Prepared for a World that no Longer Exists:

White Afrikaner Males Revise Identity for a Transformed World.

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Master of Arts in Social Anthropology.

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Abstract

Following the peaceful transition in 1994 from apartheid to democracy, and the political realignment of power from the Afrikaner minority to the Black majority, South Africa has been thrust into a social climate of radical and far reaching change. As one formerly advantaged group in the new dispensation, white Afrikaners are facing new and often bewildering challenges as they struggle to carve out an appropriate space for themselves in the new political ethos of non-racialism and equality for all.

This study examines how a particular group of white Afrikaner men between the ages of 28-42 in the town of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape, are negotiating their way in post-apartheid South Africa. As individuals who grew up in a system that enshrined the privileges of minority white Afrikaners, while denying the majority of the population basic human rights, these men are currently faced with a system that places them now, as full grown adults, on equal footing with the rest of the South African population.

This study pivots around the question of how these men are coping with this radical change, and how crucial aspects of their identity, personal and collective, are being reformulated. It is argued that the past, combined with the embodiment of class privilege, serves as an important reference point for these men in their attempts to bridge the felt dissonance between the past and the present. The study also examines the importance of ritualized group activity and interaction, as well as demonstrating how the motifs of 'adapt or die,' 'a world that no longer exists,' and 'sins of the father,' are used as current coping strategies. The study also shows that despite a post-apartheid South Africa that advocates nationalism and unification across races and ethnicities, boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are nevertheless continually re-created and reinforced.

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Abbreviations:

ANC	African National Congress
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
NGK	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk
NP	National Party
PMC	Professional Managerial Class
SADF	South African Defence Force
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

1. Introduction

Since the peaceful transition to democracy in April 1994, South Africa has been the site of significant political realignment, moving from the white minority stronghold of the Afrikaner National Party (NP) to the non-racial economic and social order of the African National Congress (ANC). Prior to the negotiated settlement between the NP and the ANC, apartheid, instituted by the NP in 1948, was an Afrikaner led policy that entrenched the social, economic and political privilege of white Afrikaners. As a vehicle of Afrikaner nationalism, apartheid sought to secure the future dominance and upliftment of the Afrikaners through repressive legislation (Giliomee, 1994: 530). Based on a pre-occupation with ethnic survival (Giliomee, 2003: 323), the Christian nationalism of apartheid stressed Calvinistic values of patriarchal authority, heterosexuality, the nuclear family, and the protestant work ethic (Vestergaard, 2001: 19, Epstein, 1997: 8). These efforts came to fruition, as by the 1960s and 1970s, the Afrikaners had largely been transformed into an urbanized middle class people (Welsh, 1969: 270, Giliomee, 1994: 530). Yet, it was during this time that Afrikaner rule came increasingly under attack, receiving its blows in the Durban strikes of 1973, the Soweto uprising of 1976, and the general rise of black consciousness. The continued violent resistance to apartheid in the 1980s gave rise to alternative visions of Afrikaner survival and a new generation of intellectuals and politicians who advocated a negotiated settlement between Blacks and the minority white population. The beginning of the end of Afrikaner rule culminated in F.W de Klerk's February 2, 1990 speech that effectively unbanned the ANC and other liberation groups, paving the way to a peaceful transition to democracy on April 27, 1994 (Saunders, 2004: 160).

The future of the new government, led by the ANC, can be seen as "...premised on the demise of everything [apartheid] has stood for (Norval, 1996: 299). Many of the changes, driven at the macro-level by government policies, have reversed the entitlement of whites as the recipients of social and economic privilege. One such impact has been the Employment Equity Act that seeks to eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace through the implementation of affirmative action. As a part of current government legislation, affirmative action seeks to remove barriers to

employment for disadvantaged groups, including Blacks, Coloureds, Indians, women and people with disabilities by increasing diversity, implementing training programs and ensuring that people from designated groups are fairly represented (Jordi, 2002: 13). Affirmative action, in conjunction with Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), a socio-economic process that seeks to ameliorate inequalities through the transfer of economic ownership and control to the Black majority,[1] has become the "...lightening rod that catches feelings of grievance..." among the Afrikaner community (Steyn, 2001: 73). These feelings were vividly elaborated upon by former president F.W de Klerk in *Learning to Live Together*, an open forum held by the Justice and Reconciliation Centre at the University of Cape Town on October 24, 2005. During this session, De Klerk vehemently argued the plight of minority white Afrikaners who he feels are being forced overseas due to legislative measures that denounce the competitive edge inherent in a mixed market capitalistic society. This concern of white Afrikaners, in addition to a new democratic ideology that counters the ideological grammar of apartheid, has resulted in feelings of displacement among this group as they struggle to come to terms with democracy in the new South Africa (Vestergaard, 2001: 3). The new positioning of Afrikaners in South Africa has been studied by numerous scholars (Botha, 2001, Grobbelaar, 1998, Korf & Malan, 2002, Vestergaard, 2000, 2001), who cite an overwhelming feeling of loss among this group. Within this group, there has emerged the specific plight of white Afrikaans men between 30 and 50 in the media – a passionate debate that has appeared in Afrikaans newspapers such as *Die Burger* since 2000. The debate centres upon the reaction of journalist Chris Louw to W.A de Klerk's book *Afrikaners: Kroes, Kras, Kordaat* (2000) that urges Afrikaners to accept the mistakes of the past and become an integral part in creating the new South Africa. Louw's article entitled *Boetman is die Bliksem in* (Brother is Fed Up), directs his anger towards De Klerk's generation for playing around with apartheid concepts while his generation lived out their words in the battlefield, adhering to their requests and never questioning authority.

> My generation of men have been brought up to control our emotions, not to give ourselves over to any kind of affection, love or hate. We were taught to be seen and not heard; to carry out our tasks without complaining and always show respect for older people. In short, willing to give our lives for our country for the greater cause. I

[1] Empowered Futures: Fact or Fallacy? Unpublished BEE Lecture Series 2005, hosted by the Political Studies Students Association of Political Science, Department of Political Science, University of Cape Town, September 28, 2005.

> is as diplomatically as possible. your [illegible] between 30 and 50 years old...let me put self-rationalization....your book is written for the old man in his seventies [illegible] wrinkles on his face, grey hair and glasses on his nose (Chris Louw, Die Burger, May 8, 2000, my informant Conrad's translation).

Louw, who felt his generation was moulded into accepting National party rhetoric without questioning, acutely portrayed the anger towards the previous generation.

> I am a product of a Christian National Education. A successful making of organizations like your Broederbond....you never tasted the embarrassment. Not you or any of your generation ...now we are sitting with new questions. Apartheid is dead. Now there is transformation and reform. A new state has been ordered with a snap of the fingers, "Come *boertjie* (literally small farmer)[2], move your ass. Outa has ordered his own state. Stand at attention. Don't talk back. It's your obligation to help build the new state (Chris Louw, Die Burger, May 8, 2000, my informant Conrad's translation).

The group of Afrikaner men that are the focus of this study share many similarities to Louw's generation of men – a specific generation of white Afrikaner men in the new South African dispensation. Specifically, this dissertation will focus on white upper-middle and middle class Afrikaans men between the ages of 28-42 in the town of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. As a specific place in South Africa, Stellenbosch has captured the imagination of popular culture and scholars alike as the apex of Afrikaner intellectual thought and culture. Seen historically as the home of Afrikaner intelligentsia, Stellenbosch can be seen as a special place where Afrikaner thoughts and ways of life come together (Teppo, 2004: 62).

This dissertation will explore how a particular group of white upper-middle and middle class Afrikaner men between the ages of 28-42 in the town of Stellenbosch are negotiating their place in the new South Africa. As a group of men who were born during the throes of apartheid, reached puberty and young adulthood during the tumultuous 1970s and 1980s, served in the South African Defence Force (SADF) under mandatory National Service during the early 1990s, and were economically self-sufficient twenty-somethings upon South Africa's first democratic election, these men are an interesting example of how a particular group is negotiating its way in South Africa's new democracy. To unravel the negotiation process, this dissertation pivots around the question of how these men, through an oscillation

[2] This direct English translation, while accurate, fails to capture the true meaning of the term. While historically connected to Afrikaner farmers, the term is often used to describe oneself and/or other Afrikaners, regardless of occupation.

between the past and present, are attempting to resolve the dissonance between their expectations and the new set of circumstances in which they find themselves. Closely linked to this is the question of how ritual social life, seen as an embodiment of shared norms, presents the men with an effective coping mechanism to combat their growing perception of marginality in the new South Africa.

Historical Background

The rise of Afrikaner nationalism was strongly linked to fundamental socio-political and economic changes that occurred within the past century. (Grobbelaar, 1998: 387). The economic upheaval induced by rapid urbanization and industrialization following the South African War (1899-1902), turned average Afrikaner farmers into impoverished urban proletariats, and highlighted both the high economic discrepancy between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking whites, and the rising economic competition with Blacks (Vestergaard, 2001: 21). The problems caused by war, drought and structural changes in the larger world of capitalism left the Afrikaner people scattered, impoverished and without any real historical identity to clamour towards. Afrikaner identity building was undertaken at many levels of society, beginning with the 'language movement' of the early 19th century that gave legal status to the mother tongue of the Afrikaners, Afrikaans, a mixture of High Dutch, local dialects and languages spoken by Indonesian and African slaves (Teppo, 2004: 28). Yet, it was the pervasive poor white problem that became the rallying call behind Afrikaner nation building in the 1920s and 1930s, as key Afrikaner organizations attempted to find an expression for Afrikaner identity and nationalism (Giliomee, 2003: 530).

With the electoral victory of the National Party in 1948, the initiation of apartheid came to fruition through the efforts of the Afrikaner Christian Nationalist movement. Originally viewed as a separate development of races, apartheid put full responsibility for society in the hands of whites, and encouraged separate defined groups to find pride in their own *volk*. The notion of the Afrikaner *volk* was based on values of God-fearing Calvinism that originated in structures of patriarchal authority among husbands, fathers, priests, school principals, and political leaders. Heavily influenced by the protestant work ethic imported from the Calvinistic Netherlands,

this movement stressed the vital role of the Afrikaner man, who was idealized as an instrumental agent who worked out God's will in Afrikaner history (Moodie, 1975: 17).

Following rapid urbanization in the 1930s and 1940s, the dominant trope of Afrikaner masculinity moved from the puritan ideal of the simple and steadfast farmer to the superiority of the man of action in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Stressing physical attributes, the Afrikaner man of action still embraced conservative values of heterosexuality and religiosity, whilst paying heed to the rising economic materialism of emerging capitalism (Du Pisani, 1997: 9). The Afrikaans saying *'n Boer maak 'n plan'* (a farmer makes a plan)[3] epitomizes this image of the far-seeing, cunning and industrious nature of the Afrikaner man, who, despite any situation is able to plan beforehand and make an appropriate plan of action. The Afrikaner woman, on the other hand, was historically portrayed as her husband's loyal helper, a woman who sustained her husband in times of crisis and was entrusted with bearing and raising Afrikaner children (Moodie, 1975: 17).

Following 1948, one way the South African state was able to entrench Christian Nationalist values and morals as natural was through the Christian National Education system. Christian National Education, alongside the growth of urban Dutch Reformed Churches, otherwise known as *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK), attempted to thwart all denationalising influences and assert national Afrikaner distinctiveness (Welsh, 1969: 270). Christian National Education was integrated into the state educational system during the apartheid years and was geared to reveal a Christian philosophy of life that championed conservative Calvinistic beliefs (Moodie, 1975: 105). This system was an important avenue for legitimising the power, authority, and identity of the state through the endorsement of Christian values concerning monogamous sexuality within marriage, patriarchal authority and respect (Cross, 1999: 44, Epstein, 1997: 9).

By the end of the 1970s, the Afrikaners had been transformed into a relatively secure middle class people (Giliomee, 1994: 530). In fact, Afrikaners had moved steadily up the economic ladder, with the number of white-collar workers rising from 29% in 1946 to 65% in 1977 (Le May, 1995: 239). However, while many Afrikaners

[3] This direct English translation fails to capture the full meaning of this particular saying. In fact, many of the participants, while agreeing that this was a correct translation, argued vehemently against the absence of meaning. For them, *'n Boer maak 'n plan* can be applied to all white Afrikaners, regardless of occupation.

benefited enormously from apartheid, many were given sharply drawn choices of identification that remained firmly attached to the typical Calvinistic understanding of marriage, family and generational respect, giving little room to negotiate competing images of the 'good Afrikaner' (Vestergaard, 2001: 21, Goodwin, 1995: 95).

During this time of economic prosperity, apartheid came increasingly under attack. The violent Black youth protest of the 1970s gave rise to a series of responses epitomized in the NP's policy of 'total strategy.' This strategy sought to eliminate all resistance through police-state terror to create the stability that the violent happenings of the 1970s had threatened (Frankental & Sichone, 2005: 168). Alongside the policy of 'total strategy' was P.W Botha's contradictory 'adapt or die' attitude that resulted in a number of reforms to apartheid that was portrayed as a sacrifice of some democratic freedoms of whites (Giliomee, 1994: 539).

The dismantling of apartheid and the ushering in of the post-apartheid dispensation has had far reaching consequences for white Afrikaners. Liberal democratic values have replaced the credo of the apartheid regime, as the new Constitution presently endorses a range of basic rights for all citizens that were denied to the majority during apartheid, including the elimination of discrimination, and the freedoms of religion, expression and association. Alongside this are new governmental legislative measures, such as BEE and affirmative action that offer to redress past disadvantage to the Black majority. These and many other changes, including the introduction of English into historically Afrikaans universities such as Pretoria, Rand Afrikaans and Free State, have stimulated a crisis in the Afrikaner community. Scholars such as Giliomee (2003: 660) argue that institutional structural changes have displaced the necessary reproduction of the Afrikaans language and culture, as organizations like the NGK have lost significant membership since the 1994 transfer.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Problematizing the concepts of 'Afrikaner,' and 'Afrikaans-speaking,' and "Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner.'

As Goodwin has noted, the problematic nature of determining who is an Afrikaner is a "...vicious/mystical/pathetic-verging-on-bathetic debate [that] goes on, presenting a dilemma for anyone writing a book about Afrikaners" (Goodwin, 1995: 51). Other scholars like Vestergaard (2000: 5), have noted the often inconsistent and rarely agreed upon definition of an 'Afrikaner,' or 'Afrikaans-speaker.' For the purposes of this dissertation, I will be drawing upon the terms of 'Afrikaner,' 'Afrikaans-speaking' and 'Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner' to describe my informants, all of whom are white. This is not to deny the often divergent accounts among my informants of what constituted an 'Afrikaner' or an 'Afrikaans-speaker,' including Coloured people (see chapter 5), but rather serves to situate my own work among white Afrikaans men between the ages of 28-42.

Middle Class

As a concept, the middle class has been the subject of much debate in the social sciences. Its enigmatic nature has eluded theorists from anthropology to history, as it has often been tossed around with gay abandon without any definitional precision. The historical tendency of the social sciences to focus on lower-class groups has resulted in the middle class serving more as a rhetorical device whose characteristics are created mainly to illuminate those in the lower strata (Sterns, 1979: 379).

As Gaude (2004: 5) points out, Sherry Ortner stands out as an anthropologist who has attempted to break through the taboo of the middle class. Her book *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture and the Class of '58* (2003), serves as a useful model for anthropologists who wish to break through the imprecision of the category. Seeing that the middle class has indisputably become a central part of the way in which capitalism evolved, Ortner (2003: 296) parts company with the classic two-part Marxist scheme (bourgeoisie/workers), and instead follows a tripartite scheme of Professional Managerial Class (PMC)/middle class/lower class based on occupation.

