especially WESSAs. Indeed, her family background *is* middle-class. The fact that she is a young, talented woman studying at one of Africa's top-level universities adds to the impression of her "White-ness".

For Lillian, being a native English-speaker is both a blessing and a curse; it provides her with a powerful *juju* of social navigation and mobility, but it also pushes her toward "coconut" ambiguity against her will. Much like Thomas Finlayson, she seems to find herself trapped in *incompleteness,* struggling (despite, or perhaps because of, her convivial outlook on life) to navigate the limbo space between labels – White, Black, East African, South African, English-speaking – that are perceived to refer to *complete* and bounded identities. Lillian's case is illustrative of how such *completeness* may be not only unattainable, but an illusion in and of itself. In the specific context of this study, it raises the question of whether there really is any absolute boundary defining what it means to be WESSA or White.

Figure 9. **Venn diagram of English-speaking South Africans:**
A visualisation of the relationship between WESSAs and BESSAs



Non-WESSA South Africans

Cherilyn Booysen is a woman in her forties who works in an office located in my field-site. Originally from the Cape Flats, she identifies as a member of the Coloured community. Cherilyn has travelled and worked in Europe, including the United Kingdom, an experience which gave her intimate knowledge of British culture. I asked her if she agreed that there is a

British atmosphere in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town as well, upon which she proceeded to tell me in vivid terms about her experiences with, and opinions about, WESSAs.

> CHERILYN: Southern Suburbs, I think there is an air like that. And it's seems… I would refer to it as *privilege,* I used to refer to it as White privilege… the Rhodes privilege (chuckles), Even if you meet administrators that are White, English, there *is* an air about them. And… I'm not saying, this is my perception, so, the way they perceive themselves, "I *am* better than you". And even though we've been years of not being in Apartheid, it's just been like that. And I can tell you now, the way they raise their kids […] if you interact, if you go, for example, in a shopping queue, and there's a long queue, the White, predominantly English person will get up, and, "Where's the manager?" It's simple things like that. And they get raised, I don't believe that the way they get raised is, they see this… success. They see this from their parents, so they don't know, even if they're not the most clever people in the world, they're going to be a success 'cause they see this, they live that success. And this is the one thing I've been questioning, but yes, there *is* an air about them. […]
>
> And because Afrikaners are also entitled to their heritage, and… what they perceive, they also keep you in terms of, they don't allow you in. But they are openly racist. Openly. But what I prefer about the Afrikaans is that if they don't like you, you know it. There's no air about it. But once you gain their trust, you become… in good relation with them. And then they won't just break that relation. White English people in South Africa are very conniving, and they can have the biggest smile on their face, but you have a knife in your back. You *don't* know that… the pretense is *amazing.* And I'm talking about even administratively, I find it – academically, administratively, there is no White cleaning staff, so I can't talk about the cleaning (chuckles)… but yes. Amongst administrators, they are… the air about them, "I know everything", and even if they don't, they wouldn't let you on… they're not human that way. There's no flaw in their existence. And they're always just complaining about how they are now being disadvantaged. But yet… for example, I wouldn't have food on my table, I'd have jam and bread and say "Ooh, I had jam and bread last night", [and they would reply] "Oh! You must just be thankful for what you have. But yet, I had to lose my 1.7 million house for a two-garage… God, how am I going to survive with a two-garage house? Two of our cars have to stand outside!" But they tell you that you mustn't complain, and you must be grateful for having jam… I didn't complain that I'm having jam, I just said, "We had jam and bread last night", but… yeah. It's like, "Do not complain, and be grateful". They've always, I think, because they employed Coloured people and not Black people, so we were… almost like they preferred, back in the day before BEE and all this… […]
>
> White people, eh, English, I don't trust them.

Like Lillian Atieno, Cherilyn expresses a view of Afrikaners as blunt but honest, and generally more in touch with the world around them than WESSAs are.

Afrikaners themselves do not figure prominently in my field-site. I have not personally met any Afrikaners living in Mowbray, although the language statistics (Afrikaans being the first language of 8 % of Mowbray residents) suggest that some Afrikaners do live there. Apart from my landlady Elize, the few people of Afrikaner heritage whom I have met in Rosebank have mostly been other tenants of Elize's. I have also met and talked with one middle-aged man on the next street who is of mixed Afrikaner and English parentage – a not uncommon mix in the Cape Town area – but his mother tongue is English, and although his surname is Afrikaans, he identifies more closely with WESSA culture, and his wife is WESSA.

Crapanzano argued that "Just as the Afrikaners appear to measure themselves against the English, so the English respond to the Afrikaners" (Crapanzano 1985: 37). This does not – at least not currently – seem to be the case in my field-site, whether it is because the Cape Colony was not involved in the Anglo-Boer War (Schutte 1995: 33) or simply because time and democratic rule has changed the relationship between White ethnic groups (a question which lies outside the scope of this thesis). Still, as the main White grouping in South Africa besides the WESSA, the views and opinions of Afrikaners are relevant to understanding how WESSAs are perceived in South African society.

My friend **Melanie Marais** is in her mid-thirties and comes from an Afrikaner family background, but grew up in very close proximity to WESSAs, so much so that she became effectively bilingual in English and Afrikaans from an early age. She works in the ICT sector and lives in a Southern Suburb not far from my field-site. Since it was difficult for us to find time to meet face to face for interviews, she became one of the participants whom I interviewed via Facebook Messenger. In addition to this, we also ended up having many *informal* face-to-face conversations touching upon the topics of my project.

Our first formal interview took place on 22 April 2019. When I asked her if her bilingual upbringing has affected her identity, or the way she views herself as a South African, Melanie replied:

> I think so; I grew up in the wake of 1994, with the Rainbow Nation dream on everyone's lips and I subscribed to that. I was just barely young enough to not really know or remember anything about the Apartheid regime except what we learned as history, so I was able to adopt pride in my Afrikaans identity as part of that rainbow nation dream, without guilt.

To me, my Afrikaans identity was rooted in people like Johannes Kerkorrel (whose music I adored, and still do), and the Voëlvry movement, and other Afrikaans counter-culture.

I sought the Afrikaans culture that was young progressive, liberal, queer, that freely mixed with English and other languages, and everything else that's the antithesis of the old conservative Afrikaans culture that gave us Apartheid.

I learned how Afrikaans was rooted in slavery, in "kombuistaal" how it was first written by Muslims in Arabic script, and how it's spoken by the mixed-race.

So to me, all that made Afrikaans a good part and colour of the rainbow nation.

We grew up more or less straddling the border of the "boerewors curtain",[76] so I guess I never experienced either side too intensely on its own, but we lived in the mixture and interface that comes together in the Bellville area. So at least when we were young, we would rarely venture out to visit the further south or CBD, but also rarely the more northern suburbs of Durbanville proper.

So that midline is what felt like home to me. Going much further north would feel strange, as everything became more opulent and white only but likewise, going further south would remind me of the privilege and lack of poverty our area still had.

I asked Melanie what kind of impression she gets when she visits the areas like Rosebank today.

MELANIE: Things gradually get less affluent and less white, as you move away from Durbanville.

ME: True. But does it not get more white and affluent as you move towards the mountain and the CBD? The area where I live now, lower Rosebank, is extremely white and affluent. And very English.

MELANIE: Right, Rosebank, Observatory, and those areas are a similar mix to Bellville in many ways: they border the affluence of the CBD like Bellville borders the affluence of the Durbanville suburbs.

ME: Very interesting.

MELANIE: Then further south you have places like Constantia, that's another Nexus of affluence (and whiteness).

Melanie agrees that English is the dominant language:

[76] A colloquial term for the boundary between Cape Town's primarily English-speaking Southern Suburbs and the primarily Afrikaans-speaking Northern Suburbs. *Boerewors* ("farmer's sausage" in Afrikaans) is a popular type of sausage which is commonly eaten at *braais* (barbeques).

> MELANIE: Hmm, I think knowing English enough to get by is a practical necessity, at least in urban society: you can still get by elsewhere without knowing Afrikaans or Xhosa or Zulu, but if you don't have English, you're going to have a lot of difficulty everywhere, even if you know one (or two!) of the other languages.
>
> I don't think being first-language is so important: the vast majority of English speakers are probably second-language speakers, and having English as a first (and/or bilingual first) language doesn't confer too much advantage, privilege, or status compared to second-language.
>
> Though of course there are graduations of racism attached to speaking English with less mastery, with more of an accent, and so on.

Of WESSAs, Melanie has little to say directly. Although she grew up in a culturally mixed area, she admits that her knowledge of WESSA self-perception is limited:

> MELANIE: I don't think there's really a strong or distinct Anglo-African cultural identity, like there is with Afrikaans (and Afrikaner) identity. (Or if there is, I'm mostly ignorant of it.)

I later asked Melanie if I was correct in interpreting this as her being not too sure about WESSAs' self-perception as a group, which she confirmed.

My neighbour **Victoria van den Bergh**[77] is in her early twenties. She grew up in Pretoria and moved to Cape Town and Rosebank in early 2019. She works part-time in a neighbouring suburb, studies art, and otherwise prefers "spend[ing her] time […] in nature and just trying to grow [her]self as a person". Victoria explains that her father is an Afrikaner and her mother is English, "so I have Afrikaans surname but my schooling was in English, [and] my home was both English and Afrikaans". She sees this culturally mixed background as "actually a great advantage", because

> sometimes, like, Afrikaans people will stick to themselves and English people will stick to themselves. And because I can speak both, and I sound almost completely Afrikaans when I speak Afrikaans and I sound almost completely English when I speak English, uhm, that I can be accepted by both.

When I asked her to tell me about the differences between Pretoria and Cape Town, she described it this way:

> Well, one main way is [Cape Town is] a lot more liberal than Pretoria. It's a lot more free. Pretoria's a lot more, hum… strict and rigid, it's a lot more Afrikaans as well. There is, ja, well,

[77] My first and longest interview with her, from which the below quotes are taken, took place in my cottage in Rosebank on 25 April 2019, lasted 29 minutes, and was recorded.

I don't know if that's completely accurate, but just from my experience from where I was living and where I'm living now, a lot more Afrikaans in Pretoria, uhm, a lot more English here, and people here are a lot more, like, willing to, uhm… I don't know, like, a lot more willing to *be different.* And they, I don't know, people are people here. Over there, it felt a lot like, there's a very big… like it's a very box-like system.

Uh, and it's very, like… it's very Christian, very… uhm… conservative, uhm… very, like, *proper,* everyone's, like, very proper and everyone uses, like, their manners and so on..

But it's also a very superficial thing. It's not real, you know, oh… you have manners and whatever because you really genuinely respect other people. It's oftentimes oh, it's just because this is the way I was raised.

And… I was punished if I was not… if I didn't behave that way. So it doesn't feel very genuine for me, and people there, for me, don't feel very *alive,* or, like… you know, they don't feel like they *love living.* Over here it feels a lot like people are closer to nature, and people are more artistic, people are more willing to express themselves in a much more brave way. Uhm… So yeah, that's the feelings that I get in comparison to the two places, ja.

I then asked her about ethnic relations (such as Afrikaners versus WESSAs) and racial relations, and how she feels these things work in Cape Town.

VICTORIA: Wow. Yeah, that's a big one that I've actually really noticed. So, in Pretoria, like… there is a big difference, uhm… in… like, if you're English, let me- let me try and- let me try and… uhm… most Black people in Pretoria are English, uhm… I mean they- not English, they have- sorry, you know, they have *their* languages, their Black languages, but the language that- the language that is used to, between White and Black people is usually English.

VICTORIA: That is in, like, Pretoria. In a little bit more rural areas *around* Pretoria, like on farms and so on, then it's Afrikaans.

VICTORIA: Eeh. But obviously then it is the White people's first language and the Black people's probably, like, fourth or fifth language, you know.

VICTORIA: So… ja, there is bit of- there's a lot of room for miscommunication, uhm, there. And that happens a lot. And there's a- there's a huge language barrier.

VICTORIA: And there are other barriers as well, like racial barriers, like, umm, just, economical ones, Uhmm… and, just the way that people think, there's… I don't know, people just still have this *old* way of thinking, and it feels like it's not changing at all.

VICTORIA: *Some* people, like… *some* people, that's very very rare, that, you know, you'll find a White family who adopts a Black child, or something like that, but… and, like, in Pretoria, it's very strange if a Black person and a White person start dating. It's very strange, like…

[…]

VICTORIA: […] in Pretoria it's sort of, okay, there's Black and White. Whereas here, there's White, there's Black, there's Coloured, there's Indian, there's… *mixed,* like kids who have, you know, different parents, you know, someone, so it's a lot more like "oh, I don't actually know", like, when I look at this person, I'm not actually sure what you are. Like, are you White, are you… like, what are you? And that's kind of cool, because it- it takes away the barrier, so, you know? So that person is like, I don't know, feels, can probably feel more free to, like, date somebody of *any* colour. You know?

VICTORIA: So there is a lot more, like, interracial dating, and… probably marriage as well. I think the biggest barrier now still, that I've noticed is, uhm… uh… the economical one. There are still a lot, I think there are… I'm not super-clued-up on the statistics or whatever, but, like, there are probably a lot more, um, Coloured and Black people who are a lot poorer than most of the White and Indian people, I would say.

VICTORIA: I've noticed that a lot of Indian people here are- Muslim Indian people are very very rich (laughs). Like… they always go to the best schools or whatever (laughs). But I don't know, maybe that's just… what, from just a little bit of what I've seen. I don't know if it's completely accurate (laughs).

ME: Maybe. I don't know.

VICTORIA: Yeah. Uhm… Yeah, so it's a lot more, people are, sort of more willing to pass the racial barriers and it's a lot more normal to have, uh, mixed couples or mixed marriages or… you know, adoptions from different races, um… and… ja, and then, the main language that I would say is English, um, you just have your different *accents.*

ME: Yeah.

VICTORIA: That's the only… thing that I've noticed, is the accents.

ME: Definitely. And how does that impact on people's daily lives? Or, like, people's perceptions of each other?