For my own purposes, I have chosen to endorse Ortner's delineation of class, as my data excludes information on income, and extends only to education and occupation.

Also of relevance to an analysis of class is Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1984: 268), specifically his premise that external cultural assumptions become internalised as elements of one's identity. Yet, my argument, rather than incorporating all the elements of Bourdieu's 'habitus', such as tastes, clothing and other bodily inscriptions, will focus exclusively on his notion of the internalised nature of cultural assumptions. Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' (1984: 13-14) will also form an important element in the elucidation of class for these research participants. The consistency of certain forms of 'cultural capital,' including Ortner's (2003: 155) 'boy track' and the 'college track,' (see chapter 3) will be directly linked to the participants' upper-middle and middle class positioning.

Also important are the very obvious differences between the middle class in America relative to South Africa. In America, middle class speaks for itself, in the sense that most people would understand it without explanation, as it has proven to be the norm rather than the exception (Gaude, 2004: 29). In South Africa, on the other hand, the middle class has historically been the exception rather than the norm, and has predominantly been associated with the white population. Having been brought up in the historically bourgeois Afrikaans town of Stellenbosch, the label middle class largely spoke for itself among the participants. All the men I interviewed understood the term without explanation and agreed that it was an acceptable description of their class position.

Narrative

Narrative and storytelling, seen as a medium of language where several temporal events are arranged in a meaningful way, provides people with a sense of meaning and order within and across time (Rapport & Overing, 2000: 284). Seen as deriving in both the individual and socio-cultural domains, narrative functions both as a unique aspect of individual subjective experience and as part of a public language (Rapport & Overing, 2000: 286). While individuals create something particular and unique to themselves, the deeply internalised narrative conceptions that people create invariably find support in the moral reasoning of specific socio-cultural settings

(Rapport & Overing, 2000: 288). Rapport & Overing, Jackson (2002) and Ochs & Capps (1996) are but a few scholars who have attempted to bridge the ongoing debate between the individual and socio-cultural derivation of narrative. More specifically, these scholars, who accept both an individual and socio-cultural explanation of narrative, attempt to uncover how narrative enables human beings to negotiate a balance between private and public spheres of knowingness.

This dissertation accepts the assumption that storytelling is neither wholly individual nor social, but rather is an aspect of what Arendt (1958) calls the 'subjective in-between,' a place where individuals are continually subject to a variety of private and public interests (Jackson, 2002: 12). As an aspect of this 'subjective in-between,' storytelling can be seen as a social act that reworks the balance between actor and acted upon, as the struggle to negotiate, balance and mediate these two modes is felt in every human encounter (Jackson, 2002: 13). When prompted by a crisis, storytelling acts to transform varying contexts of identification. This remodelling allows people to "...feel that [they] actively participate in a world that for a moment seems to discount, demean and disempower [them]" (Jackson, 2002: 16). In essence, storytelling is a journey that vividly portrays a sense of moving 'to and fro' in the world (Jackson, 2002: 33, Ochs & Capps, 1996: 27). Important is the notion that storytelling is not purely a personal revelation, but is created in the course of sharing and collaborating with others (Jackson, 2002: 23, Ochs & Capps, 1996: 30). As a strategy, it is often used to resolve a perceived discrepancy between what is expected and what has actually transpired, and frames events as problematic in light of this expectation. How one evaluates these events is intricately linked to communal and/or local ideas of what is rational, moral and appropriate (Ochs & Capps, 1996: 23).

In her book *Stories, Community and Place: Narratives from Middle America* (1990), Johnson pursues an analysis that views narrative as a form of social action. For her, personal storytelling solidifies and creates appropriate social roles and relationships. Of interest is her idea that gendered storytelling works to reflect appropriate social roles. In pursing this analysis, Johnson (1990: 77) examines how gendered social roles and relations are elaborated and manipulated in stories, and examines how cultural knowledge about these roles are transmitted through stories.

The theoretical approaches of Jackson, Johnson, and Ochs & Capp, will structure the narrative aspect of this dissertation. Their idea of storytelling as an

oscillating 'to and fro' movement that aids actors in negotiating opposing domains of identification will provide the groundwork for the narrative analysis in chapters 3 and 4.

Ethnicity and Social Identifications

The study of identity and ethnicity has long been a battleground of diverging theoretical debate, as theorists have struggled not only to separate the two concepts but also to merge them in an all-encompassing theory. Standing out amongst them are Richard Jenkins' *Ethnicity Etcetera* (1996a), *Rethinking Ethnicity* (1997), *and Social Identity* (1996b), important works that attempt to synthesize previously diverging work into a coherent model. This basic social constructionist model of ethnicity includes 4 elements: (1) cultural differentiation, (2) shared meanings that are produced and reproduced during social interaction, (3) the variable, manipulable and often situationally contingent nature of identity (4) and ethnicity as a social identity that is simultaneously collective and individual (Jenkins, 1996a: 40).

Concerning the first and second components of Jenkins' definition, ethnicity can be seen as constructed on an 'us' and 'them' binary. Following Barth (1969) and Cohen (1985), it is argued that both similarity and difference are produced and reproduced across the ethnic boundary line during interactions (Jenkins, 1997: 41). This dissertation will combine arguments of Jenkins with those of Barth and Cohen to demonstrate how boundaries are drawn and maintained through (1) the prescribed nature of interaction (Barth, 1969: 16), (2) a positive rendering of a felt stigma (Cohen, 1985: 60) and (3) a desire to distinguish one's group from those who represent something perceived as negative (Cohen, 1985: 12). In other words, the reproduction of difference is what creates the image of similarity within a group.

The third element situates identity as something that is continually in flux and subject to a shifting negotiation by actors. Jenkins proposes that for a message of identity to be meaningful, it must not only be received by significant others, but be accepted by members of a group (Jenkins, 1996b: 23). The final component of identity, and the most central to his argument, is Jenkins' notion that individual and collective identity is inherently "...entangled with – the other" (Jenkins, 1996b: 19). The sketches of this theory are held together by the assumption that individual identity

is never fully meaningful in isolation from the social world, for "...we cannot see ourselves at all without also seeing ourselves as other people see us" (Jenkins, 1996b: 21). As a part of the social world, the institutional order and larger stratagems of power often play a vital role in distributing particular kinds of identities. The struggle for power at the institutional level invariably leads to the formation and maintenance of a certain class of people who can be seen as sharing similar life-experiences and chances (Jenkins, 1996b: 25).

Important to Jenkins' model of identity is his use of Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). In presenting oneself to members of a group, an actor is never wholly able to control the signals that he/she sends, and therefore must use 'impression management strategies,' consciously or otherwise, to insure that a message is correctly communicated. 'Impression management strategies' are those that dramatize the relationship between one's self-image and public image, and are used by actors to exemplify the accepted values of the social group (Jenkins, 1996b: 22). Essential elements, including a 'proper' setting and other items of expressive equipment also aid actors during 'impression management strategies' (Goffman, 1959: 33).

To give the impression of adhering to ideal standards of one's group, individuals usually make a concerted effort to conceal any action or behaviour that is inconsistent with these standards (Goffman, 1959: 50). In so doing, activities, facts and motives which are known to be incompatible with the impression an actor wishes to put forward are relegated to the background, while those that personify agreed upon standards of the group are presented to give the impression that they are related to them in an ideal way (Goffman, 1959: 56-57).

Also of relevance to a discussion of identity is Jenkins' notion of nominal and virtual identity. Nominal identity, the name of an identity, alongside virtual identity, the experience of an identity, are often compounded against one another. In times of radical social change, either the name of an identity can change while the experience of that name remains the same or vice versa. Or, both can change (Jenkins, 1996b: 24).

Jenkins' arguments, in conjunction with premises of Barth, Cohen and Goffman, will form an integral part of chapters 5 and 6. Through a variety of tactics performed during ritual social life (see chapter 6 for definition), including weekend

braais and festive drinking, it will be shown how the participants were able to give meaning to their social identity through validations offered by others.

Structure of Thesis

This introductory chapter has provided a brief background and historical sketch of the social location of the participants and has identified the focus of the research. Chapter 2 will provide an outline of methodologies used, introduce the reader to the field site and participants, as well as provide a reflexive account of my research. Chapter 3 will focus exclusively on the participants' narratives of the past, and uncover the evolution of their felt dissonance between their past expectations and their perceptions of present circumstances. Paying close attention to the emergent themes of patriarchal respect, deference to authority, and self-discipline, this chapter will unravel the role their past expectations play in their present day reactions to radical social change.

Chapter 4 will examine the exact nature of the men's coping strategies. Through an analysis of larger cultural themes, including crime, sport, relationships and employment, this chapter will trace how these men are bridging these instances of felt dissonance. While giving careful consideration to how the men are forming new patterns of association, this chapter will similarly look to the men's narratives as a reflection of appropriate male gender roles according to the way they were raised. A further interrogation of coping strategies in chapter 5 will examine how essential elements of the men's identity, nominal and virtual, are being revised and renegotiated against the backdrop of an ethos of non-racialism. It will be shown how the displacement of institutional identification, in addition to a public rhetoric that challenges underlying motifs of Afrikanerdom, has stimulated a revision of identity. This revision, taking place within the warm familiarity of ritual social life, will be shown to be a valuable coping mechanism that is used to realign oneself in a world fraught by radical social change.

In chapter 6, this dissertation will examine how aspects of ritual social life amongst the enduring group of seven men (see methods), provides a template for the production of social identity. Situating these men as a cohesive group of white upper-middle and middle class men whose relationships can be traced through time and

space, it will be shown how this particular group's existence is closely linked to the coping mechanisms it performs. Performing within the traditional comfort of regular braais, this chapter will demonstrate how the group is able to re-assert boundaries with 'others,' while simultaneously expressing taken-for-granted understandings of similarity.

The conclusion will draw together the different layers of the dissertation, and illustrate how this group of white Afrikaans men between the ages of 28-42 in Stellenbosch, are negotiating their way through South Africa's new democracy while still embracing traditional ways of knowing. The group, instead of merely providing a comfortable social space to negotiate identity, can be seen as gaining its existence through the urgent need of its members to cope with far-reaching social change.

The Origin of Interest

This dissertation is based on five weeks of concentrated research in Stellenbosch during the months of June and July 2005. My burgeoning interest in South Africa and particularly Afrikaans culture, developed long before my arrival in South Africa, as I formed lasting friendships with many Afrikaans people during my travels in Asia for three years. It was during my stay in Taiwan, where I worked as an English teacher from 2002-2004, that I was introduced to a particular group of Afrikaans people who, upon learning of my future study plans in South Africa, initiated me into a world of stories and narratives that explicitly drew upon their perspectives as white Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa. It was through the kind efforts of Conrad, one of my Afrikaans acquaintances in Taiwan, that I was able to come into contact with the group of Afrikaans men in Stellenbosch that form this study.

Upon arriving in South Africa, my knowledge of Afrikaans culture was based on one South African history course taken during my undergraduate studies in Canada, several South African works of fiction and, of course, my interactions with this group of Afrikaans people in Taiwan. It wasn't until I was introduced and ushered into the lives of the men who form this study that the idea of studying an aspect of Afrikaans culture developed. And like the stories that caught my interest in Taiwan, the stories and narratives of this particular group of Afrikaners in Stellenbosch helped pave the way to the research and writing of this dissertation.

Limiting the Scope

The historical association of apartheid with Afrikaners has resulted in a gathering momentum of interest and speculation among scholars, ordinary citizens and the international community alike. This direct correlation has positioned the Afrikaners as one of the most stereotyped and socially dissected groups in South

Africa's new democracy. As a foreign student studying Afrikaans culture in English Cape Town, I was subject to an onslaught of negative reactions by local Capetonians, who were quick to disdain my burgeoning interest and fascination with Afrikaans culture. Many disparaged my desire to learn the culture and language, and to my surprise, labelled and stereotyped me in a similar way to the Afrikaners. It is not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that I, upon being introduced to Afrikaans culture for the first time, held similar stereotypes of Afrikaans people, and sought out affirmations of those ideals. Yet, my extended immersion within Stellenbosch and among this particular group of Afrikaans men, allowed me to look beyond the simple and one dimensional stereotypes that were offered to me. After several months of immersion, in addition to a considerable amount of rapport with the research participants, I found myself a proud champion of Afrikaans culture, and made a concerted effort to dispute stereotypes that were put forward by my Capetonian friends.

The point is that my interest was not, as many believed, relegated to the stereotypical *Boer* (Afrikaner farmer),[4] who is often perceived as inherently racist, narrow-minded and fanatically religious. I am only claiming to offer an interpretation of a number of themes that developed during my research among this particular group of white Afrikaner men in Stellenbosch. It is clear from previous research done that 'the Afrikaners' are significantly more internally diverse than this particular study of men would suggest. My interpretations highlight an aspect of change in South Africa's political realignment among a particular group of white Afrikaner men, and I do not claim to represent all 2.5 million white Afrikaners living in South Africa.

Methods

During my five weeks of fieldwork, which were supplemented by ten months of regular weekend visits, I interviewed and interacted intensively with a total of 15 white Afrikaans men between the ages of 28 and 42, 13 of whom I was able to gather in depth information on, including general work and life histories that included

[4] The term *Boer,* while historically associated with Afrikaner farmers, is often used by all South Africans, including urban Afrikaners to describe Afrikaners. Many of the participants, all of whom are urban, described themselves and others as *Boers* on several occasions. Its use is also dependent on the context in which it is deployed, as it can be communicated and received as either positive or negative.

general upbringing and familial information. During the initial stages of fieldwork, formal interviews formed the bulk of information gathered, as I met and formally interviewed most of the men on at least two occasions. The formal interviews often took place in local coffee houses or pubs for several hours during either the afternoon or evening, and were mostly tape recorded on a dictaphone. As many anthropologists forewarn the novice ethnographer, the use of a dictaphone can often impede the interview process, and subsequently I was rather pleased, as were my informants, to pursue many of our conversations off the record. The recorded conversations were transcribed and like the 'off the record' conversations, were supplemented by detailed field-notes.

A large proportion of the fieldwork was based on participant observation at weekend braais, Afrikaans dances, birthday parties, and similar social festivities. These regular social festivities often took place in the informants' homes and at public venues the men ritualistically frequent. A majority of the social occasions that I participated in tended to be small and intimate, and rarely included those outside the core group of seven men (see upcoming section). These intimate braais often took place in either the participants' homes, or backyard gardens. Several had sprawling and luscious gardens, and braais were often hosted in traditional *lapas* (an enclosed outdoor braai area), that were built especially for entertaining. During these social occasions, I was able to take note of material culture, both inside and outside the participants' homes. All the participants in the study independently rented either houses or flats, and had considerable access to various forms of material culture, including taken-for-granted 'essential' modern conveniences, including running water, electricity, etc.

Observation was not wholly relegated to interactions among group members, as there were many instances where I was able to observe the group in public venues such as pubs, coffee houses, etc. Yet, a large proportion of this study, especially chapters 5 and 6, is based on the social space of intimate braais among these well known cohorts. Interactions among 'others' (see upcoming section), usually occurred outside this familiar social space, and the themes surrounding these interactions emerged only after extended immersion.

I was rarely given the opportunity to participate in the family life of most of the participants. The exceptions to this were Jasper, and the brothers, Conrad and Jaco, who continually invited me to Sunday afternoon braais at their parents' homes

in Stellenbosch. Over a 9-month period, I attended several dozen family braais at Conrad and Jaco's natal home, and approximately half a dozen at Jasper's fiancé Liezl's home.