VICTORIA: I think, uhm… I think it depends, on… on how open-minded the person is or not. Uhm… like… for me, I don't know, it really doesn't make a difference *at all,* I actually really love accents. Uhm… and… so if you have like a strong Indian accent, or, you know, if you're Indian and you've got, like, a really strong Indian accent, or if you're Black if you've got like

a… whatever language is your native language, and you know, you're speaking English or Afrikaans to me, and I can tell, you know, that this is not your first language, like… it's fine, like it doesn't matter. I also have an accent. You know, like…

ME: Everyone does.

VICTORIA: Yeah. Like, I have a slight… American accent, I have a slight, I don't know, Afrikaans accent, Pretorian, whatever, I don't even know what I sound like. Like, ja. Uhm… so… I think people are a lot more… used to the different accents, because it's just their normal… you know, just their norm. Like, in schools, like, the kids are… there's White, there's Black, there's Indian, so everyone has their different languages and their different accents, at least, sorry. Uhm… So ja, you're a lot more used to it, uhm… and, look, I don't think it super-separates people unless you're like maybe really… close-minded and like, *stuck up* on… I don't know what, but… for the most part, I don't think it really makes a difference too much.

ME: Right.

VICTORIA: Yeah.

ME: And so… uhm… to, ja… when it comes to White English-speaking South Africans, like, what can you say about them? And especially the ones you've met here in Cape Town?

VICTORIA: Ahhhh.

ME: Is there any… Are there any generalisations you can make about them? Are they even a group?

VICTORIA: I would say there is a certain sort of a group. Uhm… I would say very, like… okay, one: Usually they're richer. They are comf… they generally, like, even if they're not *rich,* they're at least *not poor*.

VICTORIA: You know, so they're sort of middle or upper.

VICTORIA: That sort of… is that. So there's a definite… uhm… I don't know what the right word is, but, like, you can tell if someone has been through great suffering, and, like, or poverty or whatever, and, like, come out the other side stronger.

VICTORIA: Like, a lot of, I would say, White, uhm… English-speaking people don't have that.

VICTORIA: I mean, not to say that… you know, they don't have their own struggles, or, like, you know… but I think it's more of, like, first-world kind of problems? Like, I almost want to say, like, you don't… you didn't have to walk five kilometres this morning just to get a bucket of water, but maybe you do struggle with depression, or something like that. You know. There's different *levels* of problems, I would say. Uhm… so… ja, they seem a little bit, I'd almost say

> a little bit out of touch with reality, out of touch with nature, a lot more westernised. Uhm… ja. More rich. And, honestly, a lot of the time a lot more, like, *stuck up.*

Just like Cherilyn, Victoria's impression of WESSAs is that they are generally well-off, a bit detached from the struggles of poorer people, as well as sometimes having a bit of a "stuck up" attitude.

> VICTORIA: Uhm… and I find them difficult to relate to, like, the average sort of person. Uhm… Like when I go and pick up my kid from school, then there's all the moms and so on there, and then obviously it's not *only* White, uhm, but… I don't know, there's just this feeling of, you know, "oh, I just had my nails done" or whatever, and… nothing wrong with having your nails done, but there's that air of… like, I don't know, like, "my husband works, I don't work, and I've just had *such* a stressful day!"

Victoria's comment of "Oh, I just had my nails done […] I've just had *such* a stressful day!" parallels Cherilyn's "God, how am I going to survive with a two-garage house?" However, Victoria admits that there are WESSAs who are not like that, and some who even deliberately try to break away from the stereotype. These are people who, in Victoria's words,

> have recognised that for what it is, and decided to turn away from it. And then you meet, like, some really really really cool people who *are* White, *are* rich, *are*... English-speaking and whatever, but they can *see* what they are.
>
> […] Usually, and I don't know if this is, like, just… I don't know if this is completely true, but what I've noticed a couple times, uh, is… usually it will be a, uhm… it will be, yes, it will be part of the younger generation, but if it's from the older generation what usually has happened is, uhm, it will be that person's, the older person's son or daughter, who gave them hell growing up, and then actually, through that, made them change their minds and made them see things. Uhm… that I've seen in a number of situations. Actually very cool to see, because then usually that child, who is usually a lot more open-minded and, like, doesn't care about race, and, you know, things like that… uhm… will have a great relationship with their parent. And usually it's with the women. Um, I've seen, like, the men, I don't know, are a lot more… uhm… you know, set in their ways, and, you know, "this is the only way", whereas the women are like… you know maybe, maybe things *should* change, maybe things *can* change. Yeah, that's… and, I've also met examp… I've also met people who are completely, like, men who are completely, you know, *completely* open and so on, so it's not a *set* thing. But in general, that's what I've experienced.

Victoria agrees with my suggestion that there may be a class dimension to this, as well as a cultural and generational one:

VICTORIA: […] I think when you're rich, and you have everything you need, and you… you can very… you can a lot more easily keep yourself distracted and busy with material things, uhm… that… probably… uhm… that will stop you from thinking about the world in the way that it… is. And from, like, seeing reality properly.

And when you're like lower, or, like, lower middle-class sort of vibe, then… there are other problems, like, okay, you actually need to *work* to, you know, and you might be in a place of, "I need to protect myself a lot more, so I don't want to change, so I…" you know, maybe not reach out to someone who's maybe a bit more hippie, or maybe I won't want to change any of my ways of living or thinking, because just now, if something goes wrong, and I can't afford that, or I can't… you know, support my child, or… you know, whatever.

Uhm… so there's this, like, I don't know, obviously more problems than what I've just named… uhm… but I think… I don't know, I think… a middle- or lower-class person might have more exposure to nature, and to, like, just, reality… like, I don't know why I use that word, but like… just real life, and like, just to see things the way that they are.

[…] and also I think they might have more exposure to cool people who change their minds about things, who ex… who… let them learn how to really think for themselves, and to think about who they are, and to think about how… what they are doing, the way that they behave, and the way that they view people, how it changes things. Um, so I think they're a little bit more, like, conscious of themselves.

And can become conscious of themselves more easily. Whereas I think… ja, richer people might struggle with that. But, if you *are* a rich person who *has* come to that realisation or, you know, who has, who can see things, who can see past the material stuff and all that, then I think you are in a position of, sort of, *power*, to do a lot of good. Uhm, and you can make… uh… the circles that you'll probably be in, the circles that you can influence, uhm… it would be great to influence those.

What makes Victoria's statements particularly interesting is the fact that she herself is of partly WESSA descent, yet she is critical of WESSAs and specifically mentions the problematic attitudes of WESSA women. Victoria's betwixt-and-between positionality makes her reflections especially valuable; to an even greater extent than Melanie, her observations are based on lived experience with WESSA culture from an inside as well as an outside perspective, and her general outlook is based not on fixed and eternal identities, but on fluidity and nimble-footedness.

Noluthando Siwisa[78] is a friend I have known since my first visit in Cape Town in 2017. She is a Black South African in her late twenties, of Xhosa ethnicity, born and raised in the township of Khayelitsha on the outskirts of Greater Cape Town. She still lives in Khayelitsha, and commutes daily to the Southern Suburbs where she works a highly-skilled office job. As a Black woman whose first language is *not* English (but isiXhosa), her perspective is a valuable addition to that of BESSAs like Lillian Atieno.

> ME: So… do you find working with White English-speaking South Africans different from working with other South Africans? Like, is there anything that sets them apart, culturally, or their way… their way of… maybe, you know, organisational culture, things like that? Is there anything that sets them apart?
>
> NOLUTHANDO: I haven't really had the opportunity to work closely with South African White people, unfortunately. But when I did, it was at a previous job, and I… I hated it. And it was one of the reasons why I left the job, actually. So, I was an assistant buyer to the buyer of the company, which they manufactured electronics and made circuit boards. Ehm, again, the… which kind of, like, tends to be the case in South Africa and, eh, *tsk,* the company was White-run, founded by White people, and everybody in their executive team were, kind of, like, Whites. And, ehm… in the office it was the same-same thing, and it made me… Personally, I just couldn't, ehm… *tsk…* I couldn't, ehm, relate, I couldn't relate in any shape or form, in their lifestyle and in their lifestyle at work. There was very little that we had in common. […]
>
> ME: Can you elaborate a bit on that? What was it that was different?
>
> NOLUTHANDO: It was just that we came from totally different… worlds. Did different things, hanged out with different people during weekends, and even at work, eeh, because I couldn't, I didn't feel I fitted in. Because… besides that they were holding, like, these big titles, and the boundaries were kind of, like, *there.* And because of the boundaries, I didn't even feel comfortable that I could break some of those boundaries. It was just people set in their own ways, and you know, they would hang out together, and leaving very little room for… I just… I was just inferior, I suppose. I was just… ehm, *tsk,* ehm… I felt inferior, and, ehm, I just didn't fit in. I just couldn't relate to… ehm… so what I did was just, I did my job, and then went home, came back again, did my job, and I would hang out with the working-class of the company. So, yeah. It just, yeah, even, also because they spoke a different language as well. They were White Afrikaners, of course, most of them. So I couldn't… even though I could understand, but I just

[78] My interview with her took place at Gangstar Café in Mowbray on 24 August 2019, lasted about 14 minutes, and was recorded. We also had a long informal conversation after the formal interview.

couldn't converse in their language as well. So it was just… I just found it unhealthy and unbearable and I just left. I just didn't like the environment.

ME: Do you feel there is a difference between Afrikaners and the English-speaking South Africans?

NOLUTHANDO: Eh, so… I got a lot of [..] White Afrikaners, but I haven't really engaged with a lot of White English-speaking South Africans, work-wise. I haven't.

ME: What about, like, life in general? When you've encountered White English-speaking South Africans, what have those encounters been like? Like… from the perspective of, maybe, your community, or from your life growing up, what image do you have of that… category of people? What experiences do you have with them?

NOLUTHANDO: White people, okay.

ME: Yeah, specifically English-speakers.

NOLUTHANDO: Eeh… *tsk*… So… I mean, from growing up, I've seen and… and drawing from other people's experiences, even, as well, I found that, ehm… I suppose I don't have a set mindset or set opinion. It changes with different people. But I know that there are really genuine, good, progressive White South Africans in South Africa, that even I have engaged with. And I know that there are also the other bunch, who's kind of, like, set in their own ways, that are resistant to change, you know… Yeah, just set in the ways in which they do things, in which they, the way they think, and… and, ehm… yeah, just set in their own ways. But yeah, so, at the moment I believe, or… it's impossible for me to, kind of, like, paint every person with the same brush.

ME: Of course. I'm not asking you to.

NOLUTHANDO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've had, like, really good experiences with others, but also… ehm… maybe it's simply, simply… not really, man.

ME: Which is good.

NOLUTHANDO: Yeah.

ME: It doesn't have to be negative.

NOLUTHANDO: Yeah, I guess I haven't been much around White people. (Laughs)

ME: That's interesting in itself.

NOLUTHANDO: Yeah, that's interesting, because, I mean, where are they? (Laughs) Yeah, you know? Even, I think… I think that's got a lot to do with how Cape Town is set up, the difficult geographical factors and all of that, I mean, there's not a lot of engagements. And it's kind of,

like, hard to go to where White people are, and hanging out with them, and I think that's vice versa, the same for White people to come and, eh, I suppose, I think that's the dynamic there.

It is interesting that although Noluthando was a small child in 1994 and thus did not have much *direct* experience with Apartheid, she has still had limited experience and interaction with White South Africans (except her Afrikaner colleagues at her previous workplace). Because of this, her experience with White South Africans seems to have been shaped much more by race and colour than by intra-White ethnic distinctions. I take note of the fact that Noluthando is one of the few interlocutors I have spoken with who explicitly blames the lack of interracial interaction on the segregated geographies of Cape Town.

Non-South Africans

Tobias Bråbekk and **Iselin Wang** are both from Norway and in their mid-twenties. Iselin was one of my classmates during my first visit to Cape Town in 2017, and we became close friends during that time. In April and May 2019, she was visiting her boyfriend Tobias, who was doing a semester abroad at UCT and had also become a good friend of mine. While in South Africa, Iselin and Tobias communicate in English, placing them in the White English-speaker category and giving them a quasi-WESSA "outsider within" positionality not unlike my own. I interviewed them both on 23 April 2019 in a group conversation[79] in which Lillian Atieno was also present but did not take a very active part.

ME: So, can you tell me something about your impressions and experiences, like, what's it like here [in Cape Town]?

TOBIAS: Yeah, I can try. Uhm… Well it's very *different.* It's, uhm, coming from a place[80] where we… it's kind of taboo to talk about uh, race, or colour. It's- it's a different experience coming here where people are quite… uhmm… it seems to be quite at the forefront of their minds. Especially when I talk to Uber drivers and other people, they do tend to group people into different, uuh, colours, which has been quite a strange experience for me.

ME: Right. And for you? You've been here before, and what would you say your general impression is? Of this city and…?

ISELIN: Cape Town?

[79] The conversation lasted 14 minutes and 30 seconds and was recorded.
[80] He is referring to Norway.

ME: Yeah, the dynamics, the social dynamics in Cape Town.

ISELIN: [T]he word that come to me first is *complex*. Complex city with a complex history, but also complex social dynamics. It is strange to come to a place from Norway where […] you don't have that kind of history where you have divided people before, and coming here and you can… some way see the after… you can still feel the Apartheid history, is still present here. In the conversations with people, how people talk about each other and talk about the future. But, yeah, I think also the strangest thing is that they… that it is important for people to group people in the different colours to explain *why* they are where they are, and why they are doing these things, and how they see other people, and.. because it's not, eehm, it's not something we do in Norway.

ME: Mm.

ISELIN: Yeah. So that is my… yeah, my impression is that it's… it's complex, but my experience is that all of the people are really nice, friendly and welcoming.

ME (TO TOBIAS): Do you have anything to add to that, or any comments?

TOBIAS: Well, I guess my experience as well has been people are very friendly and- and forthcoming, ehm.. but I do have the impression perhaps in the back of my mind that it's… it's a place that kind of holds its breath? In a way. It seems there's a huge *push* to either change things very quickly- and when I say things, I mean the social… social-economic, uhm, echo, or shadow, from- from- from Apartheid era. With talks about taking… land away without… eehm… eeh, what's it called?

ME: Compensation?

TOBIAS: Compensation, yeah. Which is quite drastic. So it feels… there's a duality here. I mean, it's a very relaxed city in many ways, but at the same time there seems to be kind of a nerve, or like eh… something going on beneath… beneath it. Uhm… which comes up not directly, but in conversations every now and again.

[…]

ME: So how do you guys find being individuals who are coded as White but not being *from* South Africa? Like, do you find it gives you any, you know, specific experiences, specific viewpoints?

TOBIAS: It's difficult to… I mean, I don't know what it's like to be, uhm… any other *thing* in South Africa, so it's hard to compare in that way, but I did sense quite a huge change between the time where I was walking around like a tourist looking everywhere, till the time I became very comfortable and I think people perhaps interpret me more like a native? In the beginning

there was a lot more, uuh, I was approached a lot more on the street from different people. It doesn't happen *as* often as it used to. But otherwise I find it kind of difficult to compare, I guess, the experience of my own to other people.

ME: And how do you find your impression of White South Africans?

TOBIAS: Well, uh… my impression, I mean… I try to compare it a little bit to, say, how Germany has kind of faced their history and acknowledges their history a lot. And there's a sense when I meet White South Africans, that they… they don't really… they haven't had, uuh, *oppgjør?* What's that called in English?

ME: Like they haven't *dealt* with the past?

TOBIAS: Yeah, they haven't- they don't, uuh… I don't know if it's too uncomfortable, or if… I don't know why they don't… acknowledge, uh, the incredibly brutal and terrible past. Like, just a few weeks ago when I was bouldering, I met a White South African and when he heard I was attending UCT, he kind of did a little laugh and said that *he* was lucky enough to leave before all the protests and stuff kind of ruined campus and they had to take away all the beautiful statues and… that was a really weird experience to me, because that would never happen in a place where you acknowledged the terrible things that your ancestors and your parents… eh, did. So it seems like there's a kind of disconnect between the history and the, uhm, at least in my gener… the White- the South Africans in my generation. Who seem unable to truly take in the kind of gravity of what… they as a people… did. Which is very… which is a huge contrast to how it is in, as in for example Germany, where they acknowledge it very openly.

Iselin talked about how difficult it was for her to get to know White South Africans, and what she found to be a condescending, patronising attitude towards Black South Africans and disadvantaged people:

ISELIN: […] What I find a little bit strange is that when I lived in Cape Town for two months, I got to know local people, but I didn't get to know any White South African. All of the people I got to know were either Coloured or Black. And I wonder many times, why is this so? Why doesn't[81] I meet any White South African? The only White South African I met when I stayed in Cape Town for two months were at my work. Where there are a lot of White people. And it was strange because I didn't feel that I got a connection with them, because they talked about South Africa in a very different way compared to the friends I have gotten here in Cape Town. So my boss, he was White, he talked about the Black community, as, they have to help them, like, the White man's burden or something. And he talk in a… talked in a... uuh… (pointing downwards)

[81] This interview contains some grammatical Norwegianisms.

ME: Condescending?

ISELIN: Yeah, condescending way. But he didn't realize this himself, because he was *helping,* and I… I want to help. And do something good, because it was an NGO. So I felt that was really strange because I felt that we… I felt I had more in common with those I gotten to know at parties and, I met out [on the town], than the White South African. And I don't know why, but, but I felt maybe it's a little bit because of what Tobias talked about, that they… I didn't feel like they viewed themselves in maybe the right perspective. But that is *my* views on this. But I didn't feel that they were on the Earth – *jordnær*[82] – on their past, and what their role is, and…

TOBIAS: There's a lack of humility.

ISELIN: Yeah. Yeah.

[…]

ISELIN: Yeah. And… also, when I talked to… if we… compare [unintelligible speech], when I talked to my Black friends in South Africa about Apartheid and ask them questions about South Africa, they were really… they were honest, and they talked about it like this is how it is. But when I asked the people that I worked with, they didn't *want* to talk about it, and they were like, "yeah, but now it's other times", uuh, "it's different now", and I felt that they were not honest about their past, and…

TOBIAS: And the repercussions, perhaps?

ISELIN: Yeah. Mm.

TOBIAS: Yeah.

ISELIN: So that is my impression of White South Africans, is that maybe they are more closed. They're isolated from the others, because I haven't met anyone, or… at parties, and places where I've been. Yeah.

[…]

TOBIAS: But of course, that doesn't mean that there are not a lot of kind and nice White South Africans.

ISELIN: Yeah (laughs)

[…]

TOBIAS: Yeah, exactly. Of course there are.

[82] Down-to-earth.

ISELIN: And that is why it's strange, is that I haven't been at places where I have gotten the opportunity to get to know White South Africans. And I don't know *why* it is so, but… Yeah.

TOBIAS: Like, especially when you bring up the past, or like the guy I met at the climbing gym, that was a weird experience.

ME: I guess the final question maybe especially for you (Tobias), since you've actually met a lot of White South Africans, like, do you think… do you feel there is a difference between, like, Afrikaners and the English-speaking White South Africans? Like, do you notice any difference between, like, different ethnic groups within White people?

TOBIAS: Uhmmm… hm.

ME: You can also… you can say no, if you don't.

TOBIAS: Yeah. I feel like… Eh… I can't really speak too much to that, without perhaps constructing a little bit too much in in my head, because I haven't really been focusing on the difference between them. Eehm, maybe, I mean, one of the guys I live with at the moment, is South African who is very… English. And just from a very generalized impression, the British seem more, kind of, uhm… like they're not that boastful. I mean he's a very humble and kind and nice guy, and the few Afrikaners I have met are perhaps a little bit, uh… more prideful about their South Africanness? In a way?

ME: Mm. Their culture, perhaps? Heritage?

TOBIAS: Yeah, it's a more… It's a more distinctive, uh… culture as well. I find, or I feel like.

Tobias' final remarks are consistent with the literature as well as remarks by my WESSA interlocutors suggesting that WESSAs do not have a strong perception of themselves as an ethnic group, but that they see themselves as culture-less and group-less, especially in comparison with Afrikaners.

My friend **Jessie Gopaul**[83] is a 22-year-old UCT student from Mauritius, of Indo-Mauritian ethnicity, who lives in a student residence in Claremont. When I asked Jessie who she is in the Cape Town context, and how she finds life here, she replied that she primarily enjoys the city's diversity and cosmopolitan atmosphere and the freedoms of student life. Her views of Cape Town's layout and social dynamics seem strongly influenced by her positionality as a student.

ME: […] do you feel the Southern Suburbs are different from the rest of CT in any way?

[83] My interview with her was planned as a face-to-face interview, but had to be conducted on WhatsApp instead, on 23 May 2019. The interview lasted 45 minutes. Please note that in this transcription, line breaks are marked with / and message breaks are marked with //.

JESSIE: It's got an industrial look, where i am. There's so many facilities though // It feels different from campus and the whole of rondebosch which feels like campus too (laughing emoji) // Or rosebank I should say* // It's different from Town and Obs in that there seems to be a lot of life and culture and interesting places to visit there // Whereas i think that it's not available to the same extent in Claremont // It is a convenient place though, which is what i prioritise rn

ME: Do you ever feel that certain areas of CT are dominated by a specific culture or ethnic group?

Jessie: I do think so // Bo-kaap seems to have a big coloured and muslim community; constantia a very white area // Sea point seems to have many Jews and camps bay a lot of wealthy people

ME: How about the Southern Suburbs – Mowbray, Rosebank, Rondebosch, Claremont?

JESSIE: I'd say they are more mixed. I know of a lot of international friends too, staying in these regions. // Student areas seem more diverse to me

In terms of internal differences among White South Africans, Jessie does not seem to have a lot of experience (probably because of her being a student and living life in student-dominated spheres). When talking about White South African culture, she thinks of Afrikaners first. When I ask her specifically about her impressions of WESSAs, her responses are telling:

ME: Thank you :) / So, lastly… What kind of impression do you have of white English-speaking South Africans? What are they like? Are they different from others in any way? Can they even be seen as a group?

JESSIE: I think that they are chilled but it's not always easy to approach them, especially if they're in a "group". I have seen clusters of white speaking south Africans and black people just hanging around each other a lot and it seems to me that more so in the case of the former, there seems to be a barrier which makes it difficult to integrate those people's friend groups // I mean: the white speaking south africans and the black people in groups each, but hanging around separately

ME: I see

JESSIE: But i also have friends who think that it's not the case for south africans as a whole, but mostly english speaking people from Cape town // English speaking white south africans* (double laughing emoji) not white speaking south africans (double laughing emoji) // (laughing emoji) was thinking and typing differently (double laughing emoji)

The "White-speaking South Africans" slip suggests that Englishness is seen as the normal and default type of Whiteness: English-speakers do not simply speak English; they speak "White".

It is interesting that this seems to be the case even for someone like Jessie who, like myself, is a relatively recent arrival in South Africa. She does, however, come from a country with a history of British colonisation, which might help explain her positioning towards White English-speakers. Jessie's other observation, that WESSAs are difficult to approach and get to know, mirrors my own observations as well as those of Iselin and Tobias. In fact, many Capetonians have said to me, often half-jokingly, that they are a bit cliquish, more so than people from other parts of the country.

Yvonne Le Gourvenec[84] is a woman in her late thirties from the French island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean. While in her own words she was "raised very French", Yvonne's family roots are in fact a mixture of French, African, Malagasy, Indian, and Indonesian. Her paternal grandfather was from Brittany, a region of France with its own distinct language and culture. Yvonne's mixed heritage, and the fact that she passes for White (she tells me that "It's always met with amazement" when she reveals her actual ancestry), makes her feel "a bit like a chameleon".

> YVONNE: The first reaction is to box me in. But after that there's always curiosity. // It's completely alien from what they know. // An example would be in Canal Walk last year when my grandparents were here // And I called my grandfather [who is Black] quite loudly in the mall (he's almost deaf). I shouted "papi" // A couple of people turned around and did a double take when he reacted // They were very surprised

In other words, her family ties challenge essentialist assumptions of identity based on physical appearance. In South Africa, with its history of racial segregation, an apparently White woman calling out to her Black grandfather is unexpected, even shocking.

Yvonne arrived in South Africa at the age of sixteen (not many years after the end of Apartheid) and ended up staying in the country. While her testimony foregrounds the binary racial essentialist thinking common in South Africa, Yvonne finds that her betwixt-and-between positionality is a positive rather than a challenging aspect of her life in Cape Town; in her words, it "helps in 'opening doors'".

When I ask her to describe the Southern Suburbs, in which she lives, she echoes the common observation that the area is dominated by middle-class, English-speaking people:

[84] My interview with her was conducted on Facebook Messenger on 26 May 2019. Message breaks are marked with // (there are no line breaks).

> YVONNE: [The area is] Middle-class, english speaking // The city was clearly divided back in the day // Northern suburbs for afrikaans, southern for english // Quite mixed in terms of races and social levels // Some neighbours are students, some are lecturers // Some doctors // Quite a few activists in the obs area // Very rich people in Constantia (if that's included) // But mainly middle class people, families

She finds that "Britishness" manifests itself in various ways, including

> […] the language spoken around us, the culture. Old people will stop everything to watch a royal wedding // Go to a parkrun at the common and the accents are very "proper" // Go to the Durbanville parkrun, it's all afrikaans // In the parow area, all school names are afrikaans // here, we have "rhodes" // Walk around Newlands village, you have cardiff st, kildare st // Kent st

Yet in contrast to many of my other interlocutors, Yvonne does not feel the "British" dominance to be invasive or problematic:

> YVONNE: I'm happy with it // I came to this country firstly to learn how to speak english // So it helps (broad smile emoji)
>
> […]
>
> YVONNE: And because of the cinema, it's a culture i'm very used to // Less "foreign"
>
> ME: So you never feel "other"?
>
> YVONNE: Well, i alway feel "other". Wherever i am
>
> In reunion, i'm french, because of the color of my hair and eyes // In france i'm creole // Here I'm french […]

What, then, does it mean to be Creole, or French? What, indeed, does it mean to be White or Black? Out of all my interlocutors, Yvonne is the one whose history and identity most blatantly fly in the face of racial and ethnic essentialism.

Reflections on the nature and positioning of WESSAs as a group

WESSAs as an ethnic group

The word "community" is commonly used in South Africa to refer to a group with a feeling of commonality and togetherness, either because of geographical proximity (cf. Ueland 2012: 50) or due to a shared ethnic or racial identity. By asking my interlocutors if they see WESSAs as a "community", I was using this everyday term to explore the contested question of whether or

not WESSAs are a *group* in Jenkins' sense – i.e. "a self-conscious collectivity" (Jenkins 2008 [1997]: 56), or, more specifically, what social anthropologists call an *ethnic group*. Fredrik Barth has famously argued that "the critical focus of investigation [into an ethnic group should be] the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth 1998 [1969]: 15).

My non-WESSA interlocutors clearly see WESSAs as boundary-defined in Barth's sense. Even though they themselves may not use the term *WESSA* in everyday speech (terms like "Anglo", "English", or "English South African" being more common), non-WESSAs always know which group of people we are talking about (cf. Salusbury 2003: 34). From the perspectives of my non-WESSA interlocutors, the WESSA category includes several typical traits including a specific English accent; a sheltered and privileged middle- or upper-class lifestyle; a tendency to isolate themselves (socially and geographically) in certain areas, within their ethnic and racial community and within their individual homes; and a certain lack of identification with the South African nation as a whole.

WESSAs themselves are also highly aware of the boundaries of their own ethnicity, although, as we have seen, they define these boundaries not so much in terms of what they *are* (an ontologically positive definition) as in terms of what they are *not* (an ontologically negative definition), which is in line with earlier observations by others (Salusbury 2003: 25; Salusbury & Foster 2004: 96-97; Ueland 2012; Falkof 2016: 23). Additionally, Schlemmer has argued that "[p]eople living in the Western Cape, with its purportedly liberal tradition, appear to be low on ethnic consciousness" (Schlemmer 1976: 107), although this observation may be outdated.