The use of qualitative methods as a source of data generation raises many ethical issues in a research project. In order to carry out my research project ethically, I guaranteed the participants anonymity, and all my interviews, whether formal or informal, were conducted according to the ethical guidelines set by the AAA. I gained informed consent from my interviewees in advance through a verbal agreement, and ensured the participants that the information given would be used exclusively for future data analysis.

Tracing Relationships through Time

As the academic and cultural capital of Afrikaans-speaking people, Stellenbosch has historically been renowned as a gathering place for the best talents in the country (Stellenbosch Town Council, 1979: 337). On several occasions, many of the research participants boasted the achievements of Stellenbosch's sacred prodigies, including the recently deceased entrepreneur, Anton Rupert, who, I was told, was a fine example of a shrewd Afrikaner businessman. This sense of pride was combined with a fervent desire on the part of the participants to outline Stellenbosch's intellectual roots and pre-eminence. Regardless of their origins, the participants in this study can be seen as fully immersed in an upper-middle class environment that championed higher education and financial and occupational prestige as a taken-for-granted ideal.

Ethnographically speaking, it is important to note that the thirteen men in this sample form a complex network of friendships that dates back to their University and early childhood days. The social and physical space that served as a communal meeting place in the past, and continues to serve in this capacity in the present, is a well known 'watering hole' in the centre of town, The Terrace. A majority of relationships through to the present can be traced to this physical space, as three of the key participants, Jaco, Jasper, and Alfred, worked as barmen during their University days in the early 1990s. This physical space solidified the friendships of the men who

grew up together, and extended forward into a dynamic network of friendships that now includes all 13 participants.

As a social space, The Terrace figured predominantly in the men's narratives and stories of the past and was often used to trace and demonstrate the evolution of their friendships through time. In fact, it was the space where I was introduced to all 13 men and as such, provided me with a similar social space to forge my own network of friendships.

This group's friendship networks, while strongly demarcated by race, ethnicity and language during intimate social occasions, did, on occasion, include other people. When frequenting public venues, such as bars, pubs, restaurants and coffee houses, interactions with 'others' were quite common. One particularly marked 'other' was Divesh, who was introduced to the group by an accounting colleague of his. Over a five-year period, Divesh, an Indian who is of the same class and generation as the group, came to be a mainstay in the group, albeit in a periphery manner, and often interacted with the men on a weekly basis in town. On occasion, Divesh was invited to cohort braais and parties, but these tended to be relatively large, and he was usually not present at small intimate braais.

The research participants also occasionally interacted with English South Africans and overseas visitors, who, like Divesh, can be seen as outsiders to the group. Interestingly, many of these interactions stemmed from my own friendship networks in Cape Town. On a few occasions, I brought my roommate, Barbara, a Black Ugandan studying at the University of Cape Town, to Stellenbosch for weekend visits. My emphasis in outlining these interactions with 'others' is important precisely because patterns that emerged over a ten-month period are integral to the analysis offered in chapter 6.

An ethnographic curiosity that drew my attention immediately was the relative absence of women. This is not to say that women were wholly absent, as white Afrikaans women were often present at braais, dances, and occasions of ritual drinking in town. Yet, what became clear was the extent to which women were relegated to the periphery of the group, rather than staking a claim as members. This was made obvious by the frequent comings and goings of women, and the fact that the only enduring women were the girlfriends of Jaco and Jasper. Even in cases such as these, they seldom joined the same space of the men at braais, and rarely if ever joined ritual drinking in town. In discussing this, many of the participants told me that

they preferred to keep serious romantic relationships separate from the 'clique,' as they perceived the raucous happenings of weekend festive drinking as destructive to romantic relationships.

Table 1 provides a summary of the participants in this study, and is a useful tool for demonstrating the striking similarities in their lives. As shown in the table, these men can be seen as forming a particular generational cohort, as many of them are only a few years apart, the exception being the 28 and 42-year old informants. As a specific generational cohort, all the men in this study, who have been given pseudonyms, have some form of tertiary education, all are currently unmarried, and all are employed in some capacity. The asterisks indicate the enduring group of seven men who form the main focus of the chapter 6.

Table 1. Background of the participants.

	Age	Education	Current Employment	Original Resident of Stellenbosch?
***Danie**	37	Diploma-Mechanical Engineering (Cape Tech)	Sheep farmer in Laingsburg (W.Cape)	Yes
***Pieter**	42	M.A-Industrial Psychology (Stellenbosch University)	Owns strategic planning consulting business	No,(Brandvlei: N.Cape). Living perm in Stell for 24 yrs.
***Jaco**	32	Diploma-Marketing (Stellenbosch College)	Farm Manager	Yes
***Deon**	32	M.A-Xhosa (Stellenbosch Univeristy)	Freelance Real Estate Agent	Yes
***Conrad**	37	Honours-Industrial Psychology (Stellenbosch University)	Professional Hunter – owns own business	Yes
***Alfred**	34	Masters in Town and Regional Planning (Stellenbosch University)	Town Planner for Stellenbosch	Yes
***Jasper**	34	Honours-BComm (Stellenbosch University)	Financial Manager for Vodacom	No,(Karoo/Mossel Bay). Living perm in Stell for 16 yrs.
Kobus	34	Dentistry Degree (Stellenbosch University)	Independent Dentistry Practice	No,(Yzerfontein,E. Cape). Living perm in Stell for 5 yrs.
Ferdie	28	Completing BComm-(Stellenbosch University)	Fulltime Student	No,(Vredenburg, W.Cape). Living perm in Stell for 4 yrs.
Johann	34	MsC in Genetics (Stellenbosch University)	Teacher-Upington, N.Cape.	No,(Windhoek, Namibia). Was a resident of Stell for 14 yrs.
Handre	34	B.A-incomplete (University of Port Elizabeth)	Wine marketer for private company	No,(George,W.Cape). Living perm in Stell for 11 yrs.
Lennie	30	PhD-Botany (University of the Western Cape)	Currently completing PhD	Yes
Barry	34	BsC-Chemistry (University of Port Elizabeth)	Biochemist-corporation	No (George, W.Cape). Living Perm in Stell for 11 yrs.

Situating 'Self'

My position as a young white English speaking woman from Canada coming into a predominantly Afrikaans cultural centre to study upper-middle and middle class Afrikaans men situated me immediately as the 'other.' My positioning not only as an overseas visitor but also as a woman highlighted my 'otherness' in several ways. As I gradually learned, many of these men were keenly aware of the preconceptions and/or stereotypes that they believe foreigners hold about Afrikaners. Their sensitivity as Afrikaners in the new South Africa, compounded by what they perceived to be 'bad press' about Afrikaners in the international media, was a grievance many were open enough to share with me. It was only after several months of 'hanging out' with these men that I was able to feel my 'otherness' disappear to a large extent, marked significantly by my keen interest in learning the Afrikaans language. My rapport with this group, alongside their recognition of my very real interest in their culture and language, can be seen as predicated on the colour of my skin. Not to deny the vital strides the non-racial ethos of the new South Africa has made, it is, however, my opinion that whiteness still remains a salient factor in Stellenbosch among this group of men. Therefore, I believe that my white skin was an important component in establishing that I could be one of them.

Also of relevance was my position as a woman interviewing Afrikaans men. Many scholars (Giliomee, 2003, Du Pisani, 1997, Epstein, 1997, Vestergaard, 2001) have noted that historically, Afrikaner identity has been shaped by strong values of patriarchal authority. While contemporary images of Afrikaans masculinity offer a more feminised version of masculinity, epitomized by the image of De Klerk embracing Nelson Mandela in an offer of compromise, studies of Afrikaner masculinity suggest that the patriarchal imagination still holds to the notion of Afrikaans men as tough, hardworking and stoic (Du Pisani, 1997: 9, Epstein, 1997: 8). Included in this imagery is the portrayal of Afrikaans men as 'good providers' whose dominant masculinity depends upon the suppression of female characteristics. This imagery did not escape me, as I felt on numerous occasions that my position and gaze as an interested female ethnographer temporarily subverted the 'proper' and assumed role of a woman as passive and submissive. Despite these first perceptions, I discovered that the more natural environments of participant observation and informal

conversation nicely supplemented the relative rigidity of these 'proper' gender roles in formal interviews.

All my interviews were conducted in English, as I did not have a working understanding of Afrikaans upon entering the field in June/July 2005. This did not prove to be a major barrier to my research, as all the men I interviewed during formal and informal interviews were fluent in English and were able and willing to express themselves comfortably in their second language. This is not to discount some of the obstacles I faced during fieldwork, especially during occasions of ritual social life, where Afrikaans was spoken almost exclusively. Nevertheless, I was fortunate to have had several helpful informants who always made a concerted effort to translate for me, and these full immersion environments always proved ripe for language acquisition. My change from a mere guest to an accepted insider was dramatically marked by my interest in learning Afrikaans, as the friendly hospitality of my initial immersion gave way to a warm and accepting camaraderie with the participants. It was during these language lessons that the men opened up to me in a way I had not yet been familiarized with. Whether teaching me sophisticated, or 'kitchen' Afrikaans, these lessons often laid open a cultural repertoire and rhetoric that that had previously remained hidden. It instigated stories and narratives that I felt clearly marked me as an insider as opposed to a guest.

For this researcher, Stellenbosch has extended beyond a mere field-site for gathering data, as it has come to have the feel of a 'second home.' I regularly visit Stellenbosch, and have formed strong viable relationships with my informants that extend beyond my research.

3. A Felt Dissonance: The Past Meets the New South Africa

Following F.W de Klerk's unbanning of the ANC on February 2, 1990, South Africa became embroiled in a tumultuous four years of bilateral negotiations between the ANC and the NP that teetered precariously between success and failure. It was an uncertain time in South African history, as the country oscillated between peace and violence while the two parties hammered out a negotiated settlement. It was during failed attempts in the tense negotiation process that violence escalated, fuelling fears that South Africa was on the brink of all out civil warfare. Yet, in what has come to be known as the South African 'miracle,' a negotiated settlement was finally reached and the Afrikaner nation became the first in history to vote themselves out of power. Notorious for the creation of apartheid in the past, white Afrikaners have become famous in recent times for "...abandoning their creation...and submitting themselves to the uncertainties of democracy in a multicultural society" (Le May, 1995: 9).

When South Africa entered into its new democracy on April 27, 1994, the 13 key participants in this study were between the ages of 21 and 31. While six of these men were still pursuing tertiary education, four had successfully found their career niche, while the rest fluctuated between jobs. What they shared was a growing realization of the changing socio-political milieu that was dawning, a new milieu that moved them from a position of extreme political power to greatly reduced power. The threat of post-apartheid measures, such as affirmative action, BEE (see chapter 1) and land restitution, also loomed ahead of them. Radical social change, seen as an inevitable and continuous characteristic of the social environment following 1994, became a central aspect of the new South African political dispensation, as individuals from all groups were forced to confront and re-examine themselves anew.

This chapter will focus on the nature of the participants' felt dissonance between their past expectations and what they perceive as the present reality of the new South Africa. The first half of this chapter will deal exclusively with narratives about the past, and will provide a background for understanding the exact nature of this felt dissonance. The latter half of the chapter will examine how narratives of

crime, employment, and sport, were used by the men to highlight the high level of dissonance in their lives.

The supporting literature for this chapter will be drawn from both Ochs & Capps and Jenkins. Ochs & Capps (1996: 23) argue that narrative is used to frame events as problematic in terms of communal ideals of appropriateness. Paralleling this, Jenkins argues that the institutional order plays a significant role in allocating identities to individuals. In allocating particular kinds of identities, the institutional order contributes to the formation and maintenance of a certain class of people who share similar life-chances and experiences. Important will be the idea that it is within struggles for power that identities are acquired and formed (Jenkins, 1996b: 25).

The Past

The Naturalness of Institutionalised Expectations: The NGK and Christian National Education

Having grown up in the throes of apartheid, the 13 men were subject to strong institutional forces that dictated the way things were done in terms of what was considered rational, moral and appropriate. The institutions, including the NGK, the Christian National Education system (see Historical Background) and the SADF, served in their different capacities to secure Afrikaner interests and allocate important institutional positions. These institutional positions acted as a form of social classification, where specific identities were bestowed upon members (Jenkins, 1996b: 25).

All the participants were raised attending the NGK. When speaking of their childhood, virtually all cited a strong religious upbringing as part and parcel of an Afrikaner childhood. They spoke of accepting the authority of the church unquestioningly, adding that it was "just something you had to do as a kid." A fundamental value associated with a religious upbringing was 'proper' generational hierarchies of respect. When discussing aspects of their childhood, many made mention of the 'proper' respect that extended especially to fathers and authority figures in the church and school. In almost every conversation with the men about their familial upbringing, mention was made about the childhood expectation that one never 'back chat' one's parents. Deon, for example, noted that it was a gross violation

of generational respect to speak up against any adult. Similarly, Conrad spoke of the difficulty in challenging his parents and/or teachers as a child, and the expectation that he continually submit to authority.

> **Conrad**: My age group of people were brought up in the beginning with the old way, and now it has changed to the new way...when we grew up, you never 'back chatted' your parents. You just did what you were told. "Cut your hair, stand up, etc." All you could say in return was "Yes dad, no dad."

Generational respect and deference to authority in the natal home and the church also extended to the education system, which was characterized by a strict adherence to prescribed codes regarding behaviour towards teachers and principals. The Christian National Education system of their youth was characterized by a high degree of deference to authority that was carried out through corporal punishment. Like the respect that was extended to fathers, the men were never permitted to 'back chat' their teachers or principals, and such occasions of disrespect were met with punishment. Handre, for example, spoke rather freely about the presence of corporal punishment during his school days. He spoke of several instances when his 'back chatting' resulted in getting 'caned.' He described it in the following way: In front of the entire class, the teacher would take out a long thin stick and would proceed to whip you several times. The louder you screamed, the more lashes of the cane you were sure to get. Ironically, the resentment Handre expressed towards 'the system' for subjecting himself and others of his generation to these forms of punishment was simultaneously combined with a sense of reverence for a system that was perceived as imparting to him a high degree of respect and self-discipline. This became clear when he compared the esteemed values of his generation to what he perceived as the current "valueless" generation of students today.

Aside from instituting a high degree of deference to authority, the Christian National Education system also worked to institute a sense of national religion among students. In both formal and informal interviews with the participants, a theme developed that highlighted the centrality of this national religion. Every school day began with a teacher led classroom prayer. These morning prayers were often very general in nature and frequently involved an utterance of thanks and an invocation of a blessing. In addition to the morning prayers, 2-hour bible study sessions formed a part of the weekly curriculum during which students were required to study biblical

versus in great depth. It was during bible study sessions and weekly school assemblies that religion was linked to Afrikaans national sentiment, and the singing of the former national anthem, *Die Stem* (The Voice) regularly followed prayers and hymns.

Besides strong religious undertones in the schooling system, national religion was integrated into extracurricular activities for white Afrikaans boys. For example, the organization known as the *Voortrekkers* was an organization for young white Afrikaans boys that trained them in the purported outdoor survival skills of their *Boer* ancestors. It regularly involved weekend camps in the *veld* (bush), and included things such as target practice, star gazing, and day and night marches. Religion and nationalism formed the backbone of these camping expeditions, as Afrikaans folk songs, such as *Al lê die berge nog so blou*[5], the national anthem, biblical readings and prayers were sung and read alongside one another.