Ueland (2012: 35) argues that a negatively defined boundary may be sufficient to define WESSAs as an ethnic group. However, she also demonstrates that WESSAs do in fact have "some common points of reference" (Ueland 2012: 34; my translation), which, although not necessarily articulated *explicitly* as part of a group identity, are nevertheless important to WESSA self-understanding. According to Ueland, these include "a common language, common experiences, common knowledge and common values" (Ueland 2012: 34; my translation). My own participants' statements support this, but also suggest that certain aspects are more important than others, namely the English language, the experience of being White in a country with deep racialised socioeconomic divides, as well as "liberal" and individualist values. The fact that WESSAs clearly have an ethnic boundary consisting of both ontologically positive and negative definitions suggests that they are indeed an *ethnic group* in Barth's sense,

and I would argue that the very vagueness, open-endedness and *incompleteness* of WESSA identity in terms of cultural "stuff" makes this group particularly compatible with a Barthian – and indeed Nyamnjohan – approach to ethnicity.

WESSAs as Warnierian royalty

Going by my interlocutors' statements, most WESSAs would seem either to reflect little on their WESSA-ness, or to have an actively positive view of their British cultural heritage. Non-WESSAs feel the need to adjust their behaviour to accommodate WESSAs, whereas WESSAs are not required to do the same for other groups. As we have seen, there is also a view among my non-WESSA interlocutors that WESSAs tend to be "detached" from the struggles of life, because they face less obstacles than other groups. All of this suggests that a social hierarchy does indeed exist, in which English-speaking White people occupy the highest (most powerful and privileged) rung. The experiences of Lillian Atieno and Amy Greene show that the high status of WESSAs does not simply follow from being a native English-speaker. It stems from a combination of three things: English language, British descent, and, most importantly, a classification as White. It is a triad strikingly reminiscent of Cecil Rhodes' idea of the superiority of Britishness and, in the words of W. T. Stead, "the English-speaking race" (Plomer 1984 [1933]: 26), a concept which contains both cultural, linguistic, geographic and racial elements.

The human beings who embody this triad to its fullest extent are the British-descended WESSAs. In the Grassfields region of Cameroon, as Jean-Pierre Warnier has argued, the figure of the king maintains harmony and balance in the kingdom by functioning as a container or envelope for ancestral substances which he distributes among his people. WESSAs of British descent – whom, for convenience, I will label "Rhodes WESSAs" – have much in common with these kings, whom Warnier has dubbed "pot-kings". Representing something seemingly close to a *complete* White identity, "Rhodes WESSAs" function and behave as containers (Warnier 2007: 41) for the "royal substance" of Whiteness, or, more specifically, Englishness. By using their "royal" intermediary status (Warnier 2007: 37) to control the many streams and flows of social and physical institutions, barriers, and pathways, "Rhodes WESSAs" ensure the cohesion and continuance of an English-based, English-style dominant culture in the Southern Suburbs. I argue that it is the conflux of these flows and streams – embodied in the culture and

identity of "Rhodes WESSAs" – that makes up Englishness as a "royal substance", just like the *juju* complex of Englishness is made up of many sub-*jujus*.

The centrality and power of the "Rhodes WESSAs" stem from the fact that they fulfil a checklist of criteria. This suggests that the ideal image of personhood in my field-site is based on an ideal of human *completeness.* Someone who is White fulfils one criterion of status, a White English-speaker fulfils two, a middle-class WESSA fulfils three, and a middle-class WESSA of British descent fulfils four.[85] The higher the number of boxes checked – or, in Tutuolan terms, the higher the number of *jujus* one has at one's disposal – the more *complete* one is seen to be, and the higher one's social status becomes. A set of *jujus* thus acts as a symbol of a certain perceived inner essence.

As we have seen, however, the position of WESSAs in my field-site does not go unchallenged. Just like the pot-king of Cameroon, the WESSA is open at the ends. Rather than pots, they may perhaps be better understood as *pipes,* which fill up only temporarily. Even if the ideology of Whiteness would have us believe that *jujus* of Englishness are an inherent essence of WESSAs, the contested nature of power and status in my field-site tells us that this is not so. Nyamnjoh argues that someone who hoards *jujus* to themselves, and does not recognise the "importance and centrality of charging, discharging and recharging", will always end up "disconnected, aloof and inactive" (Nyamnjoh 2019: 284). Inevitably, then, substances of Englishness will flow like rivers between and through human beings, carrying *jujus* for people to fish out and use. Indeed, as my data shows, people of all racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds employ *jujus* of Englishness in strategic ways to empower themselves, sometimes to great effect. In some cases, non-White South Africans' mastery of these *jujus* is so great as to make them *White* in the eyes of some, as in the case of Lillian Atieno. Even though such "WESSAisation" or "Whitening up" may be neither intentional, comfortable nor always fully achievable, the fact that *any* subversion of ostensibly primordial identity labels is possible shows that these identities are in fact socially contingent and *incomplete.*

[85] The formation of social status could be discussed in more depth by focusing on the intersection of race and class with other dimensions of identity such as gender, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability. Unfortunately, a comprehensive analysis of intersectional privilege and disadvantage in my field-site is outside the scope of this thesis.

Table 1. **The hierarchy of Whiteness:** A rough sketch of the intra-White/intra-ESSA[86] ethno-racial hierarchy of Cape Town based on my ethnographic data	
Tier	*Categories*
1 (top)	• WESSAs of primarily British heritage/descent ("Rhodes WESSAs")
2	• WESSAs of primarily non-British heritage/descent • BESSAs?
3	• Non-English-speaking Whites, including: - Afrikaners - White South Africans with other first languages (Greek, Portuguese, etc.) - Foreigners (including myself) • BESSAs?
4 (bottom)	• Everyone else not classified as White

Summary conclusion

In this chapter, I have recounted a number of interviews concerning what it means to be and become WESSA. These interviews, or rather *conversations* on identity, show that WESSAs' own feelings of belonging and community coherence can vary quite significantly across generations and ancestral backgrounds. The same is true of the ways in which WESSAs are perceived by non-WESSAs. My interlocutors' statements suggest that WESSAs should indeed be viewed as an ethnic group, but that there is also a hierarchy of power and influence *within* the WESSA category, and that the most powerful group are WESSAs of British heritage and descent – a category I have dubbed "Rhodes WESSAs". Representing a specific *English* brand of Whiteness, the "Rhodes WESSAs" stand out as the primary gatekeepers of social status in my field-site. Their Englishness is associated with a specific accent, a comfortable middle-class lifestyle, a certain aesthetic, and a certain demeanour – a "package" which is seen as the default and normative way of being in my field-site, and with which others are often forced to engage through various measures of assimilation and/or distancing.

The interview data provide two parallel and equally valuable perspectives on Englishness, both of which illustrate that despite its professed and apparent completeness, the Englishness in question is really an embodiment and product of interdependencies and interconnections. The first perspective sees Englishness as a set of Tutuolan *jujus* for activating oneself in order to

[86] English-speaking South Africans regardless of racial classification.

exert power on society. The second perspective sees Englishness as a specific conflux or configuration of streams and flows already existing in society (mixing together into a "royal substance" in which the individual parts are indistinguishable). We can see this as two *dimensions* of Englishness, both of which I argue to be empirically real, and both of which are fundamental to the social and cultural dominance of WESSAs in the Southern Suburbs. In short, the more *jujus* of Englishness one has at one's disposal, the higher one's social status becomes. However, WESSAs do not have full ownership of the *jujus* of Englishness. They are used strategically and successfully by non-WESSAs to empower themselves in a WESSA-dominated society. This poses a challenge to notions of WESSAs' absolute embodiment of Englishness and Whiteness in my field-site and underscores the *incomplete* nature not only of the WESSA identity, but of *any* identity. Just as importantly, it shows that even within the seemingly rigid racial and cultural hierarchies of South Africa, no human being is ever completely bereft of agency.

CHAPTER 6
Bewilderments of being and belonging

Introduction

In the following chapter, I discuss common perceptions of WESSAs, some stemming from the WESSA community itself, and others from outside. I first discuss the idea of the *soutpiel*, the "salt penis" whose loyalty is perceived to be divided between Britain and South Africa. The discussion of the *soutpiel* is followed by a larger discussion about WESSAs' feelings of being at *home* in South Africa, and of their bewilderments as to their position and place in this country. This provides a segue into a discussion of the way WESSAs portray themselves as collectively liberal and "good", an image which, upon closer scrutiny, turns out to be less clear-cut. All these points are aspects of WESSAs' self-perception and identity which inform the social, economic and geographical relationship between WESSAs and other groups in South Africa. The main keyword for understanding this self-perception, I argue, is *rootlessness.*

As I showed in the previous chapter, the Englishness of the "Rhodes WESSAs" comes very close to a seemingly *complete* WESSA identity. However, the perceived completeness of WESSA-ness – and indeed any human identity – is illusory, and, as I will show in the following, leaves many WESSAs caught in a difficult squeeze. Although they may *want* to combat their rootlessness and attain a stronger feeling of belonging in South Africa, many of them seem unprepared and ill-equipped for the task. This, I argue, stems precisely from WESSAs' tendency to view their own positionality as universal and others as particular and situated. Unable or reluctant to acknowledge their own complexity and *incompleteness,* many WESSAs respond to the social and political changes in contemporary South Africa in less constructive ways, either through exit strategies or through an intensified scramble for an identity as complete, universal and *good* people.

The final section of the chapter is a small case study where I discuss a controversial incident that happened in Cape Town in December 2018, and where I show how subsequent critical reflection and self-education has made me view the discourses of race in South Africa in new ways. This section is meant not only as an autoethnographic vignette describing one White anthropologist's (lack of) insight into the lived realities of people of colour, but also, and more

importantly, as a way to further understand some of the psychological mechanisms behind WESSAs' well-documented tendency to avoid talking openly and honestly about race. Illustrated through my own journey of realisation, I argue for the importance of WESSAs – and other powerful groups – to be humble and attentive listeners, and to take the purported Other seriously on their own terms.

The search for home

According to Woods (2014), *home* can be seen as "one's physical birth place, a past, or as an imagined place, a future" (p. 21). Most importantly, home is a "permanent work in progress; always subject to renegotiation" (p. 22). While home may be located in physical space, it can also be seen "a creation, and re-creation, of human experience" (p. 25) as we imprint ourselves on spaces – physical and symbolic – and imbue them with meaning. WESSAs' claims to having a "true" home in South Africa – in all senses of the word – have been contested, sometimes through the use of a certain word which alludes to WESSAs' loyalties being divided between South Africa and Britain. This word is *soutpiel.* A blog called *6000 miles from civilisation* has a 2010 entry[87] where the author elaborates on the term:

> I get called a lot of names because of this blog. Some are nice, but probably most are not. The less pleasant ones dribble limply into the metaphorical pond, like water off a duck's back. But there's one which is fairly regularly used each and every time I make any criticism of South Africa (that being both my home and the country where I pay my taxes) or anything or anyone South African.
>
> That insult is "Soutpiel" – usually abbreviated to "Soutie".

Soutpiel, as I briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, is an Afrikaans word meaning "salt penis". It refers to the WESSA having one foot in South Africa and one foot in Britain, with the penis dangling in the salty waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The *6000 miles* blogger ridicules the concept by showing that the only substantial body of water directly between South Africa and England is the Mediterranean Sea and that the middle point would be far inland in Niger. Still, the "salty" image of the WESSA seems to have significant staying power. Considering the history of Britain as a seafaring power, especially in the Atlantic world, this is not altogether surprising.

[87] https://6000.co.za/soutpiel-conundrum/ (retrieved 4 April 2020)

The term *soutpiel* is regarded as an ethnic slur by many WESSAs. The *6000 miles* blog entry mentions that "[t]he term is almost exclusively used in a derogatory manner", and my interlocutor Lawrence also reacted negatively when I asked him about the term, calling it a "cheap racist epithet". My use of the English translation "salt penis" in my research proposal even caused some minor controversy within the department of Anthropology at UCT, with one committee member taking offense and interpreting it – incorrectly – as an expression of hostility towards the group I intended to study. I have since realised that although the term is not necessarily used with explicitly hostile *intentions*, it can have a real negative *impact* on the people it refers to.

One issue with the term *soutpiel* is that it is politicised, presenting the WESSA as matter out of place relative to the Afrikaner, who is construed as a native child of the soil (Johnson-Castle 2018: 35, 37). Indeed, it frames the WESSA as the quintessential – if not eternal – *settler* (Nuttall 2001: 117-118), someone who is, by definition, *not* at home. As my BESSA interlocutor Lillian Atieno puts it, WESSAs are "sort of half here, half there, you know. Like you have to tell me, 'oh yeah, I'm South African, but my family's descended from, you know, Irish or something. […] Like [a certain family friend], she'd always let us know that she's half Irish." Lillian's impression is that WESSAs feel less belonging to South Africa as a nation than other groups, such as Afrikaners:

> LILLIAN: When a lot of people talk about leaving the country, it's always a lot of White English-speaking people, like, there's always something wrong here. And then they could be back home, wherever it was, and everything would be good. […] They always complain about the problem, about how good it would be *elsewhere*, instead of trying to actually solve the problem here. Like, oh, we should go to Australia or something like that. […] They always, like, try and dissociate and remove themselves from South Africa.

Despite the popularity of the *soutpiel* figure (even in scholarly works such as Salusbury (2003), Steyn (2003: 33, 39) and Johnson-Castle (2018: 36-37)), none of the WESSAs I have met have actually claimed any kind of "homeland" outside South Africa (although they may well feel an emotional connection to their families' countries of origin). This makes me question the validity of the *soutpiel* characterisation in this day and age. It was suggested to me by Lillian that the term itself may be "archaic". Indeed, it has been suggested that after the 1960s, WESSA's previous "twin-allegiances to Britain (as 'home') and South Africa (as an outpost of the 'Empire')" have given way to a feeling that they "belong in neither – cut off from the one and alienated from the other" and that "this has played a large part in shaping their culture" (Sennett

& Foster 1996: 204, citing Foley A. 1992). This shift in WESSAs' perceptions of belonging has been explored by historian John Lambert, who argues that WESSAs "were in the 1930s and indeed until the advent of the republic in 1961, united by strong feelings of Britishness and of loyalty to the Crown" (Lambert 2005: 51), but that "a strong South Africanist sentiment was emerging" (pp. 51-52).

My two oldest WESSA interviewees, Cathy Linstead and Lawrence Powell, who were born in the 1920s and 1930s during the colonial era,[88] feel a strong connection to their British roots but do not consider themselves Britons. When they talk about *home*, either explicitly or obliquely, they refer to South Africa. I once asked Lawrence to describe "home" in two words, and he answered, "Cape Town". The following cohort, those born during Apartheid (from 1948 to 1994), have had their identity strongly shaped by racial policies and their classification as White, but also by national belonging to South Africa (rather than Britain or any other country). This cohort includes Tessa Ford, who is self-consciously and outspokenly critical of her upbringing in, and former embracement of, White supremacy. My younger WESSA informants – those born in the 1980s and 1990s – seem, as we have seen, to have a more insecure identity or to be more connected with specific ancestral ethnic groups.

It could be argued that none of my participants are "true" *soutpiele* in the strictest sense of the word. Regardless of which aspect of WESSA life one examines – the notion of being "bad at community", the fortress-like suburban lifestyle, the fear of the dangers of the outside world, the feeling of being redundant and irrelevant, the native language that belongs to the world as much as it belongs to WESSAs – it is not divided loyalties, but rather *rootlessness* which seems to stand out as the one constant factor of being WESSA at the current point in history. In this way, although *soutpiel* may not be a fully accurate description in and of itself, it is useful in that it directs the inquiring gaze towards very real issues concerning WESSAs' feelings of (non)belonging and their way of being in the world, as a nimble-footed people with a history of travelling far, taking *home* with them and spreading their ideas and habits to new lands, yet not being immune to alienation. Indeed, the *soutpiel* metaphor foregrounds the WESSAs' compositeness of being – a people with British cultural and linguistic roots in a South African adopted homeland – and, by extension, the inherent, open-ended *incompleteness* of WESSA-

[88] For convenience, I place the cut-off point for the "British colonial era" in 1948, the year when South Africa came under Afrikaner nationalist rule. The history of British rule in South Africa is complex: The Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State were consolidated into the self-governing Union of South Africa as early as 1909, but South Africa remained part of the British Commonwealth until 1960. My interlocutor Lawrence speaks of his childhood in the 1940s very much in colonial terms, and refers to his father as a "colonial officer".

ness and of human identities in general. It brings to mind, yet again, Warnier's pot-king figure, who, far from being inherently complete (although he may *seem* so), embodies a multitude of substances flowing ever in and out, in the interest of the reproductive sociality that makes life and his kingdom possible and a permanent work in progress.

Unlike some other nimble-footed groups – such as the Norwegian Roma, who possess a strong sense of identity based on descent and certain specific cultural traits (Pedersen 2016: 86) – WESSAs, as we have seen, largely define themselves by what they are *not:* Not Afrikaner, not African, not British, not rich, not poor. Salusbury has argued, with reference to Dyer (1997: 2), that WESSAs' discursive attempts to be seen as generic human beings is a way of gaining and holding on to power (Salusbury 2003: 110). While this is not necessarily untrue, there is also a flipside to such a supreme universalness or human *completeness*, namely the fact that it is an artificial and sterile concept implying de-situatedness and detachment, and the possibility that the very quest for it may well be a recipe for emptiness and rootlessness.

It begs the question of whether WESSAs, in their search for completeness, are really acting in their own interest (Salusbury 2003: 110-111) except in the most short-term sense. As early as 1989, Banning highlighted how WESSAs suffered the "intolerable stasis of being an isolated and exclusive 'I'" (Banning 1989: 23). Even Salusbury, who tends to portray WESSAs as astute discursive strategists, suggests that WESSAs may be "more torn and confused than other groups" (Salusbury 2003: 114). In fact, WESSAs may be *victims* of Whiteness, in their own way, as much as they are its perpetrators (Crapanzano 1985: xiii; cf. also Lang 1994: 51) – a finding in line with the view, presented in Chapter 2, of Whiteness as a totalising, all-encompassing system. As McIntosh has argued, certain forms of White privilege, "like the privilege to ignore less powerful people, distort the humanity of the holders as well as the ignored groups" (McIntosh 1989: 11). This double-edged aspect of Whiteness is often overlooked in public discourse as well as scholarly work. As Steyn summarises, with reference to Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* (1992), "the effects on the psyches of those who perpetuate racism are never exposed, despite the fact that their identity construction is dependent upon the existence of this 'other' which carries their projections" (Steyn 2003: 13).

Wings and roots

On 23 November 2018, when I was visiting my friends the Zweigs, a White, English-speaking Jewish family of Lithuanian origin, one of the family members told me that she had begun to

look into her family history. The reason, she said, was because the family wanted solid documentation of their Lithuanian roots in order to try to apply for Lithuanian passports. Some months later, at a house party in July 2019, I met a young WESSA woman named Molly Archer, who was very interested in my research and asked me to share some of my tentative impressions of WESSAs. We got into an intense conversation about the topic, and

> A bit later, she told me that she wants to leave South Africa, as the country, according to her, is not a good place for White South Africans to stay. I asked if it had to do with things like politics or the labour market. She told me (in hushed tones!) that in her opinion, there is a kind of "reverse apartheid" going on, exemplified by BEE. She complained that in South Africa, a copywriter internship will pay only about R6000 a month, while a similar internship in China will pay three times as much, "since I know English and have a degree".
>
> So, I commented, the difference in South Africa is that you have to compete against a lot of other people who are proficient in English and have degrees? But nobody really followed up on this comment of mine.
>
> (Fieldnotes 13 July 2019)

As long as Europeans and their descendants have lived in Africa, there has been a sentiment, at least in certain quarters, that Africans of European descent are not – and perhaps can never be – truly at home among other Africans. There is, for example, a strain of Afrikaner nationalism – termed *neo-Afrikaner enclave nationalism* (van der Westhuizen 2018: 39) – which has a strong secessionist bent, cherishing the idea of an Afrikaner ethno-state, a *Volkstaat*. What is less widely discussed is that WESSAs, too, harbour sentiments not dissimilar to those of secessionist Afrikaners. *Their* sentiments are not, however, expressed through nationalist aspirations for ethnically or racially exclusive communities or a *Volkstaat* within the borders of South Africa, but through outright exodus from the African continent (cf. Ueland 2012: 84; Johnson-Castle 2018: 126-127).

Half a million White South Africans – WESSAs and Afrikaners alike – have left the country in the last three decades or so, most of them younger people, which has contributed to the overall decline of the White population in South Africa (Mapumulo & Eybers 2017; BusinessTech 2018). "White flight" is seen as such a significant problem that on 9 April 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa himself went on record urging White South Africans to stay in the country and not emigrate (Ndenze 2019). Australia is often talked about jokingly as the quintessential

destination for potential White South Africans emigrants,[89] but destinations also include Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

A Reddit thread[90] from 2015, titled *Is white flight a thing?*, posed "A question to white South Africans":

> Do you know one or several white South Africans who emigrated? Do you plan yourself to emigrate? Is white flight a thing or is it being exaggerated?

Among the reasons people gave for leaving were a perceived lack of economic opportunities as well as a fear of increased hate and violence and bad government – one commenter mentioned "the rise of communistic thinking". Another participant in the same Reddit thread mentioned "peace of mind", being able to live in "a house without a fence", and "walking home drunk late at night and not worry about being mugged". There is also a narrative, which does not feature with any prominence in the mainstream public discourse in *my* field-site but is nevertheless strong in certain quarters in South Africa, that White South African farmers are victims of disproportionate violence and murder, effectively amounting to a "White genocide".

Apart from Molly Archer and the Zweig family, none of my WESSA interlocutors have talked openly about wanting to leave South Africa for good. Indeed, as one of the Reddit commenters noted,

> People simply do not want to up and leave. Many people feel heavily invested in South Africa. Many who want to leave can't because of financial reasons and then the limited options available to South Africans, especially if you don't have education.

Some of my interlocutors do, however, express feelings of being marginalised, of becoming strangers in their own country. Tracy Turner of Rosebank tells me she feels that "Sometimes you are like an alien in South Africa, as a White person, English or Afrikaans, you're contributing less, you're quite irrelevant to the bigger scheme of the country." At work, "nobody is really listening to what you've got to say". Lawrence Powell talks about how WESSAs are "politically marginalised because they are a minority," and tells me that WESSAs "have been excluded from leadership roles in politics", partly because "English arrogance was resented".

[89] Perhaps because the Australian Home Affairs Minister has issued a "call to prioritise a refugee intake of white South African farmers", who apparently need "special attention" and "help from a civilised country like ours" (Baskin 2018).
[90] https://www.reddit.com/r/southafrica/comments/3jcbgu/is_white_flight_a_thing/ (retrieved 13 August 2019)

The perceived issue at hand does not seem to be that an *individual* White South African has less to say politically (after all, every vote carries the same weight) or contributes less to the country than a non-White South African. The issue seems rather to be that White people have less influence *as a group* than other *groups* do – in other words, that Whites have less influence *qua* Whites. This is just as expected; if viewed as a bloc, White South Africans – at 7.8 % of the population – are indeed less relevant than non-White groups in the larger scheme of politics. For this to be a problem, however, one has to assume that White South Africans are bound together by common interests that are different from those of the rest of the population.

There seems to be a certain kind of group mentality at play when White South Africans complain about their lack of voice; an unspoken notion that racial groups are pitted against each other in a zero-sum game (Steyn 2001: 78-79) and that the "who" of politics matters more than the "how" or "what" (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 168). Examples of such politicised group essentialism can be seen in some of the reactions to President Ramaphosa's controversial announcement in July 2018 that the ANC government would be taking steps towards amending the Constitution to accommodate land expropriation without compensation. Negative reactions ranged from relatively moderate statements by "minority rights" group[91] AfriForum (who called the plan "catastrophic" to the country's economy (IOL 2018)) to the full-blown racist comments on the Facebook page *Stop White South African Genocide*,[92] where one man with an English name wrote that

> It's really sad watching the Bantu destroying another viable economy that had been built up by the non African settlers. The history of the Bantu in Africa is that of a self-serving ruthless Machiavalian [sic] people who use terrorism to take power and then fraud to fill their pockets while they bankrupt their nation's economy. The ANC is no exception.

Other comments were even more extreme, including vitriol against Nelson Mandela, references to the Rwandan genocide, and even a comparison between White South Africans and rhinos being hunted to extinction (!). Although the commentators seemed to be a culturally diverse group of White people, a significant amount of them had English names. There is no reason to believe that the comments on this page are representative either of WESSAs or of White South Africans in general, but they do illustrate an extreme expression of racial zero-sum-game attitudes widespread in many quarters of South African society, and show that these attitudes are also present among WESSAs.

[91] https://www.afriforum.co.za/en/about-us/ (retrieved 18 October 2019)
[92] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2119260274959996 (retrieved 13 August 2019)

Now and then, in conversations with young WESSAs, I have detected a certain tone which feels almost like bitterness or envy directed at me because I am foreign. I sometimes feel that there is a sentiment of 'Why do *you* get to live abroad, while *we*, who are also White, have to stay here in South Africa?' It is difficult to know if this sentiment *actually* exists (Besteman (2008: 102) suggests that it does), or if it is simply a figment of my imagination. Like so many unsaid things in South African society, it hovers on the edge of materiality, *almost* firm enough to be touched, to be felt; yet it always eludes capture. To gain some clarification, I brought up the subject with my friend Marcie Bell, a WESSA some years younger than myself. After discussing the matter with a friend of hers – a WESSA named Mike – she came back to me with the following answer:

> […] If there IS bitterness, I do think that safety and job-finding are two main reasons that people from South Africa would be envious of foreigners. […]
>
> [Mike thinks South Africans are] not necessarily BITTER towards foreigners, but more wishful that SA was more what they wanted it to be like.
>
> So, in summary, I'd say not bitter that foreigners live overseas whilst we're stuck here. Perhaps more a jealousy that they live in places that are better in some ways South Africans find desirable, and a longing for SA to be better in terms of those ways. But I don't think that there is bitterness that finds it's roots in people loathing SA.
>
> (WhatsApp 9-10 November 2019)

Whatever the case may be, it is clear that some South Africans have very optimistic ideas about opportunities abroad, perhaps overly so.[93] The Zweigs, in their eagerness to go to Lithuania, appear to be overlooking the growing movements of radical right-wing nationalism and anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe (Thorleifsson 2019). And as Molly Archer was talking about the low pay for interns in South Africa versus China, I could not help reflecting on the fact that in Norway, the norm is for internships to be unpaid.

Although South Africa is a special case with its own very specific issues, it is by no means the only country in the world with social, economic and governmental problems; to a greater or lesser extent, all countries do. This is something that every South African who moves abroad must eventually realise, and the realisation can be painful. On 12 August 2019, the Cape Argus

[93] This brings to mind, yet again, the notion of White South African Occidentalism. However, "abroad" in this context does not solely refer to "the West" (cf. the example of internships in China).

ran a story about a South African woman living in Hong Kong whose reaction to the ongoing protests in the city had gone viral:

> In the video, the woman said that she left South Africa to get away from such violent protests.
>
> "South Africa has this, I don't want this," she cried.
>
> (Tembo & Wang 2019)

The woman's statements were met with much criticism and derision, including comments like "She really just wanna enjoy her white privilege in peace"; "The entitlement is astounding"; "No, we don't want you back here either"; and "How do you make an entire protest about you?" (Tembo & Wang 2019). Even if some of this criticism may have been justified, there are also questions to be asked. Why did this woman feel the need to "flee" from South Africa in the first place? Where, indeed, does the idea of flight come from, and how did it come to be seen as such an obvious choice of strategy for White South Africans?