Mandatory National Service

The ethos of deferential respect instituted by the NGK, the Christian National Education system, and the men's families, extended into other aspects of the men's lives, including mandatory National Service for all white males upon high school graduation. In 1967, conscription was instituted in South Africa in the form of nine months of service for all white males between the ages of 17 and 65 years old. In 1977, conscription was once again increased, this time to two years and 30 days annually for eight years. Conscription was instituted within the wider scope of 'total strategy,' which legitimised increased involvement of the military in Namibia and Angola, and was the launching pad of South Africa's militarization (Draper, 1999: 5). 'Total onslaught', which was perceived as a communist international attack on South Africa, was a response not only to its weakening position in Southern Africa, but also was a response to the intensifying challenge to apartheid within South Africa's own borders. The initial thrusts of South Africa's increased mobilization were steered towards external targets, Angola and Namibia. However, the mobilization of the military domestically in the mid to late 1980s was executed in response to the growing violent resistance to apartheid in Black townships (Nathan, 1989: 67).

[5] Although the mountains lay so blue.

At the time they were conscripted, the men had the choice of either completing their National Service directly after high school, or fulfilling it upon completion of a University degree. Of the 11 participants in this study who were required to complete National Service, six completed their National Service straight out of high school, while one completed his National Service after completion of his Masters degree. The remaining four were still enrolled in higher education when mandatory National Service was eradicated in the early 1990s. Of the seven who completed National Service, all but Pieter were deployed by the SADF in Black townships throughout South Africa.

When describing their sentiments about National Service, many talked of doing what was expected of them, and spoke of their army service as "something we just had to do."

> **Q**: When you were there [in the military] what was going through your head?
> **Deon**: I made a choice…actually there wasn't really a choice. I made the choice (laughs) to do National Service straight out of matric. It was more or less something guys our age had to do. We didn't question it or pick it apart – we just did it. Get it over as quickly as possible.

For many, it wasn't even a question in their minds not to complete National Service, as individuals who refused were ostracized by their communities and potentially charged with a criminal offence. For example, Barry and Handre, who completed their National Service after University, remembered seeing military vans scour their neighbourhood near their University hostel in Port Elizabeth. The hostel they were living in was continually inundated with rumours of what became of those who refused to complete their service. One particularly potent rumour painted a dire picture of severe physical and emotional abuse by military officers who, it was rumoured, "?!!! them [the draft dodgers] up with exercise till they dropped."

In retrospect, the men often attributed what they perceived as their blind acceptance of mandatory National Service to the naivety of youth. They believe they weren't mature enough to grasp the true significance of their role in the military when they served as 17 and 18 year olds.

> **Q**: So how did you feel about having to complete mandatory National Service?
> **Danie**: Ag, everybody did it, and everybody had to do it, so it was just the normal thing to do.
> **Q**: You were 18 years old at the time, right?

> **Danie**: Yah, I know. Now, when you get older, you realize it....at the time we were more like little kiddies horsing around at camp. We were thinking about what we could do on the weekend when we were turned loose now and then. I didn't really have a political opinion on the situation back then. Too young, I guess.

These sentiments bear many similarities to Chris Louw's biting account of his generation's experience at the hands of their parents' ideological commitments in the newspaper article *Boetman is die Bliksem in.* Like the men I interviewed, Chris Louw cited the naivety of youth, alongside an upbringing of generational respect and obedience as critical factors in his generation's subservience during their military years.

> You are part of a generation that took the responsibility on themselves to mold their children into puppet soldiers that had to go to the border to fight, to kill and to be killed for your dreams. We learned to live ironically, my generation. "Shut up. Pay attention. Push your head into the scrum. You're a troop, do you understand? You will only complete missions. We will solve the political problems." (Chris Louw, Die Burger, May 8, 2000, my informant Conrad's translation).

Yet, alongside characterizing their National Service as "something we just had to do," many exhorted the value of self-discipline the military instilled in them. Danie, for example, saw the gruelling physical and mental exercises in basic training as imparting to him a high degree of discipline. As he noted, "The discipline that they [the military] teach you is something that influences your whole life – work, physical health, etc." Similarly, in reminiscing about his experience in the military, Jasper drew a distinction between those men who completed National Service and those that did not. He felt that those who did were more self-disciplined and harder working than the younger generation, who he described as "irresponsible kids who drink too much."

A Felt Dissonance

Drawing upon Jenkins (1996b: 25), the institutional recruitment procedures of the NGK, Christian National Education, and the SADF, can be seen as allocating a particular kind of institutional and ethnic identity that placed a heavy emphasis on respect, deference to authority and discipline among Afrikaners. The transfer of power from the NP to the ANC in 1994 significantly reduced the power of these institutions. The Christian National Education system of the apartheid government has now been

replaced by a new educational system that has made Afrikaans one of eleven official languages, rather than one of two. The NGK, renowned for its role in apartheid, has lost significant membership since its role in apartheid became public knowledge after 1994 when the church publicly apologized to the nation during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Also following 1994, the old SADF was replaced by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which combined the six former liberation armies into one unified defence force (Frankel, 2000: 48).

Placed in a new political climate that no longer elevates their language, religion and culture to the exclusion of others, the participants' identity is now subject to new and evolving forces. The ways in which their identity was bound up in institutional recruitment procedures of the past has now been replaced by a new struggle for identity that is largely removed from the social classification practices of the past. A potent theme of dissonance developed that highlighted the incongruity of their past expectations and perceived present reality (Ochs & Capps, 1996: 27). Crime, employment, self-discipline and sport were framed as problematic in light of a new system that was perceived as negating fundamental norms of respect, deference to authority and discipline. These four themes, while occurring alongside others, were recurring themes that were continually drawn and elaborated upon by the research participants during participant observation. Discussions of employment, alongside sport and self-discipline, proved the most forceful and emotive among the four. Crime, while noticeable, tended to be less emotive than the other themes.

Educated for a World that Doesn't Exist

There existed a common thread in virtually all the men's narratives that built upon a larger theme concerning their expectations of what constituted a 'normal' life. The 'normal' life was framed in terms of securing higher education as a given, and the expectation of securing a stable and fruitful job that would grant them access to material wealth.

> **Barry**: We were taught to attend varsity, and secure a good job with a good company. End of story.

The 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984: 13-14) of the men's natal families included the value of higher education, and in many cases this expectation was so taken-for-granted that they didn't even question the likelihood of falling outside the norm.

> **Conrad:** We were never given the option to pick and choose what we agreed or didn't agree with. It wasn't even a thought in our heads to disagree. We just did what we were told: Go to varsity, get married, and be successful in your job. Just like our fathers did.
> **Deon:** All of our fathers were educated. Not a little bit – they were all educated. Most of them were tertiary educated and back then that guaranteed them a job. And if you had matric, that guaranteed you something, and if you had standard 8 that guaranteed you something. It echoed down in society. We just naturally assumed that this was what we would get.

Like Ortner's (2003: 197) sample in *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture and the Class of '58*, being 'tracked for success' included not only the 'cultural capital' of the 'college track,' but worked in conjunction with the 'boy track.' The taken-for-granted expectation that the men would follow the 'boy track,' involving a high priority placed on eventual work/careers, entered heavily into their narratives. Like Ortner's (2003: 155) sample, marriage and family were seen as a definitive part of the future, yet it was seen as secondary to the primary importance of a career. In fact, my informants viewed a good stable career as a prerequisite for eventual marriage and children. In a casual conversation, Handre expressed his spiralling disappointment in the new system. For him, the past was perceived as more certain, as opposed to the instability of the present. For example, he spoke of the difficulty he experienced in planning for the future without the security of a good job that he believes he was entitled to. As he told me "I was brought up to get married only when my life was stable and that means having a good job and a nice house."

There existed a distinct discrepancy between the men's expectations and what they saw as the reality of the work force in the new South Africa. The participants were brought up with the expectation that a combination of hard work, self-discipline, and the procurement of higher education would guarantee them access to stable employment. Present economic realities, such as affirmative action and BEE, have made this ingrained expectation of financial and occupational security highly problematic. For example, Jasper, now a financial manager for Vodacom, previously worked as a barman and bouncer at several clubs in Stellenbosch for several years after completing his honours in Bcomm at Stellenbosch University. His acute sense of

victimization of legislative measures such as affirmative action can be directly linked to the dissonance he felt working as a "highly educated barman."

> **Q:** Do you feel like affirmative action has affected you?
> **Jasper:** It has! I probably would have gotten a decent job earlier on if it wasn't for such policies. I went for lots and lots of interviews and was always turned down. That is why I decided to do my Masters degree. I would have preferred to have worked with a good company after completing my honours, but I all I kept hearing was "Listen, you're not going to get the job. You're white!" And I had better qualifications than most people applying.

Correspondingly, Conrad, who was employed as a low level University administrator for the duration of five years following 1994, directly attributed his generation's stagnation to the motif 'educated for a world that no longer exists.'

> **Conrad:** Back then [under apartheid], it wasn't a problem getting a job. Yet, that world does not exist anymore. People my age feel, uh, you know, out of touch with reality because it is very difficult to change the way they are, and how they think – it is because of how they were brought up. We were basically educated for a world that doesn't exist!

This reflects Jenkins' (1996b: 25) notion of the powerful nature of institutional identification. The institutional recruitment procedures of the apartheid era gave preference and privilege to Afrikaners in governmental organizations such as the civil service and Afrikaner big business. The allocation of positions within these arenas also involved the privileging of resources in terms of opportunities, education, job placement and opportunities for occupational advancement. The consistency of this privileging led to the formation of a specific class of white Afrikaners that were "...characterised by similar life-chances and experiences" (Jenkins, 1996b: 25). The participants in this study, who can be seen as benefiting enormously from the privilege of apartheid, were allocated a social identity that was strongly connected to power and privilege in terms of education, job security, and material assets. The discrepancy between their expectations of attaining power and privilege and their perceptions of present day economic hardship is linked to the new institutional order that distributes its resources in a contrary way to their expectations.

"Don't Touch my Game"

The men's perceptions of the waning levels of self-discipline in the new South Africa often led to conversations about sport, especially the national sport of rugby, which was seen as a source of Afrikaans cultural pride. A majority viewed rugby as a predominantly Afrikaans sport, and an arena where the Afrikaans man reigns supreme, displaying approved masculine physical attributes of strength and endurance. The image of rugby players, with great emphasis on physical attributes alongside self-discipline and hard work, was an ideal image these men held for themselves. For the participants, rugby should remain a space where these performable characteristics remain unscathed by governmental legislative measures such as affirmative action.

As part of transformation following 1994, the Department of Sports and Recreation announced its intention to implement demographic representativeness in South African sports. Sports transformation, viewed as necessary in moving towards a non-racial society, involved the institution of sports legislation that sought a demographic representation of the country (Frankental & Sichone, 2005: 269).

All the men in this study were adamant in claiming that the only determining factor for placement on a rugby team be talent. In making this claim, a distinct criticism was made of the demographic representativeness in which rugby talent is now decided.

> **Conrad**: We can't just pick the best players for the national team [the Springbok] anymore. We now have to put in so many races to make it representational. I think, um, it's a sport. Do you understand? If the government tells the national rugby team "We must put so many Black players, and Coloured players or whatever on the team," I think it is extremely wrong! It must be the 15 best guys in the world.

The dissonance between their expectations and the reality of the sporting world in the new South Africa stemmed from what they perceived to be the unfair way in which rugby talent is now determined.

> **Kobus**: In sport, talent is earned. It isn't handed to you. In other words, we can't call up the All Blacks [New Zealand national rugby team] and say "You are better than us, and you've got better talent than us, so we want a 20 point lead!" No way! You play to win, and you play until you die. Talent and performance – that is what it should be about. Not about demographics!

Crime in the New South Africa

A majority of the men spoke of crime in the new South Africa as a pervasive problem that has reached unsurpassed proportions since 1994. As a prevailing societal concern, not a day goes by in South Africa without one being inundated by soaring statistics that explicitly outline the prevalence of corruption and violence. People's concern about crime is not without justification, as assault, murder, rape and robbery have all increased exponentially in the period from 1974 to 1997 (Vestergaard, 2000: 107).

In the case of this particular group, they evaluated the high levels of crime according to their expectations of what was considered moral and appropriate – in this instance, respect for parental and communal authority. They linked the soaring levels of crime to a fundamental lack of respect for authority figures. When discussing crime in the new South Africa, Ferdie linked the rising crime rate to a lack of respect for parents and teachers among the new generation. Now that corporal punishment has been abolished, he perceives students as no longer in fear of authority. Ferdie felt this was in direct contrast to his own school days, where children were disciplined and held both a high degree of fear and respect for authority.

During our many interviews, none of the men verbally attributed this lack of respect among the new generation to race. Yet, many months of immersion and participant observation led me to a different conclusion than my formal interviews had first led me to believe. When discussing this topic informally among their cohorts at regular braais, many of the participants covertly attributed South Africa's current problems, including crime, to race. The purported lack of respect and similar values among the new generation was linked to race, yet it was done under the convenient guise of poverty. Class, instead of race, was viewed as a critical factor, as lower-class poverty was directly associated with race, especially to Blacks and Coloureds. The associations of crime and a lack of respect were never extended to white children, whether English or Afrikaans.

Another theme that weaved through the men's narratives was the connection between a lack of respect and an absence of values in the home. For example, some participants linked the staggering rate of violent crimes against women in South Africa to this absence of respect.

> **Handre**: Kids these days don't have any respect, especially when it comes to their parents. They are not taught to respect women in their homes. They need to be taught values of respect, because if one does not respect their mother, how can they be expected to respect their wife?

This correlation was again covertly linked to race, as race was automatically coupled with poverty, and poverty was inevitably linked to the violent nature of crime in South Africa. The high rate of violent crime was attributed exclusively to Blacks and Coloureds, and no link whatsoever was made between crime and the current generation of white Afrikaner children.

Expectations of Self-Discipline

Similar to the values of respect that were imparted to them through religion, education and the family, the men placed a profound importance on the value of self-discipline. An essential element of their school days was the institutionalisation of Cadets, a junior level preparation for future military service that emulated the rules and regulations of the SADF. During weekly training, young boys dressed in military uniforms, marched military style and re-enacted military rules and regulations. Similar to their sentiments about National Service, the participants viewed Cadets as integral in teaching them the value of self-discipline. There existed discrepancies between their expectations, in this case a high level of self-discipline, and the reality of today.

> **Pieter**: I'm involved at the University now, and you need to see the guys coming to University nowadays. The boys, er, the students, they don't have what we once had. And there are a lot of problems in Stellenbosch concerning booze, drugs and partying among the students. And I would say not all of that, but a lot of it has to do with people not being required to do cadets in school and being in the military for 2 years. There they were taught strict discipline.

In discussing their perceptions of employment, self-discipline, and sport, the men framed events as problematic in light of their expectation that institutions such as the school and the church, institute both a strong sense of deference to authority and a robust sense of self-discipline. The socialization practice of instilling deference to authority and conveying a pronounced need for self-discipline among children is something these men still hold fast to. The problematic nature of this dissonance lies

in the struggle they are engaging in as they attempt to come to terms with a new political stratagem that is perceived as advancing a different set of values. Their identity can be seen as measured against a particular kind of identity that was instilled in them in the past.