The fact that so many WESSAs complain about being politically marginalised and "irrelevant" in post-Apartheid South Africa implies a *wish* to attain a stronger sense of belonging to the country, but also a feeling of not being truly welcomed by their compatriots. If they were not invested in South Africa, why would WESSAs spend time complaining about South Africa? Perhaps the loud talk about moving to other countries is not simply an expression of entitled attitudes, but an expression of a longing for a place to feel at home in, a place to be seen as human beings, "just *me",* a place where one might feel the same kind of relief that I felt on the day when I moved from Mowbray to Rosebank. Perhaps WESSAs, like myself, are simply searching for *home.*

Being human

"The English, it has been asked – are they human?" These words were written by Cecil Rhodes' biographer William Plomer (1984 [1933]: 169), himself a WESSA of English ancestry, in 1933. In contemporary South Africa, there seems to be a sense in which the credentials of humanness are not seen as equally distributed among humans. The political discourse around land expropriation and "White flight" further suggests a worldview in which empathy and solidarity is reserved mainly for those who *appear* most similar to oneself[94] (while the racialised Other

[94] The tendency of White South Africans to refer to Black people as "these people" or "they" has been well documented (Ross 2010: 21; Johnson-Castle 2018: 19; Schutte 1995: 197, 289).

is "removed" (Johnson-Castle 2018: 19)). Although both White and non-White people can hold this worldview, it encapsulates the essence of the ideology of Whiteness through the very notion of mutually exclusive categories in a hierarchy of humanness.

In the most extreme expressions of this worldview, all human traits – cultures, personalities, backgrounds, political leanings, aesthetics, interests, abilities, morals, etc. – are colour-coded, eliminating any need to look beyond the surface. This is the worldview of racist organisations such as the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (AWB) and the *Kommandokorps*,[95] and of White internet commenters who make sweeping generalisations about "the Bantu". Ironically, this worldview is very similar to the one promulgated (albeit in an opposite form) by certain radical Black activists such as Andile Mngxitama of the *Black First, Land First* (BLF) movement,[96] who in September 2019, as a response to ongoing xenophobic attacks, claimed that "The current apocalyptic scenes of charred buildings and carcasses of motorcycles eaten by fire is a mere dress rehearsal of an eventuality awaiting white South Africa" (The Citizen 2019). In other words, all White people are seen as the same, just as all Black people are seen as the same, and the two are seen as inherently different from each other. The Whiteness of White people and the Blackness of Black people is all too often framed as primordial and immutable, as is their essential separateness and incompatibility.

This brings to mind Tutuola's (2014 [1952]: 20-23) tale of the Skull who rents body-parts from others and fools everyone into thinking he is a "complete gentleman". Blinded and bedazzled by the *jujus* of others, it is all too easy to be fooled into thinking that our fellow human beings *are* their *jujus* and belong to completely different species than ourselves. Discussions which should have been about *juju* is then easily derailed and turned into a discussion about essential traits of human groups. Rather than encouraging dialogue and understanding, the premise of essential differences encourages zero-sum-game thinking, segregation, and alienation.

On 22 June 2018, still relatively new in South Africa, I reflected that

> As I've been thinking a lot lately: people here in SA don't *want* segregation to end. I mean, non-whites don't seem to want it. Perhaps they're so used to the status quo, it's ingrained into their psyche. Most people seem to be quite comfortable with it (whites least so?). Yes, people

[95] As documented in Tarryn Lee Crossman's documentary film *Fatherland* (2013), contrary to claims by the group itself (cf. news24 2012; Euronews 2013).
[96] Which was "deregistered by the [Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)] as a political party [in 2019] due to their policy of not allowing any white person to join them. The IEC found that this went against the constitution" (The Citizen 2019).

> want economic and social improvement, but that doesn't mean they want racial integration. Sometimes I feel that many people here truly see races as different species.

My ex-partner, Zimkhitha, used to tell me that I had "eyes like a cat". My eye-colour is uncommon in South Africa, and her closest reference was a non-human creature. She talked and joked about my "cat-eyes", first with me, and then with her mother on the phone. I still find it strange and somewhat uncomfortable to think about. Even such a tiny and seemingly innocent comment can be off-putting. It gnaws at one's sense of self and can easily set in motion a destructive train of thought where one ends up wondering: *Am I less than you for being different?*

I have often asked myself: How can anyone retain their humanity in a dehumanising environment like South Africa, where the distinction between human and *juju*, container and content (*à la* Warnier (2007)), is so blurred? In the case of WESSAs, how can you retain a sense of connectedness with society when your very appearance marks you, in the eyes of many, as the very symbol of everything that is wrong with the country and the world, and you lack the feeling of cultural togetherness found among Afrikaners? How can you relate as "one of the people" when you are a member of a category which is arguably the most privileged and powerful group in the country yet simultaneously refuses to acknowledge the existence of that privilege and power? WESSAs, bewildered, knock vainly on a door that does not open. They remain in the cold, cut off from the full fellowship of the South African nation, feeling rootless, resentful and marginalised.

I do not think it is possible to fully understand WESSAs in contemporary South Africa without understanding this pain and bewilderment. In a society based on "[s]ystemic, and indeed systematic, societal preference" (Steyn 2018: 13) for Whites, Black pain is real. In its most fundamental sense, however, pain is *human.* Rather than being seen as possessing specific colours, pain should perhaps be understood as manifesting itself in different ways – sometimes in radically different ways – according to one's position in the racialised and highly unequal social configuration of South Africa. The differences between *my* lived experiences and those of a Black person like Zimkhitha, while undeniably real and very significant, are not due to any kind of "essence" inherent in either of us (Distiller & Steyn 2004: 5), but simply our ascribed roles in the game into which we are both thrown, and the ways in which our *incompleteness* as human beings plays out through the different connections that the rules of the game allow us to make. Our differences, great as they may be, rests on a fundament of common humanity. The

challenge, then, is to find a common ground which would allow us to bypass the game and communicate *as human beings.*

When good becomes bad

In Cape Town and elsewhere, WESSAs have long been associated with so-called "liberal" politics (Salusbury 2003: 30; Steyn 2003: 90-91, 235; Ueland 2012: 6; Worrall 1976: 196; Foley A. 1991: 21; Butler 1985: 172; Barker & De Kock 2007). Like many political labels, "liberal" is a vague term (Ueland 2012: 8; McKaiser 2014: 54) which can mean different things in different countries and contexts. In South Africa, "liberal" politics seem to contain elements of individualism, accommodating diversity (cf. McKaiser 2014: 51-52, 57-59), focusing on political liberty yet still addressing poverty and other social issues, and having a non-racial outlook (Cardo n.d.; Trewhela 2017; McKaiser 2014: 192; MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 95-96; Salusbury 2003: 115). There are, however, strands of South African liberalism that present as aggressively market-capitalist and anti-Communist and detached from the issues of the disadvantaged (Steyn 2003: 127-131), and the DA, "a party seen to be the vanguard of liberalism by many" (McKaiser 2014: 30), has been criticised – rightly or not – for being "right-wing, poor-insensitive and deeply uncaring" (p. 19).

The image of WESSAs as a liberal and "good" kind of Whites (cf. Ueland 2012: 37) is an image of which many WESSAs are proud (cf. for example my interview with Lawrence Powell), and it seems to be shared by many non-WESSAs as well. Zimkhitha, for example, has a White great-great-great-grandfather, but does not know his exact ethnic origin. At one point she told me that she hoped he was a WESSA and not an Afrikaner. However, right from the beginning of my fieldwork, I was uncertain about my stance on this issue, and in a note written in November 2018, I asked myself: "Are WESSAs/Brits really the quintessential good guys, or have they simply been very good at marketing themselves?"

As early as 1971, Orpen argued that WESSAs were a "fairly 'authoritarian' cultural group" (Orpen 1971: 301), more exposed to and influenced by the authoritarian norms of Afrikaner culture than to the "liberal" traditions of England (p. 302). Some of my own interlocutors also express strong hints of scepticism to WESSAs' purported progressiveness, liberality and goodness, such Cherilyn Booysen, who, as we have seen, berates them for their "pretense". When I have brought up the topic of contemporary South African social issues in interviews and conversations with WESSAs themselves, their responses have tended to be defensive of

their own actions and of WESSAs (or Whites) as a group. Like Lawrence Powell, they may focus on the good things brought by colonialism. Like Thomas Finlayson, they may blame the Black population for their own poverty, for not working hard enough to keep up with the Whites. Like Tracy Turner, they may blame the ANC government for not doing enough to lift people out of poverty. Or, like the people on the WhatsApp alert group, they may construe criminality as a characteristic specific to non-White people.

Another tendency is to blame Afrikaners for Apartheid. While Afrikaners as a group have little choice but to acknowledge the fact that Apartheid was instituted in their name (cf. Giliomee 2019: 77), WESSAs try their best to distance themselves from White supremacy (Steyn 2018: 10; Steyn 2003: 123-124, 135, 222) and indeed often frame themselves as protagonists in the freedom struggle narrative. Lawrence, as we have seen, believes that WESSA opposition to Apartheid was based in a cultural belief in the rights of the individual. In a way that evokes Steyn's concept of *white talk,* he places the blame for Apartheid squarely on the shoulders of the Afrikaners and exculpates himself not only of *guilt,* but also of any indirect complicity:

> LAWRENCE: Let's be honest: The Afrikaner gave Whiteness a bad name through the very unjust and unworkably impractical and stupid policy of Apartheid. I mean, I've spent my entire thirty years in journalism fighting Apartheid, through the columns of the newspaper.

Stories of WESSA anti-Apartheid activism abound, and many are surely true (Nuttall 2001; Salusbury 2003: 32-33; Foley A. 1991: 26). Lawrence is undoubtedly sincere in his stance against the ideologies underpinning Apartheid, and he has undoubtedly contributed significantly to combating those ideologies through his journalism. Nevertheless, the narrative of WESSA heroism, [97] as it has been presented to me, sometimes comes rather close to suggesting that the struggle was one of non-White South Africans and WESSAs fighting together against the Afrikaner nationalist government. Although this narrative has elements of truth in it, a wholesale framing of WESSAs as struggle heroes is problematic because it underplays the "politically divided nature of the WESSA group" (Foley A. 1991: 19) as well as their Whiteness as an aspect of their position within the Apartheid system.

The tendency of WESSAs to project racism onto Afrikaners has notable parallels in other parts of the world. Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre observe that "there still remain[s] a misrecognition" in the United States, even among anthropologists, "that white supremacy is something that *other* (read: ignorant, poor, or uneducated) white people *do"* (Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre 2019:

[97] Reminiscent of the DA's attempts – not well received by Black voters – to position themselves as a liberation struggle party equivalent in stature to the ANC (McKaiser 2014: 123-147).

69). As they point out, "[t]his characterization, in the words of Jonathan Rosa and Yarimar Bonilla (2017, 203), 'effectively delinks present-day racism from colonial histories of power, disavows US settler colonialism, and silences critiques of global coloniality' and global white supremacy" (p. 69). In the Netherlands, Çankaya and Mepschen observe that "liberal and progressive 'middle-class' articulations of whiteness […] often remain unrecognised and – especially – bathed in innocence" (Çankaya & Mepschen 2019: 626). Çankaya and Mepschen take issue with

> the liberal peripheralisation of racism, a discursive practice that locates racism in the 'white working class' and symbolically exorcises it from the 'moderate', centrist core of Europe. Rather than truly facing racism, what seems at stake for many liberals and progressives is the self-image of being well-meaning 'respectable' and 'good' middle-class people. (p. 626)

This closely reflects the processes at play among WESSAs. The concern with being perceived as "good", and the subtle discursive correlating of "goodness" with middle-classness, almost exactly sums up the mentality I have observed in Cape Town, the only main difference being the addition of the regionally specific WESSA/Afrikaner ethno-linguistic dimension. It may be argued that the very dichotomy of middle-class (or WESSA) "goodness" versus working-class (or Afrikaner) racism serves to reproduce the same type of zero-sum approach to identity that the people in question purport to criticise through their rhetoric. A more honest and constructive approach would be for WESSAs and others to adopt a position of humility, recognising the *incompleteness* of any identity claim.

As Nuttall puts it, "[c]learly such whites [who themselves were involved in the struggle against apartheid, and in some cases the military dimensions of that struggle] are not representative in demographic terms of the white population" (Nuttall 2001: 116). Apartheid privileged *everyone* classified as White, which of course includes WESSAs too (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 66-67), and although Schlemmer's (1976) statistical data suggested a "fairly well-formulated social conscience among a *substantial minority* in the English-language group" in the Apartheid era (Schlemmer 1976: 126)), he also warned that "there appears to be far from a majority recognition of the specific need for improved race policies in South Africa, and in this sense the results should not give English-speaking whites cause for self-congratulation" (p. 128). In the same volume, Garson asserted that "[g]enerally, English-speaking South Africans have endorsed the doctrine of White supremacy" (Garson 1976: 35).

In my November 2018 note, I reflected that

> Claiming that WESSAs were constantly fighting against Apartheid is rather meaningless if you do not also consider the fact that they were fighting from a privileged position *within* the system. […And b]y denying complicity in Apartheid, a white person effectively continues to deny non-white people any truth to their experience of the realities of Apartheid. It is a form of gaslighting, a technique of domination which has no place in a conversation between (supposedly) equals.