Conclusion

The men's narratives pivoted around unexpected or troubling turns of events. Their narratives, which revolved around communal norms of respect, self-discipline and deference to authority, demonstrated their felt dissonance between their expectations of adulthood and their perceived present circumstances. As has been shown, the ways in which the men evaluated specific events, whether crime, sport or employment, was intimately connected to shared ideas of what was considered appropriate, moral and rational. These collective ideas were related in a very real way to the social classification practices and institutional recruitment procedures of the apartheid era. Institutions such as the NGK, the Christian National Education system, and the SADF, played a large role in creating social identities for these men. These social identities created under apartheid also involved the privileging of Afrikaners and whites in general in the form of education, employment and access to material assets. The men's experienced dissonance between the past and the present can be closely correlated to the establishment of an institutional order that aims to distribute privilege to others.

4. The Ideal and the Real: Bridging Techniques

During the 1960s, '70s and '80s, Stellenbosch was well established as a proverbially quiet and peaceful upper-middle class small town with clean safe streets, beautiful Cape-Dutch style homes and good Christian National Education. Regardless of where they were born, the participants were brought up sharing similar qualities of life – all were born into solid middle class homes with well-educated Afrikaner bourgeois fathers and homemaker mothers.

During a majority of the men's childhood in the 1970s and 1980s, a tight ideological defence of apartheid was in place, and this ideological commitment to apartheid was held together through a fusion of nationalism and religion (Giliomee, 2003: 534). This was further entrenched by the totalitarian ethos of the apartheid regime that effectively silenced all dissent and opposition. By the time the majority of the men entered adolescence and early adulthood in the 1970s and 1980s, the apartheid regime was heavily under attack. In fact, political dissidence was rife, and fear of violence was quickly becoming a concern for the average middle class Afrikaner.

A system that exerted total control over its citizens through the auspices of government institutions has since been abolished, and, as explicated in chapter 3, has produced a heightened sense of dissonance in the participants. Following this is the question of how are these men are bridging this felt dissonance between their past expectations and their current positioning in post-apartheid South Africa. As will be shown, this group of men can be seen as reworking and subtly altering the influence of a multitude of interests in their lives. The assumed conformity of their childhood and adolescence has been replaced by greater choice and agency. Yet, in the process of exerting more choice and individual agency, crucial aspects of their social identity were reinforced during ritualised social life (see chapter 6 for definition).

This chapter draws upon the notion of storytelling as a social act that reworks the fine balance between actor and acted upon (Jackson, 2002: 16). For the men in this study, 'being in the world' resembled a journey that allowed them to change their experiences of events by symbolically restructuring them (Jackson, 2002: 16).

Reinvention and journeying was used to bridge the difference between their past expectations and the reality of their current lives in post-apartheid South Africa. Also of relevance is the premise that people alternate between two fundamental tendencies when revising a philosophy of life: either an adherence to a dominant narrative or an enlistment of a variety of interpretive frames (Ochs & Capps, 1996: 32). The decision to question, criticize and embark on different ways of identification can be seen as closely connected to power relations at the institutional level (Jenkins, 1996b: 25). More specifically, the struggle between an adherence to a dominant narrative and an alternative way of identification can be seen as lying within stratagems of power.

In an effort to rework and revise themselves in a climate of far-reaching social change, gender still, nonetheless, played an important role in how events were framed. An analysis of a familiar vein of storytelling among the participants in the latter half of this chapter will interrogate how storytelling can be seen as both a reflection of gendered social roles and relationships, as well as the result of broader efforts to secure one's sense of self in a world characterized by radical social change.

A Critique of Dominant Ideologies

An Active Revision of Religiosity

The powerful influence of the NGK in the men's childhood and adolescence has proven to be of much less importance in their adult lives. They have distanced themselves from the institutional religion of the NGK and have chosen instead to internalise their religious tenets as personal faith. This turn to a more fundamentalist view of religion is not wholly unique to this group of men, as all faiths and religions have experienced an upsurge in fundamentalism following the beginning of modernity. In fact, the powerful force of fundamentalism is most potent in societies contending secular values, and can be seen as a response to an assault by mainstream society (Armstrong, 2001). What makes this general trend particularly interesting is the context in which this realignment is taking place among this group of white Afrikaner men. The shift from an institutional identification to a more individualized notion of religion is especially interesting considering South Africa's current position as a country in transition.

In many cases, the participants' narratives were framed to expose the fragility of investing in authoritative structures, for, as Handre told me "Anything that is right today is a sin tomorrow." In his story of religious disillusion, Handre discussed how his steadfast belief in the NGK's religious teachings was shattered upon learning that "the system you grew up believing from a young age turned out to be wrong." During many informal conversations at De Akker, a local pub in Stellenbosch, Handre spoke openly and freely about his thoughts on the NGK. He spoke of being brought up to believe that the NGK was right and described the shock and disillusionment he felt when the church "had the audacity to ask you to believe in them after publicly apologizing to the nation in front of Desmond Tutu" (see 'A Felt Dissonance' in chapter 3). This confession by the church has instigated a re-examination of Handre's religion and faith, as he now makes a concerted effort to form his own opinions.

Correspondingly, Conrad's narratives share with Handre the unsettling of foundational religious principles and an active criticism of ideology. Conrad, through his narratives, attempted to revise an institutional definition of religion by drawing upon a personal notion of faith, while at the same time condemning the dangers of identifying with religion as an institution. For Conrad, there was a clear distinction between faith and religion. He saw religion, and especially the NGK, as an institution that was connected to a political party and/or cause. Faith, instead of religion, was used to explain his spiritual relationship with God, as "you can't change faith because it grows in your heart and doesn't go out of fashion like religion."

In a story about his spiritual journey from adolescence to adulthood, Ferdie, the youngest of the men, talked of attending church regularly in his hometown of Vredenburg in the Western Cape. But, as he realized, attendance came to resemble more of a popularity contest than anything else. Using the phrase "Praise the Lord and pass the hat," Ferdie described the tendency of some members of his church to drop large sums of money in the donation hat to give the impression of being a good Christian. As he entered adulthood, Ferdie became disillusioned not only with the NGK but also with the common belief that mere attendance at church made one a Christian. Now an accountancy student in his final year at Stellenbosch University, Ferdie prefers instead to "carry God with [him] at all times." This means praying regularly and listening to a church program on the radio rather than attending a Sunday sermon.

More than just a means of understanding the world, the men's stories worked to change their experience of events such as the collapse of the omnipotence of the NGK after the fall of apartheid. By restructuring a prominent public domain into a more personal and private domain, these men can be seen as exerting a sense of agency in their spiritual lives, giving them a heightened sense of meaning. Yet, this change in affiliation was not without its repercussions, as their decision often caused conflict with the older generation, especially parents. When discussing his eventual withdrawal from the NGK following 1994, Pieter described his father's shock and disillusionment. This decision was followed by a two year stalemate with his father, where neither would submit to the other. Likewise, Jasper, when discussing his decision to get married within the NGK, spoke of his desire to please both his own and his fiancé, Liezl's parents. Citing their decision as a sign of respect, Jasper's fiancé, Liezl, simultaneously expressed her ambivalence towards a "traditional church wedding." Their decision to get married within the church demonstrates their precarious position in a "subjective in-between' (Arendt, 1958) place where individuals are continually subject to a variety of contested domains.

Religiosity as Socially Constructed

Yet, this restructuring of religiosity to a more private and individual domain was not created wholly within each individual. Following Jenkins' notion of social identity, this individualized nature of religiosity was "...not meaningful in isolation from the social world of other people" (Jenkins, 1996b: 20). The process of reshuffling the once public identification of religiosity to a more individualized one was not embodied alone in selfhood. Rather, it can be seen as socially constructed through the continual processes of social interaction. This change in religious identification was a frequent topic of conversation during group interaction, as the men consistently redefined and drew up new domains of identification.

During social braais, members would sometimes discuss their reasons and motivations for not attending church regularly. Danie, for example, saw regular church attendance as important only when getting married and having children. As a bachelor, he preferred to keep his faith alive through independent means, rather than making an appearance at church every Sunday. Many of the men echoed and

validated this sentiment, arguing that their faith remained just as strong away from the church as within it. A more personal notion of faith was something that was validated and accepted by the group.

Here we can see how the men's individual re-workings of religious identification were created through social interaction. Their selfhood was thus very much a production of both their individual identity and the external validations offered by others. Social interaction within this intimate group, whose members felt they shared so much, provided the space for these transactions of meaning to take place (Geertz, 1975: 5). These transactions of meaning can essentially be seen as part of a wider coping strategy that allowed the participants to draw up new domains of identification within the safety of the group.

To Have and to Hold in this Day and Age

In attempts to understand and revise a philosophy of life, storytelling by the participants was used to question dominant ideologies and narratives. (Jackson, 2002: 25, Ochs & Capps, 1996: 20). Storytelling was used to critique dominant narratives of courtship and marriage by enlisting a set of 'necessary illusions' (Jackson, 2002: 26) to help them validate their deviance to this norm as 30+ year old bachelors.

During the men's childhood, the dominant view of romantic relationships was portrayed as exclusively heterosexual, as heterosexual sex was seen as legitimate only within the confines of marriage. The official representation and endorsement of heterosexual relations within marriage was taught and promoted through institutions such as the family, the NGK and the Christian National Education system. The approved narrative of the men's youth stressed the sinfulness of premarital sex and common-law living arrangements, and encouraged the ideal of marriage and financial stability.

> **Barry:** Growing up, we were taught in church, school and by our parents that sex before marriage was not a good thing. I have never lived with any of my girlfriends because of the negative way in which the older generation might see such an arrangement. To this day, my mother would lose it if I moved in with a girl before getting married.
> **Handre:** You know, even though I would love to get married, I just can't bring myself to marry without having solid financial backing. Until I have the money to buy a house, I will not get married. It's just not right.

Struggling against these internalised norms, including a pronounced concern for parental and generational respect, the men enlisted a range of interpretive devices. Jasper and Jaco, who currently live with their girlfriends, verbalized their 'necessary illusions,' to the group on many occasions, and received support for their hard won choices. Jasper, who recently became engaged to his Afrikaans girlfriend, Liezl, has chosen to move into his fiancé's natal home – a necessary financial decision that he argues will allow the couple to save money for their future. In his storytelling, Jasper distinguished between the past, which presents an idealized public narrative of the necessary steps a couple must take as they prepare for marriage, and present economic circumstances. Present economic circumstances, including high housing prices and job instability, were used by Jasper to create the 'necessary illusions' needed to justify his deviation from the norm.

> **Jasper:** It just seemed like the best option at the time [moving into Liezl's natal home]. After we got engaged we needed to save money for the wedding. After we get married in February, we will be staying permanently with Liezl's mother, and we are building a granny flat for her in the back. A good choice I think, but not much of a choice if you consider how expensive house prices are in Stellenbosch.

Among this group, the creation of these 'necessary illusions' was combined with a critique of taken-for-granted notions of courtship, engagement and marriage and a balance was struck between one's own situation and the prevailing public narrative. For Alfred, who is currently single, the ideal marriage route is something that belongs to his parent's generation who, he believes, were given all the tools to successfully live up to that ideal. As a grown man, Alfred believes that his choices remain his own, and should not be influenced and scrutinized by the older generation.

> **Alfred**: Listen, I don't have any problem with living with a girl before marriage. It's such a common thing now, almost an expected thing *among our generation.* Our parents, on the other hand, well that was a completely different story. You cannot compare the two. I will make decisions that suit me, not decisions to please my parents (emphasis added).

The tendency of many of the men to make use of a multiple range of interpretive spheres closely corresponds to the notion that narrators, when faced with a challenge, often enter into a dynamic dialogue with underlying assumptions (Ochs & Capps, 1996: 32). In-between a tension between the legitimate and the intimate, individuals can either choose to uphold status quo values and foundational principles,

or confront and critically challenge ingrained ideas of knowing (Jackson, 2002: 27). In the case of many of the men, their present circumstances have led them to confront dominant narratives, and to carve out new modes of identification.

The extent to which the men critiqued dominant ways of identification was also invariably tied to 'internal-external dialectics of identification' (Jenkins, 1996b: 20). Rather than arising exclusively through the embodiment of the self, the carving out of new modes of identification was created in the course of social interaction. While their sentiments concerning relationships and marriage were not shared by the older generation, within the confines of the group, such sentiments were validated and supported. Therefore, the group functioned as a coping mechanism for its members, whereby individuals were able to find solace and meaning in the fluctuating definition of 'proper' relationships. In so doing, the men were able to perceive meaning in the changing nature of relationships, paralleling the Geertzian notion that interpretation is often contingent on social interaction (Geertz, 1975: 5).

'Adapt or Die:' The Entrepreneurial Initiative

As young adolescents in the precarious and violent 1970s and '80s, the participants spent their formative years at a time when fear of communism was rife, and the survival of the Afrikaner nation was an omnipresent question in the minds of intellectuals, the media and the average Afrikaans person. It was during this time that the threads of apartheid were unravelling, and the future survival of Afrikaner people was debated, turned over and dissected with adamant intensity. Yet, this was not a new phenomenon in the history of the Afrikaner people, as the precariousness of Afrikaner survival had been a dominant concern since as early as the 1920s (Goodwin, 1995: 46).

The assumption of a threat to survival built upon a rhetoric that called for certain adaptations to be made to ensure the survival of the Afrikaner people. This 'cultural assumption' (Bourdieu, 1984) of the vulnerability of Afrikaner survival became internalised to form a fundamental part of the men's identity and worldview. Especially in regard to employment, the men felt that adaptation to a new political system that currently seeks to redress wrong done to the Black majority was a necessity. For example, all believed that employment in any governmental or private

institution was quickly becoming a scarce option, and men of their generation were being forced to adapt to new and different circumstances through entrepreneurial endeavours. Johann, for example, saw democracy as presenting many challenges for Afrikaans people. He believed that the previous generation, who are mostly retired, were not required to change. No longer economically active, they were able to carry on and live the way they did before 1994. Johann perceived his generation of men as being forced to 'adapt or die,' as change for them is inevitable. Similarly, Deon perceived the new economic changes characterizing post-apartheid South Africa as forcing white Afrikaner men to "think outside the box."

> **Deon:** We were never taught to think laterally and think outside the box, and you were not educated to be entrepreneurial at all. Our present circumstances have forced us to step outside that box, and you have to be positive in order to stay there. If you don't feel positive you should not be in this country. Change yourself because there is no other choice.

This conscious strategy of 'adapt or die,' was used to bridge the discrepancy the men felt between their past expectations and their perceptions of present economic circumstances. Their expectations of institutional stability can be seen as deriving from the rhetoric of the apartheid government, whose power and authority gave entitlement to the Afrikaners in various institutions. Yet, in view of the new political milieu of affirmative action and BEE (see chapter 1 and aspects of chapter 3) these men are shifting from an institutional expectation to a more entrepreneurial notion of employment. In so doing, 'adapt or die' was used to bridge the experienced dissonance. Alfred, a town planner for Stellenbosch, believes that his current position could be threatened by legislative measures such as affirmative action in the near future. As a result, he has decided to pursue his PhD in regional and town planning part-time to prepare for what he sees as his eventual termination:

> **Alfred:** You can never be too careful nowadays, with affirmative action and all. I have a good job, but I wouldn't say I have much stability in the long run. I never planned on pursuing my PhD in town planning, but its just one of the things I feel I must do with the threat of affirmative action hanging over me. I must adapt. There is no other choice.

Gender and Storytelling

As a social act, personal storytelling was an effective way of transmitting cultural knowledge about appropriate gender roles. Employed in social arenas such as braais, storytelling amongst this particular group of men not only described the gendered social world, but also created it. When told to an exclusively male audience, aside from myself, personal storytelling served to reaffirm friendship bonds while socializing the group in appropriate gender roles. Following from Johnson (1990: 77), communal storytelling amongst this group of men can be viewed as a way of illustrating and recommending appropriate social roles for Afrikaans men in the new South Africa.

The repertoire of stories drawn upon by the group were numerous, and rallied around the topics of employment, sport, hunting, crime, and relationships. Yet, the discursive strategies employed by the participants when engaging in group stories about hunting and the *veld,* best highlights the gendered aspect of their storytelling. Like the men in Johnson's analysis of storytelling in middle class white America, the men in my sample employed distinct discursive methods that reflected suitable roles for an Afrikaans man. The participants' stories tended to be built upon personal images such as skill, physical strength and courage (Johnson, 1990: 66). Hunting stories, or stories of danger in the *veld*, were used to display these desired male images. One particular story told by Conrad about the physical danger of animals in the *veld* called upon his skill as a professional hunter. The story illustrated his professional skills, and drew upon his ability to protect vulnerable individuals like children.

The story, set in Limpopo, was about a hunting expedition with Pieter and his two young children and ten adults. After a successful day of hunting, the men returned to the camp, cleaned the impala and kudu they had killed and hung it between two trees before settling down to a well deserved braai. After relaxing for a few hours, Conrad heard a rustle in the nearby bush where the kudu and the impala were hanging, and immediately suspected the worst – that a dangerous leopard had been lured to the camp by the dead carcasses. Taking complete control of the entire situation, Conrad ordered the others inside, exhorting Pieter to get the boys to safety. As the others scrambled to safety, Conrad ran to his *bakkie* (truck), loaded his gun,

and returned to the dangerous and unknowing scene. Upon returning, he saw a leopard crouching close to the carcasses and instantly fired a shot into the air to scare the animal away. Conrad realized that the leopard would only be deterred for an hour or so, as the carcass meat would surely lure him into the camp again, and decided to *maak 'n plan.* Thinking quickly, Conrad, with the help of another professional hunter, took a leg off the impala carcass and went into the riverbed to hang it on a tree far away from the camp.

A story that played upon similar themes concerned the weekend several members of the group ventured out to Danie's farm in Laingsburg to catch springbok. It was an enduring story that was frequently referred to by different members of the group at social braais. Each man, when recounting the story, would regularly pay heed to images of individual skill and physical prowess. In telling the story, Danie, the owner of the farm, portrayed himself as the bold and courageous leader of the group, using his shrewd *veld* skills to properly track down the animals and round them up in an effective manner. Similarly, Pieter, who was raised on a farm in the Northern Cape, would boast of his *veld* skills, making the point that if it weren't for his keen sense of the bush, the group would have been unsuccessful in catching the game in time.

Like the gendered analysis of men's stories that Johnson (1990: 76) provides, the participants' stories can be seen as creating appropriate roles for an Afrikaans man. Throughout their stories of danger in the *veld,* members of the group consistently highlighted their own physical prowess and keen intelligence. The crux of their stories focused on their skills in the physical world, as each one went to great lengths to report in detail the positive outcomes of their physical prowess and astute intelligence at each stage of the story. Each man spoke of their keen instincts in the *veld,* whether the result of their professionalism in the cases of Conrad and Danie, or the result of years of experience like Pieter. Fundamentally, their stories were a portrayal of their ability to take control and overcome nature in order to ensure their own and the group's safety. An important element in their stories was the emphasis they placed on their individual ability to take a leading role. While Conrad commended his own skill at ensuring the protection of Pieter's small children, Danie and Pieter applauded their own individual leadership abilities when catching game.

As main protagonists in their stories, many of the men focused entirely on their own actions, and made little mention of interaction with the others. This was

made obvious by the lack of reported talking and visiting and the explicit way in which they downplayed any help from the others. Rarely did the men mention the actions of other individuals, and they rarely bothered to give the names of those present. In the beginning of his story, Conrad told us that he was with Pieter and his two young sons, although he did not give them names. In fact, Conrad remained rather vague about how many people were present and it was only upon further enquiry at a much later date that I learned that there were 13 people. Even the individual who helped Conrad place the impala leg near the riverbed was not named, and was only referred to as "another professional hunter who was there."

The world that these men created was made real by means of details about times, places and objects, rather than details about individual identities (Johnson, 1990: 75). Conrad named the two animals that had been hunted that day, impala and kudu, as well as mentioning the time and place of the hunting trip and the exact time frame of the trip, two weeks. Also, during his story, he described the exact model of not only his own gun, but also the gun of the other professional hunter. Paralleling this, Danie and Pieter focused more exclusively on details of the *veld,* its precise location, and the number of springbok that were successfully caught that particular day.

By paying closer attention to details about individual actions, the men can also be seen as discursively manipulating the thoughts and/or actions of others to bolster their own sense of self. As white Afrikaner men in a time of fundamental social change, the men's sense of self can be seen as tied up with qualities that stress individualism, industriousness and a pronounced level of work ethic (see aspects of chapter 3). Therefore, these stories, while creating a gendered world appropriate for an Afrikaans man, are also an example of how the men are revising and reworking themselves in the face of radical social change. The heavy emphasis the men gave to their own performable characteristics and skills demonstrates their attempt, albeit subconscious, to rework domains that allow them a sharper sense of agency.

Despite the appearance of repeated motifs in their storytelling, there existed some degree of variability, most noticeably in the different styles and strategies utilized. While some, like Conrad, focused heavily on physical characteristics, others like Pieter emphasized strong leadership qualities. The point is, however, despite individual variations in style, these men were able to find a common currency in their behaviour whilst still designing it subjectively to their own needs (Cohen, 1985: 17).

It was within the security of the group that individuals were able to draw up and put forward these shared characteristics, pointing to the importance of the group as a coping mechanism.

Conclusion

In attempts to resolve the dissonance between the world they had been prepared for and the world as it is currently perceived to be, the men placed greater weight on individual domains of identification. The individual agency extended into the previously powerful institutionalised domains of religion, employment and relationships did, in several cases, give rise to a following critique of dominant modes of identification. This critique resulted in more internalised views of religion, and encouraged a more entrepreneurial notion of employment in place of institutional employment in large corporations and/or the civil service. In critiquing the "world as it once was," the men also revised and redefined the tenets of 'proper' behaviour in intimate heterosexual relationships. Placed rather ambivalently in a 'structurally in-between' place, the men were able to find support for their solutions through the solidarity of the group. In doing, this revision can be seen as an act of meaning-making that allowed them to re-focus the nature of their journey through life. Preparing for a world that no longer exists resembled a journey that allowed members to discard and amend dominant domains of identification, allowing the men to symbolically restructure their experience of events.

This transaction of meaning was also given impetus through strategies of discursive manipulation that allowed the men to display individual skills of physical prowess, intellectual sharpness and industriousness. As an act of revision and mutual collaboration among this group, storytelling was shown to reflect appropriate gender roles. The gendered way in which the stories were told was shown to involve a substantial degree of subjectivity, as the men highlighted skills, either deliberately or automatically, to bolster their own sense of self in a social world fraught with radical change. Yet, rather than a wholly individualized endeavour, these instances of storytelling can be viewed as an interpretive act in search of meaning whose 'webs of significance' were continually redefined and recreated during the course social interaction (Geertz, 1975: 5).

5. Reworking Identity in the Face of Radical Social Change

> And what now? Now that there are no more apartheid laws creating enforced group identities and the principle of freedom of association applies? Who will associate freely with the concept 'Afrikaner?' What social capital in the form of cultural heritage, skills, and economic resources can be mobilised to give content to this concept? How will those who linked their Afrikaner identity to the control of political power participate in the process of giving new content to the word 'Afrikaner?' They used and abused political power to consolidate and favour the Afrikaner character as a racial identity. What are most of them going to do now that they have become politically powerless? (Van Zyl Slabbert, 2000: 79).

The participants' identity, tightly allocated and organized by the institutional recruitment procedures of the NGK, Christian National Education and the SADF, is now subject to new political processes that undermine this institutional identity (see analysis in chapter 4). Following South Africa's first democratic elections, extensive media attention has focused on the urgent need to publicly come to terms with a past of institutionalised racism. The installation of the TRC is but one example of how the country is attempting to "establish the truth in relation to past events...of...gross violations of human rights" (cited in Botha, 2001: 5). Concerning the question of Afrikaner identity, the removal of old apartheid legislation and the desire of the current government to publicly come to terms with a marred past has given way to uncertainty. This uncertainty, causing dislocation and fragmentation among white Afrikaners, has stimulated a reconstruction of core aspects of their identity (Botha, 2001: 5).

This process of identity reconstruction became salient in two fundamental aspects of the participants' identity, namely nominal and virtual. This chapter will examine how aspects of the men's nominal identity, defined as the name of an identity, and their virtual identity, seen as the experience of that name, have been revised (Jenkins, 1996b: 24). This revision can be seen as an attempt to bridge the felt dissonance between their experience of being an Afrikaner prior to 1994, and their

current experience of that identity in South Africa's new democratic space. For this particular group of white Afrikaner men in Stellenbosch, both the name and the experience of that name were actively contested and renegotiated in light of the radical social change marking post-apartheid South Africa. Whether experienced as positive or negative, the reconstruction of essential elements of their identity imparted to the participants a sense of meaning in a world characterized by flux and continual change. Taking place within the familiar social cocoon of close friends, this renegotiation was, in essence, a coping strategy.

Nominal Identity: The Choice in a Name

During both formal and informal interviews I asked the proverbial question "Do you consider yourself Afrikaans, Afrikaner, Afrikaans-speaking, South African, etc?" The answers I received were also supplemented by participant observation, where the men enlisted a variety of terms during casual conversation to identify themselves. The answers were multi-fold, as were the reasons they gave for taking on a particular name. Ferdie, for example, defined himself as an Afrikaner. When speaking of what this meant to him, he defined an Afrikaner as someone born in South Africa, regardless of mother tongue or race. As he told me "We are all Afrikaners. It is not based on language or race." Like Ferdie, Kobus used the term Afrikaner to define himself. For him, being an Afrikaner was directly correlated to the Afrikaans language, and implied that one was "made here." Being an Afrikaner signified that one belonged to a tribe or a certain culturally orientated group of people. Yet, like Ferdie, he agreed that the term went beyond colour, and could be applied to groups such as Coloureds who, he believed, share many cultural and linguistic similarities with white Afrikaners. In a somewhat similar way, Pieter defined himself as an Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner. His definition combined many elements of the other definitions, stating that while the term could apply to anybody born in South Africa, it tends to be associated with people of a certain culture and language. Conrad, while taking on the label of Afrikaner, openly disputed its association with those not white. He described an Afrikaner as someone who belongs to the "white tribe" of South Africa, a distinctive group of people with German, French and Dutch origins who formed their own culture and language.

Other men defined themselves solely according to language, preferring to call themselves Afrikaans-speaking. Deon identified with this and considered language the sole determinant of his identification. "I am Afrikaans because of the language I speak." A shared language, rather than an all-encompassing culture, was the determining factor in his identification. Interestingly, many men used these terms in conjunction with one another, adding that they saw little difference between calling oneself an Afrikaner, Afrikaans-speaker or an Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner. Jasper, for example, used these terms interchangeably to describe himself, adding that while some people may assign different meanings to each term, they essentially mean the same thing to him.

> **Jasper**: For me, it is the same [Afrikaner and Afrikaans]. Some people might differ. But for me it is the same. You're an Afrikaner because you speak Afrikaans – that is your culture. It might differ from person to person.

The manifold ways in which these men are choosing to reconstruct the name of their identity can be seen as closely connected to present day circumstances of the new South Africa. Put simply, the centrality of change in the new South Africa has encouraged the men to actively confront and examine the name of their identity. This is in contrast to the apartheid era where one's identity was very much bound to the confines of institutional identification. Following Jenkins' (1996b: 25) idea of institutional identification, institutional recruitment procedures of the apartheid era allocated not only positions and ethnic identities, but also considerable resources and privileges to white Afrikaners. Keeping this in mind, it can be argued that the privileging of positions and resources to a specific group of people, the Afrikaners, supplied these men with a certain level of security that predisposed them not to question their identity to the same extent as they are currently doing. The complete reversal of institutional privilege has highlighted their minority status, a status that existed under apartheid but was associated with a high level of privilege. This new positioning as one of several minorities has stimulated a profound dissonance, and in order to bridge this heightened sense of dissonance, many are engaging in a reconstruction of fundamental aspects of their identity. As a coping strategy, the participants are currently exercising a higher degree of choice when revising and reworking the name of their identity. Their nominal identity, while enlisting similar terms such as Afrikaner, and Afrikaans-speaking, did not use a prescribed set of

criteria for determining what the terms meant. The meanings varied from individual to individual, as each member of the group sought out individually appropriate terms. The term Afrikaner, for some, closely correlated to race, while for others it implied a shared language and culture. And for others, the term Afrikaner applied to all those born in South Africa, regardless of language, race, or culture.

Yet, the coping mechanism of active questioning and examining is embedded in far more than institutional change. The choice these men are engaging in is also considerably influenced by the naming and identification by others following radical social change. As a form of cultural contact, the opening up of representations into public visibility and scrutiny following the implementation of commissions such as the TRC, has made potent the process of being named by 'others.' In the South African context, these representations are subject to naming and labelling through a media rhetoric that seeks to ameliorate the injustices of the past (Botha, 2001: 7). The opening up of these representations into public visibility can be seen as a form of cultural contact that generates consequences to being named.

As a coping strategy, there was the tendency of the majority to distance themselves from labels that were perceived as associated with conservatism and racism. In discussing his motivations behind choosing the term Afrikaans, Deon spoke of distancing himself from the label Afrikaner. For him, the term implied political undertones that could be associated with right-winged conservatism and racism. He saw the term as linked to the image of a "bearded spitting *Boer* who historically lived by his bible and his gun." In addition to this, he described an Afrikaner as someone who held strong convictions of racism towards Blacks and Coloureds, and would fight to his death protecting the Afrikaans language and culture. It was this image that Deon wished to distance himself from, describing himself as an urbanized Afrikaans-speaker who currently embraces liberalism and rejects religious fervour.

In a similar way, Conrad spoke of wanting to distance himself from the typical Afrikaner. He would express his frustration and annoyance when interacting with those he described as "typical Afrikaners." He perceived a typical Afrikaner as someone who clings steadfastly to their language, religion and culture and lacks a fundamental open-mindedness to new ideas. He described himself as a "different kind of Afrikaner," a more liberal one who has refused to carry forth the cultural baggage of the past.

In the same way, Jasper was keenly aware of the stereotypical image of Afrikaners, and like Deon and Conrad, actively disassociated himself from these negative representations. In relating his friends' experiences overseas, Jasper spoke of the perception that many people hold of Afrikaners as racist, and compared this negative stereotyping to the situation of Germans following WWII.

> **Jasper**: My mates said that when they travelled overseas the English would say "You're an Afrikaner so you must be a racist." It's the same as if you're German – people think you are a Nazi. Basically, it is the same thing. And we all know that not all Germans are racist towards the Jews. Unfortunately, you do get Afrikaners who put our nation to shame.
> **Q**: Like who?
> **Jasper**: Right-wingers. I detest them. They are (pause) an embarrassment for our language and our culture. Racists like that you get up north in the rural areas. Stellenbosch tends to be more liberal than most parts of the country. You know, I'm an Afrikaner and I'm proud of it, but I don't want to be associated with those kinds of racists.

Here Jasper was strongly distancing himself from the stereotype of Afrikaners as racist, while at the same time making a clear geographical distinction between his perception of the liberalism of Stellenbosch and the racism "up north." Like Conrad, Jasper was attempting not only to distance himself from a label that carries negative connotations in the non-racial South Africa, but was actively redefining the term Afrikaner.