With the notable exception of Tessa Ford, none of my WESSA interlocutors has openly acknowledged or even problematised their Apartheid-era White privilege, or whatever role they may have played – consciously or not – in the perpetuation of White supremacist ideology. Even so, it seems to be common knowledge in my field-site that the material comfort of many WESSAs in the area is largely a continuation of their situation – or that of their parents and grandparents – prior to 1994. Furthermore, as Bell (1993) has documented, there was significant pushback from the local community against the establishment of UCT student residences in the Mowbray area in the early 1990s and the influx of students of colour into the community, which suggests that the WESSA community of Mowbray, Rosebank, and Rondebosch contained strong conservative elements and a certain opposition to democratic change. According to Tessa Ford, such attitudes still linger on:

> TESSA: I just think a lot of people haven't moved on in the area. Especially the older people. […] They're still stuck in the era of White privilege, I would say. Um… says me sitting in a house like this. But they still look down on people like street people […] It takes a long time, especially when you've been brought up in Apartheid era like we have, where you're brought up to think that you're superior. (Interview 4 April 2019)

At one point during my fieldwork, I learned that a local DA politician, a WESSA, was in the habit of publicly claiming to have been an operative in the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (the armed wing of the ANC, abbreviated MK) during the anti-Apartheid struggle. A civic leader of some prominence in the Southern Suburbs decided to investigate this, and made phone-calls to erstwhile leaders of the MK who denied that the person in question had ever been affiliated with the organisation.[98] This increased my scepticism towards WESSA virtue-signalling and claims to struggle credentials. If an elected official could spread blatant lies about something as serious as this, I gathered that anyone might lie about anything. The same person also told

[98] The civic leader revealed this information to me and others in a public workshop hosted by a Southern Suburbs civic association (not the RMCA).

me at one point that he was the Honorary Consul of Norway in Cape Town, which was another lie.[99]

The apparent lack of self-critical reflection, combined with the proliferation of questionable information, partial truths and even outright lies about WESSA "goodness" and political heroism, damages WESSAs' collective credibility. In fact, the "liberal peripheralisation of racism" (Çankaya & Mepschen 2019) brings to mind Robin DiAngelo's concept of White Fragility. DiAngelo argues that "white moral objection to racism increases white resistance to acknowledging complicity with it" (DiAngelo 2011: 64), and that "Whites who position themselves as liberal often opt", for reasons of psychological comfort, "to protect what they perceive as their moral reputations, rather than recognize or change their participation in systems of inequity and domination" (p. 64). The focus on one's own good deeds may also – and simultaneously – be understood as a sincere attempt to open up the closed door; to prove oneself and one's humanity; to gain access to, and legitimacy in, the national community. Either way, the insistence on "goodness" may be seen as yet another manifestation of the scramble for *completeness* – in this case a "complete goodness" which sees no need to apologise to or otherwise engage with the Other, and which is therefore fundamentally un-convivial in nature. It is therefore not surprising that the perceived lack of humility and critical introspection among WESSAs, and their perceived failure to own up to their role as part of the privileged "caste" of South Africa (cf. Fredrickson (1982 [1981]: 98) both during Apartheid and today, constitutes a real obstacle to constructive dialogue between WESSAs and other South Africans. In the following section, I recount an incident which changed my awareness of my own positionality and privilege as a White person, and which reveals a fundamental missing piece in WESSAs' current attempts at legitimising themselves.

Reflections on a slaughtered sheep

On Sunday 23 December 2018, security guards emptied the Atlantic beach known as Clifton 4, at the western extremity of Greater Cape Town, allegedly due to an incident of sexual violence. It was reported that "Those affected were mainly people of colour, and even included local ANC figure Faiez Jacobs" (Head 2018a). This was seen by many as a racist move – a flashback to the Apartheid era, when South African beaches were segregated. At the time I did not really

[99] The Honorary Consul for Norway and Sweden was, and still is, Geir Tellefsen; cf. https://www.cnsct.co.za/ (retrieved 7 September 2019)

know what to think, but the fact that an ANC politician was among the people told to leave the beach seemed to me to be a main reason why this specific event got such a high level of publicity.

The City of Cape Town soon revealed that it "had not given any authority to [the security company in question] to remove people from Clifton Beach at sunset" (Sicetsha 2018). There was also doubt as to whether the alleged sexual violation had really occurred, and the City eventually filed a complaint against the company (The Citizen 2018). On Friday 28 December, a group of protesters, including Chumani Maxwele of *#RhodesMustFall* fame, slaughtered a sheep on the beach in order to "exorcise the demon of racism". The protest was dubbed *#ReclaimClifton,* and a video of the event was released and shared on social media. Being in the vicinity that day, I remember seeing a lot of traffic going from Green Point towards Clifton. An Uber driver later told me there was going to be a "sit-in" at Clifton beach. He was not sure exactly what it was all about. I only got the story later, by reading the news online.

While the *#ReclaimClifton* protest was going on, others were simultaneously protesting *against* the sheep-slaughter, framing it as animal cruelty (Thamm 2018; Mjo 2018). Proponents of *#ReclaimClifton* framed the competing protests in terms of race. *The South African* quoted a tweet: "The yts are complaining about the slaughter. Quick question, how do they think the meat they buy at Woolies comes to be? Do they think the butchers wait for the animals to die of natural causes? #OccupyCliftonBeach" (Head 2018a). Those who slaughtered the sheep were eventually charged with breaking the law, as "the slaughter of an animal in a public space without consent" is illegal (Head 2018b; The Citizen 2018).

My initial reaction to the incident was one of scepticism, if not exasperation: Race *again?* And does *race* always equal *racism?* My feeling at the time was that people might have been overlooking other possible alternative or intersecting explanations such as class arrogance (forcing poor people off the beaches of the rich), the corrupting influence of power (security guards have the tools for physically subduing others, and may have gotten carried away), sincere misunderstandings on the part of the security firm's employees, and/or a normal security response to legitimate grievances about crime. At the time, I found the Clifton beach incident an interesting possible example of a complex incident being quickly reduced to a matter of "Black versus White" because that was what people *expected* to see, or perhaps even what they *wanted* to see.

However, upon further reflection, I found myself sympathising more and more with the *#ReclaimClifton* protesters. On 9 January 2019, the Facebook page *Busting The Myth Of White Genocide In SA* posted a meme about the Clifton incidents, featuring a quote by Ferial Haffajee. Reading some of Haffajee's work, [100] and contemplating the simple captioned image (screenshot below), helped me understand a point that had previously passed me by: The fact that people felt the Clifton beach removals to be reminiscent of trauma from the Apartheid era, a time when *Net Blankes / White Persons Only* signs dotted the beaches of Cape Town. Indeed, it is evident to me, in hindsight, that the racial framing of the Clifton incident had to do with *pain:* The pain of memory as well as the pain of racialised inequalities that linger on even if *Net Blankes* signs are no longer to be seen. The reactions highlight a need for serious confrontation with, and accountability from, White South Africans who, in order to save *themselves* from pain, prefer not to acknowledge their unearned privileges.

Figure 10. *Facebook screenshot.*

The incident with the slaughtered sheep, and my subsequent attempts at critical reflection and self-education, showed me that despite my hyper-awareness of the omnipresent racialisation of social interaction in South Africa, and despite my inner struggle with personal identity versus

[100] https://www.africaleadership.net/what-if-there-were-no-whites-in-sa-ferial-haffajee/ (retrieved 10 September 2019).

ascribed identity, I still possessed something that made me fundamentally and quintessentially *White:* An unawareness and lack of understanding of the positionalities and lived experiences of those who, historically and currently, have been racially Othered and marginalised. Forgetting my *jujus* of White privilege, I had started seeing myself as *complete,* un-situated and neutral. Regardless of my self-professed critical stance and the structural disadvantages I *do* have (for example as a transgender woman), I had not "transcended" my positionality as a White person (Ahmed 2004). Indeed, it is something I may never be able to do. This realisation forced me to finally face the reality of White privilege as the privilege of not *having* to be self-aware about race, of not *having* to engage with present and past racial injustice.

What happened at Clifton illustrates the lack of sensitivity often shown by the privileged towards the experiences of the marginalised. It is not difficult to understand how an insistence that race "has nothing to do with it" can feel like a denial of Black lived realities. The outcry about animal cruelty added insult to injury and revealed a lack of understanding of indigenous African lifeways as well as a lack of willingness of Whites and urbanites to even try to have a discussion on equal terms with poor and rural Black South Africans. Whether or not it was an intentional red herring (my suspicion is that it was simply an expression of ignorance), the animal abuse criticism served little purpose other than to side-track the debate and to delegitimise the concerns of those who saw themselves as victims of racism.

The Clifton incident summarises many of the problems surrounding interracial relations in modern-day South Africa. It all comes down to the will and courage not only to *listen* to the perceived Other, but to make an active effort to *understand* the message being conveyed, even if the language may be unfamiliar and the message uncomfortable or even painful. True understanding demands an acknowledgement that one's point of view – even with regard to oneself – is never universal and *complete,* but always partial and situated, and always mediated – and skewed – by circumstances and *jujus,* not unlike a funhouse mirror. The only way to overcome this is through humility and earnest listening.

Summary conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed some common perceptions of WESSAs. Based on my WESSA interlocutors' verbal accounts of their own identities, I have argued that the *soutpiel* stereotype does not describe them well, and that it may no longer be valid in today's South Africa. I have also argued that many WESSAs' eagerness to frame themselves as "good" people may be seen

as a consequence of their search for *home* in South Africa, but that their perceived lack of humility and critical introspection creates an obstacle to open and honest dialogue with other, less privileged groups. WESSAs' strategies for claiming belonging in South Africa are thus wrong-footed, and a different and more honest kind of engagement is required, one that is based on humility and attentiveness to the perspectives of people whose lived experiences are different from one's own.

Unlike their colonial predecessors who pushed ideologies of *completeness* in the name of furthering "civilisation", the WESSAs of today strive for acceptance and inclusion as part of a democratic South African nation. A true decolonisation of South African society (cf. Nyamnjoh 2016: 279-280) requires WESSAs to leave behind all notions of the superiority of their own culture (or *any* one culture or lifestyle) and begin to engage with their Others on equal terms. Partaking in a community requires a recognition of the partialness and situatedness of one's own being, an especially salient challenge for WESSAs, whose collective positionality is so often construed as universal, normative and *complete.* To be at home is to be *part* of a whole, to accommodate *and* be accommodated, and to *share* equitably. This is all contingent on an acknowledgement of *incompleteness* and an abandonment of ideas of life as a zero-sum game where the winner takes all, be it land, wealth, political power, cultural influence, goodness, or humanness.

CHAPTER 7

Summary and general conclusion

Thesis summary

As stated in the General Introduction, my research question for this project has been as follows:

> *How do middle-class WESSAs in Cape Town experience (a) their daily lives and their social position in terms of race, ethnicity and class; and (b) their own positioning vis-à-vis non-Whites, especially from a geographical point of view?*

In this thesis, I have attempted to answer this question by presenting everyday life in a Capetonian suburban environment from the perspective of an "outsider within", and by engaging with interlocutors from a variety of backgrounds, South African and non-South African, WESSA and non-WESSA. In this way I have attempted to view the "Mask dancing" of middle-class WESSA-ness (using Chinua Achebe's metaphor) from as many angles as possible, from the inside as well as the outside, but always acknowledging my own *situated* viewpoint in line with Haraway's "feminist objectivity" where "only partial perspective promises objective vision" (Haraway 1988: 583). I have generally kept to my original plan, although my fieldwork came to focus somewhat less on WESSA self-perceptions and somewhat more on the ways in which WESSAs are viewed by others. The geographical focus has remained a continuous underlying theme, and my data has provided much insight into the ways in which middle-class, White and WESSA identities are played out through the use and organisation of place and space.

My autoethnographic participant observation, presented in Chapter 4 *Suburban adventures,* has provided insight into life as an English-speaking White person in my field-site, and, by extension, into relations between WESSAs and other categories of people. While living in upper Mowbray, I experienced Othering as a White person, which, combined with misgendering and what I felt to be a generally tense social atmosphere, caused me significant stress and emotional pain. After moving to the heavily WESSA and middle-class suburb of Rosebank, where I felt much more at peace, I began reflecting more deeply on my experiences in Mowbray and became curious about what kinds of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion might be at work in Rosebank. Further fieldwork made clear to me that because most of my field-site is aesthetically, culturally and institutionally dominated by Whiteness (and especially

Englishness), racial Othering – except in certain specific areas, such as my neighbourhood in upper Mowbray – is predominantly directed towards non-White people. In middle-class residential areas like Rosebank, a number of factors, including an increasingly heavy securitisation of neighbourhoods, combine to keep poor and non-White people *out* in a very literal sense, creating an environment permeated by an atmosphere of affluent Whiteness. Black South Africans, although present, are largely invisible except as commuting labourers, a setup which reinforces the already strong correlation between race and class in South Africa. In sum, middle-class WESSAs in my field-site seem to geographically congregate in ways resembling Apartheid-era White Group Areas.

My data suggest that WESSAs occupy the top rung of the social ladder both in terms of racial privilege, linguistic privilege, socioeconomic status, and cultural and institutional hegemony. The fact that social status and power are invested in a person based on their possession of *jujus* of Englishness suggests that personhood in my field-site is seen in terms of an ideal of *completeness.* My conversations with non-WESSA interlocutors, discussed in Chapter 5 *Conversations on identity,* suggest that WESSAs are clearly seen as privileged in this sense, and that their power over social streams and flows has much in common with that of Warnier's "pot-kings". My WESSA interlocutors are not themselves blind to this privilege, but they seem to be much less aware of it than non-WESSAs are. Furthermore, my conversations with WESSAs suggest that while they feel alienated from the South African nation, none of them fully fit the *soutpiel* stereotype of someone whose loyalties are divided between Britain and South Africa. On the contrary, they all seem highly invested in South Africa as their homeland, and try, in a variety of ways, to claim legitimate belonging. Some do this discursively (like Lawrence Powell), some do it indirectly (like Thomas Finlayson, whose frustration at his own rootlessness is evident), and many do it in their daily lives, for instance through community work and civic engagement.

However, as I have shown in Chapter 6 *Bewilderments of being and belonging,* the ways in which WESSAs do this is through discourses that often evade issues of racialised inequalities or focus on WESSAs' collective goodness, or through institutions where WESSAs are already dominant. Rather than legitimating WESSAs' belonging among other South African groups, these strategies, with their focus on reinforcing ideals of *completeness,* serve to exacerbate their outsider-ness. In the final section of this chapter, I argue that the key to acceptance and inclusion is to acknowledge the partialness and *incompleteness* of one's perspective, and to listen to the perceived Other with humility and attention and on equal terms.

How does this thesis contribute to knowledge?

My ethnography provides new information about WESSAs as a group as well as the social dynamics within this specific field-site. Among other things, the thesis makes a statement about the nature of WESSA group identity, arguing that they should indeed be viewed as an ethnic group. The thesis also provides value and novelty through its methodology: Its thick descriptions of life among middle-class WESSAs over a significant period of time, and its examination of this powerful but elusive ethnic group through the eyes of an "outsider within", help bring to light important social dynamics both within the WESSA category and between WESSAs and non-WESSAs. The autoethnographic approach has been of great value in foregrounding the mutual Othering which happens between people of different racial categories, and the painful social divisions that result from it. Furthermore, the thesis' conceptual framework of *incompleteness* highlights an important but hitherto largely unexplored aspect of the situation of WESSAs in contemporary South Africa, namely the often-overlooked – and perhaps counterintuitive – fact that within the totalising system of Whiteness, the quest for universal, supreme, *complete* humanness ultimately leads to alienation and loss even for White people themselves. I believe this is likely to be true not just in South Africa, but in every corner of the world where Whiteness exists.

On a more fundamental level, the framework of *incompleteness* gives the thesis a larger theoretical significance which is, perhaps, its most important contribution. Using theoretical elements originating from West and Central African cosmologies and epistemologies to investigate, elucidate and explicate Whiteness in South Africa, the thesis aims to form part of a decolonial shift (Harrison 2012, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) away from the "cognitive empire" of Euro-American dominance and towards "epistemologies of the South" which would "allow the oppressed social groups to represent the world as their own and in their own terms" (Santos 2018: 1). In this way, the thesis is a contribution to what South African decolonial scholar Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni considers to be the core project of decolonisation, namely "the task of re-humanization and the creation of new forms of life" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020c: 191).

While this thesis is informed by theoretical perspectives from the South, I myself hail from the global North. As such, the thesis aspires to embody, as fully as possible, the spirit of "southern theory" in Connell's sense – i.e. not only in terms of "different propositions", but also in terms of "different knowledge practices"; of *"learning* in new ways, and in new relationships"

(Connell 2014: 218). Through my use of the Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan framework, I hope to contribute to what Harrison terms an "alternative space", a "post core-periphery setting, a democratized and decolonized environment in which a diversity of anthropologists and kindred thinkers [can] come together, productively engaging each other at the 'crossroads of knowledge'" (Harrison 2012: 88).

Further vistas: Embracing saltiness

I find that the main "affliction" of WESSAs in my field-site, and perhaps in Cape Town or even contemporary South Africa as a whole, is their isolation and insistence on holding on to a certain lifestyle and aesthetic. There seems to be a reluctance to challenge the justness or naturalness of one's own wealth and privilege and to *truly* engage with and integrate into South African society at large. This reluctance seems to be based on a combination of fear, habit, and lingering notions of the *completeness* and excellence of European and British culture. My observations support Schutte's claims that in South Africa, "the 'civilized' values set by whites cannot but be associated with the white way of life" (Schutte 1995: 358), and that many South Africans believe in "an unbridgeable, or almost unbridgeable gap in civilization between white and black" (p. 291). At the heart of it all lies the deeply-held idea – originating in colonialism and bolstered by Apartheid (MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 11, 92) – that categories of humans are *different* in their very essence. The assumption of essential differences is held by South Africans of all colours and backgrounds and can be understood in Tutuolan terms as a confusion and conflation of human beings and *jujus,* combined with a refusal to acknowledge the presence of *jujus* and to see them as what they are.

From a Tutuolan/Nyamnjohan point of view, the *races-as-species* mindset (Cock & Bernstein 2002: 14; Mbembe 2017: 35, 56; MacDonald 2012 [2006]: 93) is really a *humans-as-their-jujus* mindset in which external, unchosen circumstances (such as poverty or wealth, or a certain accent) translate into a reflection of a person's inherent essence or character, which is seen as *complete*. Indeed, the very system of Whiteness can be seen as an expression or modality of such a mindset, where the image of the "complete gentleman" overshadows the reality that humans are first and foremost *humans,* and that augmenting ourselves with *juju* technologies of self-activation does not take away from our common humanity. The *humans-as-their-jujus* worldview is dehumanising by its very definition, which helps explain why WESSAs choose to continue to self-segregate and – through problematic narratives of past heroism and present

marginalisation – to make sure their Whiteness remains "less visible" (Nuttall 2001: 121). For someone who subscribes to a *humans-as-their-jujus* mindset, being called to account for your privilege might be easily interpreted as being told that you *are* your privilege and nothing more, leading to the kinds of defensive responses I have discussed earlier. At the same time, WESSAs themselves play a very important role in maintaining and perpetuating ideas of difference through their very practices of self-segregation, *white talk*, and strategic deployment of *jujus* of Whiteness and Englishness.

WESSAs are neither heroes nor villains, neither "bastards", "wimps", nor "ghosts" (Foley A. 1991); they are simply *humans* struggling to find belonging and purpose not only in a changing South Africa, but within the very hierarchies of Whiteness in which they find themselves on top. My focus on WESSAs' pain must not be taken as a defence of their social position, or as pandering to White Fragility (DiAngelo 2011). As has been shown in this thesis, the pain in question derives directly from the system of Whiteness in which WESSAs are entangled. If anything, the fact that Whiteness causes pain even to those at the top of the hierarchy is a reason for White people to step up, own up, and use their agency to engage even *more* critically with their position as part of a structurally racist society. I have attempted to demonstrate that perpetuating Whiteness is in the interest of nobody, not even White people themselves. Clinging to illusions of completeness may bring short-term power and advantage, but it comes at the cost of something else and more fundamental: Community, belonging, *home.*

By foregrounding WESSAs' *plight* as participants, willy-nilly, in an all-encompassing, dehumanising system of Whiteness, and by taking a "problem-solving" approach to my subject matter, it may perhaps look like I have fallen into the very trap of "soul-saving" that Nyamnjoh (2015b: 48) has criticised as detrimental to honest, curiosity-driven anthropology. On the other hand, as ethnographers we always form part of our fields, constantly affecting and being affected in turn. It may therefore be argued that a role of detached and impartial observer is unattainable, and that a certain level of engagement is unavoidable. This is the standpoint of critical ethnography (Foley D. E. 2002). In the context of this project it is also worth considering the ethical argument, put forward by Salusbury, that the very "mapping of whiteness is a specifically anti-racist endeavour" which should deal with "the problem of transforming academic concepts into real social change" (Salusbury 2003: 17).

In a sense, employing an "engaged" approach towards WESSAs means turning the tables of "traditional" anthropology: The "civilised" WESSAs, rather than being the purveyors of answers and solutions, are recognised as having questions and problems of their own,

emphasising their humanness and their commonalities with (and dependence on) their non-White compatriots. Such an anthropology may even be seen as *subversive* in that it challenges the inevitability of the South African race and class configuration, or indeed of any social system. Instead of "impos[ing] upon the world a preconceived meaning of the human" (Ingold, cited in Erasmus 2017: xxii), such an anthropology urges us to rethink what it means to *be* and *become* human, with, for, and through others. It is an anthropology that opens up for "holism, reintegration, and synthesis" (Harrison 2008: 36), and invites us to explore *incompleteness* as "the normal order of things" (Nyamnjoh 2017b: 262). It helps us see *jujus* for what they are, and to see through them, like the Emperor's new clothes or the dazzling beauty of Tutuola's Skull. I argue that this realisation – knowing *humans-as-humans* instead of *humans-as-their-jujus* – will always be a necessary prerequisite for a truly "anti-racial social ethos" (Erasmus 2017: 23).

If there is any truth to the *soutpiel* or "salt penis" stereotype whatsoever, it implies that WESSAs are light-footed, adaptable, industrious and innovative. As a metaphor and a symbol, salt is *multivocal* in that it has a range of possible interpretations (Turner 1975: 155). Among other things, it evokes images of the high seas and "salty" figures such as Captain Jack Sparrow from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies (cf. e.g. Verbinski 2003), who is portrayed as a quintessential self-made man and a lover of freedom, adventure, and tall tales. Captain Jack is a character who is difficult to pin down or box in. In his capacity as a pirate, he is a person who sees opportunities and grabs them, and he can thus be seen as embodying the great potential inherent in human incompleteness.

Salusbury notes a tendency for WESSAs to construe themselves as "culturally adaptable", and although she argues that this is specifically seen in contrast to "cultural and ethnic 'others' [who] are characterised as culturally immutable" (Salusbury 2003: 65), adaptability is not in itself an oppressive trait. If cultural adaptability, openness, and nimble-footedness are genuine values for WESSAs, and not (or at least not *only*) a rhetorical strategy to maintain their status as a group, these values – this *saltiness*, as it were – should not be thrown out with the bath-water. In fact, WESSAs may have much to teach others about living together in a mutually accommodating way. A South Africa in which WESSAs are fully integrated and included as *equal* members of the national community (in the sense of being neither above nor below nor apart, but on the same level as others *qua* human beings) – a speculative scenario, of course, as it would require the active support and participation of WESSAs themselves in order to actually come true – is a South Africa which appreciates the good side of the salt penis. Openness,

adventurousness, and conviviality can all be seen as fundamental aspects of WESSA culture, a culture which can help build a truly inclusive society which does not strive for completeness, but acknowledges incompleteness and compositeness of being as fundamentals of human life. It may indeed be argued, as McKaiser (2014: 61-67) has done, that diversity-respecting liberalism, in which WESSAs have often taken pride, is in its essence *Ubuntu.*

It must be said that without an equitable redistribution of resources to alleviate South Africa's racialised social and economic inequalities, any aspiration to a non-racial society will run the risk of amounting to little more than power-evasiveness masking as colour-blindness (Frankenberg 1993: 14, 189). Provided such redistribution can be achieved, however, a convivial South Africa may well be within reach. I often reflect on the ways in which I have been shaped by encounters with unfamiliar people and places. My time in South Africa has connected me with a life partner and many new friends. It has instilled in me a love for many aspects of South African culture, as well as new understandings of the world and how to relate to it. I am not the same person that I was before moving to Cape Town, nor will I ever be; a South Africanness has seeped into my Norwegianness and created a new compositeness of being. Nobody comes out unchanged after sojourning in a bush of ghosts. Life in this country has altered my inner landscape just as fundamentally and permanently as my gender transitioning is altering my outer appearance, and I have undoubtedly contributed to changing the people around me, too.

If this is how human life works, with constant change as the only constant, then how can we as humans see ourselves as anything other than inherently *incomplete?* And how, then, can we see this incompleteness as anything other than an opportunity, an invitation to reach out to others and come together in conviviality and mutual fulfilment? Where, then, are the limits to interconnection, to understanding, to growth? What reason could there possibly be to impose artificial limitations on ourselves by clinging to social hierarchies and ideas of essential differences?

Are we not already kaleidoscopes of being, belonging and continually *becoming?*

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Social media (public pages and threads)

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RMCA minutes

All minutes of Management Committee meetings and AGMs of the Rosebank and Mowbray Civic Association (RMCA) from 23 October 2018 and onwards are publicly available in PDF format at the RMCA homepage: https://www.rmcivic.org.za/meetings/ (last visited 25 March 2020)

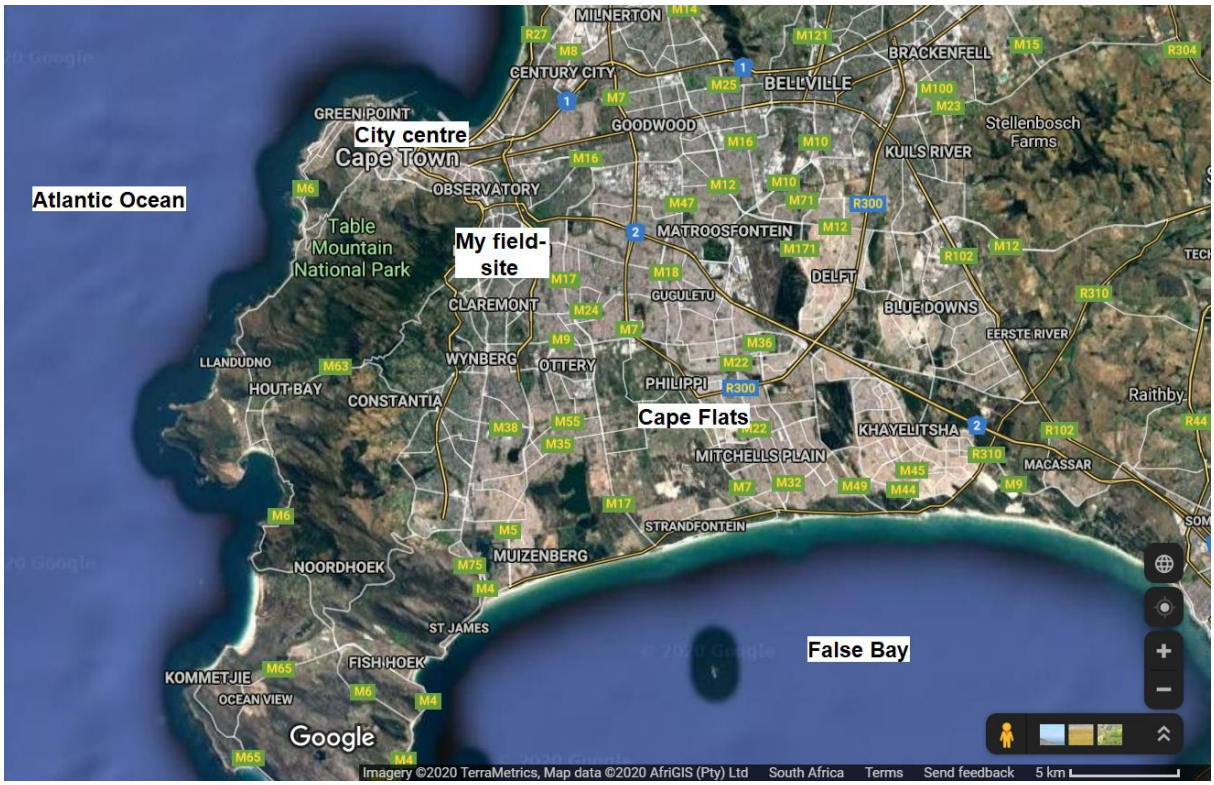
Appendix 1: Map of Africa

Retrieved 3 July 2020 from Mapswire (https://mapswire.com/maps/africa/africa-physical-map-large.jpg). "Cape Town" label added by me.

Appendix 2: Map of South Africa

Retrieved 3 July 2020 from *OnTheWorldMap.com* (http://ontheworldmap.com/south-africa/)

Appendix 3: Map of Cape Town and surroundings



Retrieved 3 July 2020 from Google Maps. White labels added by me.

See page 46 for a more detailed map of my field-site (Figure 1).