Despite the variety of names chosen to identity oneself, the process of being negatively labelled as conservative and racist in a social order of non-racialism, liberalism and equality for all, has instigated an individual renegotiation of the men's nominal identity. Media and public rhetoric has attuned their attention to representations of Afrikaners that do not fit into the stated aim of non-racialism, and in attempts to bridge the felt dissonance between their past and present positioning, they have become embroiled in an active revision of their nominal identity.

Virtual Identity: The Experience of an Identity

The opening up of representations following radical social change in South Africa has not only stimulated a reconsideration of the name of the men's identity, but has also produced a change in their experience of being an Afrikaner, an Afrikaans-speaker, or an Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner. In bringing images forth into the public

imagination, much attention and scrutiny has been drawn to the Afrikaners as a people who were represented by a government that developed institutionalised racism for nearly four decades. The opening up of these new representations into the public imagination is in stark contrast to the apartheid era's tendency to de-legitimise criticism against its government. This was potently described in Antjie Krog's book *A Change of Tongue* (2003), where she chronicled the narratives of ordinary people as they struggled through the pain of change and belonging in South Africa. In a reported conversation with her aging parents, she queried the way in which they as Afrikaners dealt with the burgeoning criticism of apartheid in the fifties and sixties.

> "We [the Afrikaners] minimized contact with it. We stopped reading their newspapers [English] – why should we expose ourselves to daily ridicule? We didn't go to their universities; we didn't listen to their radio programmes. If we had a need for something, we created it ourselves, our own films, our own books, our own history, our own Afrikaner businesses and millionaires... (Krog, 2003: 69).

Following the change in government in 1994, representations that were previously ignored, derided and de-legitimated were thrust forward into public narratives, opening up the Afrikaner people to a mosaic of images that questioned, and meticulously examined the myths, narratives and beliefs that were central to Afrikanerdom (Botha, 2001: 8). This, in addition to a new democratic dispensation that repositions Afrikaners as one of several minorities rather than a protected and privileged one, can be seen as stimulating fundamental changes in the men's virtual identity. These experienced changes can be seen as an effective way of coping with the contact generated by these representations.

During many months of participant observation, a common thread began to develop that drew attention to feelings of persecution that were experienced through public images that were perceived as ridiculing, criticizing, and disdaining the Afrikaner culture. The men's experience of being an Afrikaner, an Afrikaans-speaker or an Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaner in 2005 is one that is entangled in a complex mix of guilt, blame, victimization and resistance. Danie, for example, expressed his frustration and anger at constantly being bombarded by negative images of Afrikaners in the media.

> **Danie**: Ag, man, I'm just so sick and tired of turning on the T.V only to hear 'Apartheid this, and apartheid that, Afrikaners did this, Afrikaners did that, whada, whada, whada. We [the Blacks] are victims of apartheid, blah, blah blah.' You know,

> the last thing I need when I come home at night is to turn on the T.V and hear *kak* (shit) about the past. So, I don't even bother to watch the news anymore. You know, it's been 11 years and people must just learn to get over it. Apartheid is finished. It's over! I don't need to hear about it everyday of my life.

Here we can see how public images that actively question, scrutinize, and dissect apartheid have resulted in active resistance. In efforts to cope with these feelings of discord, Danie has chosen to filter out all negative images that he feels disparage his culture. His experience of being an Afrikaner in post-apartheid South Africa in 2005 is one that is riddled with extreme defensiveness and resistance.

Similarly, Conrad expressed simultaneous feelings of persecution and resistance. For him, public sentiment and the nation's desire for reconciliation has overwhelmed him, resulting in a very defensive stance.

> **Conrad**: As Afrikaners, we've always had to fight for our language and our culture. And any culture that is put under extreme amounts of stress would react in the same way. You always want to look out for your own. It's the natural order of things. And I realize that apartheid was wrong, but you must keep in mind that at the end of the day it was just people living their lives. It's not nice to always be told that your culture was bad, evil, etc. We have accepted that it [apartheid] was wrong, and now everyone must just get on with their lives. It doesn't need to be dragged out [referring to the TRC].

Stuck between the Lesser of Two Evils

> "Maar die groot gevaar is eerder dat hulle in die proses van oopskryf, en van regskryf wat verkeerd is, ook sal doodskryf: dat hulle in die proses van ondersoek en Afrikaner-foute kritiseer dit so ongenadig sal doen dat 'n jonger geslag sal huiwer om hom met Afrikaansheid en Afrikanerskap te identifiseer." (cited in Du Toit, 1983: 26).
>
> But, the great danger, rather, is that in the process of rewriting and revising what is wrong, they (writers, journalists, and intellectuals) will also kill history. In the process of investigating and criticizing Afrikaner mistakes, they will do it unmercifully, and the younger generation will be reluctant to identify with Afrikanerdom and Afrikaner identity. (My informant, Conrad's interpretation).

In addition to these feelings, many men expressed feelings of acute victimization and positioned themselves as victims of apartheid alongside Blacks and

Coloureds. These men perceived the legacy of apartheid as flooding into every aspect of their lives. For example, during an informal interview, Johann articulated his feelings of despair and victimization in South Africa's new democratic space.

> **Johann**: I am an apartheid victim because things are unhappy in my country because of apartheid. You know, we didn't start the fire but unfortunately we are the ones who have to pay for it with things like affirmative action. And we have to live with the blame everyone puts on us, as well. And to be honest, I am fed up with apartheid being given the blame for everything nowadays! Why must I suffer for something that has nothing to do with me? I am a victim!

This theme of victimization can be seen as epitomized in the frequently recited '*sondes van die vaders*' (sins of the fathers). This statement came to embody feelings of victimization that many felt they were subject to as white Afrikaners in the new South Africa. They perceived their fathers' generation as living in the comfort of apartheid, whereas they saw the younger generation, not being brought up with apartheid rhetoric, as easily able to distance themselves from apartheid. They perceived their generation, on the other hand, as caught in-between the older and younger generation. For example, Pieter felt that his generation has had to face a double-edged knife their whole lives. They had to uphold and protect the ideology of apartheid through mandatory National Service, and yet they are the same ones who now have to deal with affirmative action. In this way, he felt his generation was paying for the 'sins of the fathers.' He described the older generation as being protected and the younger generation as being unknowing. His generation's positioning, on the other hand, was seen as unique because of its positioning between the old and new. Similarly, Lennie felt that to be a white Afrikaner nowadays means that one, very much like a Black person in the apartheid era, is constantly discriminated against based on the colour of their skin.

For Ferdie, like many of the other men, 'sins of the fathers' epitomized his feelings of victimization in the new South Africa. Yet, for Ferdie, this was closely connected to a way of thinking that he feels was imparted to him as a child. Growing up in the rural area around Vredenburg in the Western Cape, Ferdie spoke of assuming that a system where different races lived separately was a "natural and normal thing." It wasn't something he questioned as a small child because to him, it was just the way things were. It was only when he reached his teenage years that he was able to question and criticize a system that he was brought up to believe was

natural. For Ferdie, then, 'sins of the fathers,' means that Afrikaner men such as himself are weighed down by a way of thinking that has been passed on from generation to generation. As an ingrained way of thinking and reacting in the world, it has victimized him alongside Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. This, he feels, has made him a victim of apartheid.

Whatever manner in which it was taken up, 'sins of the fathers' was a commonly enlisted theme that allowed members of the group to channel their feelings of grievance and frustration in the comfort and solidarity of a social space that coalesced many of their sentiments and attitudes. As a coping strategy, it helped alleviate their intensifying discrepancy between the world as it was and 'the world that no longer exists.'

Conclusion

This chapter examined how aspects of South Africa's radical social change have stimulated a change in the men's nominal and virtual identity. Following the massive social upheaval of transformation, it was argued that the men, in attempts to overcome their dissonance, could be seen as exercising a higher level of individual agency when reconstructing their nominal identity. The manifold ways in which the men revised aspects of their nominal identity can be seen a result of both institutional change and the dawning of a national ethos that stresses non-racialism, liberalism and equality for all. The stated aim of non-racialism has left little room for those who embrace the conservatism and racism of the apartheid era. Hence, the struggle to find an appropriate niche, both individually and collectively, along a continuum of choice.

Radical social changes following 1994 have also opened up representations that have challenged and critiqued the myths and beliefs central to Afrikanerdom. In transforming a country riddled with a past of institutionalised racism, current public and media rhetoric has focused on uncovering the gross injustices of apartheid, epitomized by agencies such as the TRC. The public consumption of representations that openly critique and challenge underlying motifs of Afrikanerdom has resulted in a complex interplay of thoughts, feelings and reactions on the part of the participants. Their experience of being a white Afrikaner in post-apartheid South Africa in 2005 is fraught with conflicting feelings of guilt, blame, victimization and defensiveness. In

coping with rhetorics of reconciliation, many have refused to attend to these images, or, in the case of others, have demonstrated a profound resistance and aversion to these images. This theme of defensiveness and resistance, as expressed among the participants in this study, was simultaneously combined with an acute sense of victimization that was represented by the statement 'sins of the fathers.' Whether used to express feelings of anger towards an ideology they felt they were forced to subordinate themselves to, or as a generational construct to illuminate the challenges facing them, 'sins of the fathers' was a successful coping strategy that imparted a sense of meaning to members.

6. Ritual Social Life – A Playground for Social Identity and Boundaries of 'Otherness.'

Summertime in Stellenbosch is a time of blossoming activity. The streets bustle with excitement, and the local Spar, a popular supermarket, is a rainbow of eager sunburnt faces rummaging the aisles looking for the perfect *braaivleis* (bbq meat) and the perfect beer with which to wash it down. As one drives through the town, the smell of fire reaches one's nose, intermingled with the distinctive mouth watering smell of *boerewors* (spicy sausage), lamb chops and *braai broodjies* (braai sandwiches). SMSs are sent and phone calls made as people organize the who, what, when, where and why of the weekend's braai. By mid-afternoon, the social itineraries have been smoothed out, the meat prepared and marinated in a large metal bucket, the fire started, and the grill cleaned by the licking flames. Chairs are arranged on the *stoep* (veranda) and soon people arrive with broad smiles on their faces with plastic bags full of food, and cases of beer dangling from their fingertips. Hands are shaken, backs patted, and cheeks kissed as they greet one another: *Hello! Hoe gaan dit met jou? Dis 'n pragtige dag!* (Hello, how are you? It's a beautiful day!)

These weekend braais are fundamental to the ritual social life of the core group of seven men (see table 1 in methods), a time when old friends come together to *kuier* (socialize) and where old memories are revisited and new memories formed. Borrowing from Turner (1987: 106), ritual social life is viewed as a transformative performance whereby a series of phases and episodes, both fixed and formal, are revealed. As the generating source of culture, ritual is intimately linked to social transitions, and functions as a social bonding mechanism by transforming perceived crises into occasions where unity is celebrated (Turner, 1987: 158).

As an essential part of their ritual social life, braais are an arena where the individually unique and the collectively shared coalesce, forming the "...canvas upon which identification can play" (Jenkins, 1996b: 21). It is the social space where their individual identity is melded into a collectively expressed commonality, a place where similarity and difference are played out through the act of social interaction. It is

essentially a combination of these elements that form the root of their social identity and ethnicity as white Afrikaner men in Stellenbosch. This basic social anthropological model of Jenkins (1997: 40), focusing on differentiation, shared meaning, variability and most importantly, the collective nature of ethnicity, will form the backbone of this chapter on identity. Alongside using Jenkins' basic model, this chapter will also examine the essential role of 'impression management strategies' in the formation of social identity, in addition to offering a phenomenological analysis of the dialectics of identification.

The Performative Dialectic of Identity

Necessary Expressive Equipment

Weekend braais proved to be a continuous and evolving social space where 'internal-external dialectics of identification' were constituted successfully amongst the group. Following the premise that social identity is never truly unilateral (Jenkins, 1996b: 21) and is rooted in the validation of others, the men used a variety of tactics to bridge the interface between their self-image and their public image.

The tactics used to interface these two images, self and public, were not executed in a random and unorganised manner, but rather followed a prescribed order that included necessary expressive equipment. This necessary equipment included a proper 'setting' for a performance to take place. A proper setting, defined as the physical layout, and including furniture and other background items, was integral in paving the way to a successful performance (Goffman, 1959: 32-33). Performances were dependent on a pre-determined braai setting that included an outdoor *stoep,* a fire, and the routine of preparing and cooking *die braaivleis* – an intimate setting whereby all the men sat in close proximity not only to the fire, but to one another. This style of setting was a virtual necessity for any performance to take place. For example, if guests arrived before an appropriate braai setting had been organized, there existed a definite lapse of social ease among the group. At one particular braai hosted by Conrad, unplanned time constraints had prevented him from organizing the braai area, and his guests arrived to an empty *stoep* with no firewood, blitz, or table. The guests stood around awkwardly, shifted uncomfortably on their feet, and repeatedly looked expectantly into the kitchen. As they hesitatingly put their bags full

of meat and drink on the floor, they stumbled in conversation, made discomfited jokes and lingered uncomfortably on their last words. "Where is Conrad? Should I help myself and put the meat in the fridge? Did Conrad manage to buy firewood and blitz?" The social unease and discomfort they experienced was predicated on the absence of a required braai setting. Before a performance could be successfully employed, the expressive equipment befitting a performance was needed. At most braais I participated in, the performative aspect of social identity never took full form until the correct braai setting had been organized. Performative storytelling, joking, singing and laughing did not reach its apex until dusk had illuminated the glow of the fire, and the smell of *braaivleis* was swimming heavily in the air.

Impression Management Strategies

To coalesce and dramatise the internal-external dialectics of social identity, these men enacted several 'impression management strategies' to ensure that the signals they sent to others were effectively communicated and received. These strategies of impression management were not, however, staged and enacted in an artificial and false way, but instead were performed naturally in the familiar and traditional social space of regular braais. It was only after several months of immersion that specific themes began to emerge, and I was able to not only to trace the common threads in their performances, but was also able to discriminate the unique individuality of each performance.

As the oldest member of the group, the father of two, and the most financially successful among the group, Pieter proved to be a natural leader. This was shown in the leading role he assumed during social performances, as he was normally the first one to initiate a topic of conversation at a braai. His performances also tended to more serious compared to the entertaining performances of Conrad and Danie. As the group 'jokers,' Conrad and Danie would always engage in comical show-offs with each other, striving to embarrass or subtly humiliate one another through snide and/or witty jokes. The difference being that Conrad tended to monopolize and tailor the flow of conversation, while Danie, assuming a less direct role, came to epitomize the quintessential 'sidekick.' Jaco, like his older brother, Conrad, offered a humorous element to the group, yet, unlike Conrad, tended to be more modest and

inconspicuous when performing. His humour was considerably more dry and sarcastic compared to the others, making the impact of his performances noticeably profound. Alfred, on the other hand, was the proverbial intellectual of the group, and was the first one to initiate more sombre and serious conversations, whether political or general in nature. Alfred's best friend, Jasper, tended to follow his lead, and frequently engaged members of the group on a one-on-one basis, rather than as a group. Of all the members, Deon was the most difficult to pigeonhole, as his political sentiments and general worldview represented an antithesis to many of the group's ingrained sentiments on race, culture and politics. Yet, when performing, Deon tended to understate this divergence, and as will be outlined in the upcoming section, ascribed to idealized norms of the group.

One strategy that was enacted again and again during these social rituals was the effort to make an effective showing of one's professional skills. This common routine of stressing one's professional skills was not haphazard, but rather endorsed already accredited values of the group (Goffman, 1959: 43). Skills such as hard work, perseverance and individual creativity were stressed in attempts to bolster their occupational reputation in the eyes of others. Pieter, for example, would often discuss the challenges and long hours of work that his consultancy business presented him, arguing adamantly that despite the hardships, he wouldn't have it any other way. Danie, a farmer in Laingsburg, would emphasize the long and tedious, yet rewarding work of independent sheep farming in the Karoo. As a familiar social routine among the men, the strategy of giving a good impression of one's professional capacity would often echo mutual and accredited values of the group. This extended not only to those involved in entrepreneurial endeavours, but applied to those employed in companies as well. As a financial manager for Vodacom, Jasper often spoke of the need to work even harder given the threat of affirmative action in his company. Like the men pursing small business undertakings, Jasper demonstrated similar professional skills to the rest of the group, arguing that an unfailing work ethic was essential to his job prosperity. Whatever manner in which these men were employed, the skills and talents performed during ritual social life incorporated approved values of the group.

Linked to this was the tendency to over-emphasize or give the impression of adhering to an idealized value of the group (Goffman, 1959: 50). One common idealized value was material and financial success. As upper-middle and middle class

men (see upcoming class analysis), these men possessed a high degree of 'cultural capital,' including a high value on economic prestige that can be seen as stemming from their access to higher education. During weekend social braais, the men would often discuss stock market investments and profits, their latest purchased material assets, whether a car, motorbike or camera, and their future investment endeavours. During these performances, each man presented the impression of lucrative financial investments and material resources, and rarely touched upon individual financial concerns. Pieter made mention several times of his plan to purchase a home in Stellenbosch for his ex-wife and two sons. He also discussed the profitable contracts he had established with the University of Stellenbosch for his strategic planning consultancy business. Taking the lead from Pieter, other men, like Conrad, would talk of the prestigious international clients from the American Pentagon that he had taken out on hunting expeditions in the Eastern and Western Cape. Conrad would rigorously and methodically perform to this ideal when initially put forward by others in the group. His desire and/or need to adhere to this ideal can be linked to the precarious and unpredictable status of his small hunting business. 4 years previously, Conrad resigned from his University administrative job, and despite dire warnings from his family and close friends, started his own hunting business. Therefore, Conrad, as opposed to some of the others, had a vested interest in proving his financial and occupational success to the group. The impression of holding fast to this idealized value, while important for virtually all the men, was significantly more important for new small business owners like Pieter and Conrad.

The appearance of embracing this ideal was crucial in bridging the effacement between one's self-image and public image. In short, 'impression management strategies' such as the ones outlined above were used to assume an appropriate social identity. As commonly ascribed-to values of the group, financial and occupational prestige were manipulated and performed in an idealized manner so as to be seen – to take on an appropriate and approved social identity within the group (Jenkins, 1996b: 22).

Yet, the idealized manner of 'impression management' tended to conceal any action or behaviour that was inconsistent with this ideal standard (Goffman, 1959: 50). Many of the participants concealed information that did not live up to the middle class ideal of wealth and prosperity. In conversations outside group gatherings, the men expressed their concerns and worries about both their financial and occupational

future. This is not to say that it was totally uncommon for these men's concerns to be aired openly within the group, as on many occasions members would express deep-seated fears of affirmative action and other governmental legislation as discussed in chapter 4. But these anxieties were expressed according to an accepted repertoire and/or language of the group, including 'sins of the father' (see chapter 5) and 'educated for a world that doesn't exist' (see chapter 3). What became obvious outside the group was the intensity to which these fears and doubts pervaded the men's thoughts.

On one particular evening, while the remaining remnants of a raucous braai were being cleared away, Jaco and I engaged in a conversation whilst packing away the leftover meat and clearing away the lip-smudged beer mugs that scattered the *stoep*. It had proved to be an emotionally trying evening for Jaco, as his ex-girlfriend, Else, had arrived uninvited to the braai after a bitter break-up the week before. Standing in the kitchen, with the debris from the party floating around us, Jaco expressed his deep-seated financial fears of the future.

> **Jaco**: I am doing well, I really am, and I am going places! I work so hard on that farm, day in and day out, but it is such a battle to get anywhere nowadays. Else is a waitress, I am a farm manager; the only vehicle we have is the one provided by the farm. We live in a rented cottage on the farm. I am just *gatvol* (fed up) with everything! And to top it off, Bill (the owner of the estate) is thinking about selling! Then what will I have? *Niks nie* (nothing).

Similar to Jaco, the ideal standards of financial stability and job security that his brother, Conrad, impressed upon the group was in contrast to his projected self outside the group in one-on-one interaction with me. The confidence and enthusiasm with which he spoke about his occupation in front of the group was strikingly dissimilar to how he spoke of it in the absence of the group. Several times, he would speak of the loneliness and isolation of being separated from his family and friends for months on end during the hunting season. This was combined with the unpredictability and insecurity of being involved in a business that could fall out from under him at any moment. On a number of occasions, Conrad asked me repeatedly not to make mention of these financial concerns when in the presence of the group, arguing that it was not something he felt comfortable discussing with them.

The idealized values of financial and occupational stability that were expressed during 'impression management strategies,' can be linked to their specific

class positioning. Following Ortner's (2003: 32) delineation of class according to a tripartite scheme of PMC/middle class/lower class based on occupation, these men can be placed firmly within both the PMC and the middle class. Of the core group of seven men, Pieter and Alfred can be placed within the PMC, an upper-middle-class set that is associated with a distinctive service class of managers, professionals, educators and scientists. The other five can be situated in the middle class, which includes owners of small businesses, teachers, accountants, real estate agents and middle level managers (Ortner, 2003: 32).[6]

As men from upper-middle and middle class homes, who were 'tracked for success' (see 'cultural capital' in chapter 3), it became 'normal' to expect occupational and material prestige. Sharing similar life histories and for the most part having grown up with each other, this particular group of men created and upheld values that resonated loudly with their class positioning, namely financial and occupational success. They can be seen as assuming a particular social identity that they either automatically or deliberately strove to maintain by giving off the impression that they were living up to these class ideals. In performing and wanting to perform these values, the men were seeking to be seen as successful by the members of the group, and in so doing were actively engaging in the construction of their social identity.

Yet, it should be stressed that these performances did not occur solely within the vacuum of a tight knit social sphere. The art and desire to perform to these idealized values was a coping strategy that was used to combat growing perceptions of financial and occupational marginalization in the new South Africa. Within the safety of a familiar and traditional social sphere, the participants were able to successfully perform the idealized and expected values of their upper-middle and class positioning. In so doing, the idealized symbols of financial and occupational prestige were celebrated, adding significance to the unity of the group.

[6] See Appendix A

The Fusion of Public and the Private Spheres - a Lived Experience

During social occasions, an important element of a successful presentation was the physical and lively interaction between performers and listeners. More precisely, the crossing of the boundary between the individual and the collective can also be seen as a lived bodily experience (Jackson, 2002: 28). Coming into a public space such as a braai, this private-public melding was experienced and enacted in the body, as friends and cohorts would sit closely together, laugh, joke and sing together. The appropriate background setting made possible a physical and bodily interaction between the men at a braai. Fundamentally, it provided the men with a comforting and familiar space for coming together, an intimacy that was similarly shared and lived through their bodies. A braai, as explicated earlier, extends well beyond food, and is valued and desired for the sociality it produces. It is this sociality, where individuals are able to reach out and understand and laugh with one another that makes communion possible. Talking, laughing, singing and dancing at a braai were experiences that were lived in the body, and when shared with others, were effective ways of crossing the boundary between individual and public selves.

One example among many where the intimacy of shared bodily experience made communion possible was the 30th birthday party of Lennie, a close friend of the core group of men. In recent times, members of the group had become disillusioned with each other, and several had distanced themselves considerably from the social scene of their close friends. Yet, under social pressure from outside 'others', they had agreed to attend Lennie's birthday party. The event, which brought together an extended network of friends, some distant and some close, was set in the upstairs section of the local rugby club. Rugby paraphernalia and jerseys were strung out across the walls, and grainy team photographs boasted the winnings and achievements of the club. People were scattered throughout the room, some teetering close to the bar, others forming a circle around the braai, while some had taken to the dance floor as the Afrikaans music of Steve Hofmeyr and David Kramer filled the air. The setting was ripe for interaction to be played out, and was an ideal setting to encourage the coalescing of the internal-external dialectic of identification in bodily form.

It was a setting in which members of the group, seated comfortably around the bar, took centre stage, and revisited old stories that had the group aching with laughter as they slapped each other on the back, and elbowed one other in jest. Throwing his head back and wrapping his one arm around his waist, Conrad told the ever familiar story about his quiet family Christmas that turned into a debauchery, as one by one members of the group joined the 2003 Christmas festivities in his parent's backyard. The crossing of the individual into a collective communion was lived through as a physical interaction between members of the group, as their laughter rang out in unison, fists playfully punched one another, and glasses clinked in celebration. "Hey, Conrad" Danie shouted enthusiastically to his friend, "remember when I did this at the party?" Crossing the room, Danie turned around, and came running towards Conrad, head down, and arms bent angularly. Conrad, sensing what was coming, bent himself slightly and prepared for the impact of Danie's head. Back and forth they went tackling one another in-between fits of uncontrollable laughter.

The power of this group's storytelling to cross the boundary between the individual and the collective can be seen as lived through as a physical event (Jackson, 2002: 28). Their storytelling, more than an amalgamation of the individual and the collective, created a vital connection between storytellers and listeners that was grounded in the lived bodily experience of its members.

The Art of Boundary Maintenance

A Deviation from the Norm

As a distinct group whose members interacted frequently, there existed a prescribed set of criteria for signalling membership in and exclusion from the group. This extended beyond geography and recruitment, and was located in continual expression and validation within the group (Barth, 1969: 15). As an enduring group, these men commonly enlisted a repertoire of core themes when interacting with one another. These core themes, including 'survival' and 'adaptation' tropes (see chapters 4 and 5), served to express the commonality of their experiences. In so doing, they received validation and support from one another as they struggled to make sense of new predicaments in their lives. These themes served to promote an understanding

among the group that they were all 'playing the same game' (Barth, 1969: 15). The point is that criteria for determining membership also functioned to determine exclusion. Recognition of 'others' implied a shared recognition between members that 'others' did not share similar understandings, evaluations, and judgements, thus marking a difference between themselves and 'others.' Both the appearance and manner of marked 'others,' (Goffman, 1959: 36) and their dissimilar sentiments to the group's own homogeneity, reinforced their identity as white Afrikaners.

For example, an acquaintance, Divesh (see methods), would occasionally join weekend braais hosted by the core group. Divesh's periphery membership in the group was not, however, clearly accepted by all the men. When invitations were extended to Divesh, several of the men would make disapproving comments and voice their annoyance at his perceived "racial sensitivity." This discomfort went beyond mere words, as many would shift uncomfortably in their chairs, roll their eyes, and sigh heavily when Divesh's invitation became known. In fact, after several months of immersion, I began to notice that it was only Jasper and Conrad who extended invitations to Divesh. After extended immersion, I was also able to see the direct link between Divesh's presence and my own. Having formed a close friendship with Divesh during my time in Stellenbosch, my own friendship networks within this group influenced the regularity with which members interacted with Divesh.

The most striking signals of Divesh's exclusion were his different appearance and manner. These proved to be exceptions that members' attentions were immediately drawn to (Goffman, 1959: 36). Firstly, his ethnicity as an Indian was a marked exception to the group's norm. This was combined with his different 'manner' of communication, which included a language, accent, and speech patterns that deviated from the norm. Born and raised in the Indian suburb of Rylands in Cape Town, Divesh was raised with English as his mother tongue. Yet, despite a working knowledge of Afrikaans, Divesh vocally refused to address or respond to the men in Afrikaans, citing their language as the "language of the oppressor." This difference was also emphasized by the nature of Divesh's English accent that became palpable by the looks of exasperation and occasions of teasing that he was often subjected to. Many times Divesh would utter something that the men perceived as unintelligible, and they would exchange disparaging looks amongst one another. On some occasions, the men would confront him in a teasing way: "What? I don't understand what you are saying! Speak English, Divesh. All I heard was blah, blah, blah, blah." This

relentless teasing can, in one respect, be interpreted as a way of testing his membership in the group to see if he could sustain a friendly manner (Goffman, 1959: 210). Several times, the men would tease Divesh relentlessly, and make several references to his ethnicity as an Indian. "Hey Divesh, what's your horoscope? Samoosa? Ha, ha ha." Or "Divesh, you didn't put your Indian lips on my beer did you?" On such occasions, Divesh would smile and laugh along, which indicated that he was performing to the standards of the group. In this way, his periphery membership can be seen as linked to his ability to retain a friendly manner in the face of teasing (Goffman, 1959: 210).

Divesh's strong contrast to the group's internal homogeneity was also shown in the criticism they frequently engaged in in his absence. Paralleling Goffman's 'treatment of the absent' (1959: 168), these men derogated Divesh in a way that was sometimes inconsistent with the face-to-face treatment he received. For example, the men would frequently voice their frustrations concerning Divesh's adamant defence of affirmative action, and criticize what they saw as his tendency to attribute his problems to race. In their talk, it became clear that Divesh was playing a different game that utilized a different set of criteria for evaluating and judging a set of circumstances. Divesh's sentiments on issues such as affirmative action were in stark contrast to their own, as what they perceived to be reverse discrimination against the white Afrikaner male represented something completely different to him. Divesh's continual charges of racism and nepotism by white Afrikaners were not congruent with their own experience as victims of new political policies like affirmative action.

"I am Not Like That"

Transactions such as these served to mark the boundary of their group of white Afrikaner men. Boundaries between the group and 'others' were marked because they represented something members wished to be distinguished from (Cohen, 1985: 12). In critiquing 'others,' the men were distinguishing themselves from what they saw as his obsession with race and racism. Yet, looking beneath this surface distaste for those they saw as "playing the race card," was the deeper theme of work ethic and rightful merit. In distancing themselves from 'excuses of race,' these men were in fact distinguishing themselves as hard workers in contrast to 'others' who were perceived

as lazy and achieving success through entitlement rather than skill. In conversations where 'others' were absent, some of the men expressed their distaste at what they perceived to be the overwhelming tendency of Blacks, Coloureds and Indians to use race as an excuse for everything. As Deon noted on several occasions, the sense of entitlement that he believes many people of colour carry is something he wholly disagrees with. He feels that many people of colour believe they are entitled to a house, a car, and a job because they suffered in the past. In making this statement, Deon was distinguishing himself from 'others' who he felt lacked adequate work ethic. In a related conversation, Kobus expressed his abhorrence at governmental policies that "...put Black and Coloured guys in because of their race, rather than their ability." Referring specifically to the appointment of Black directors in large private companies, Kobus, like Deon, can be seen as distinguishing himself as a high achiever as opposed to 'others' who "use race as an excuse" to achieve success.

Interestingly, when Divesh would counter these opinions with the argument that current legislative measures use the same principle of partiality that the apartheid government did in the past, many would plead aggressively with Divesh to "get over the past." Conrad, especially, was continually vocal in asserting his belief that the past was not a useful reference point for judging the present. Many times he would state emphatically "Apartheid is in the past! It's finished! It's over! People must learn to get over it and move on with their lives." In making a discrepancy between themselves as hard workers and 'others' as beneficiaries of entitlement, the men selectively filtered out any information that countered their beliefs. Here we can see exactly how resilient the nature of boundary maintenance was among this group of men.

Prescribed Codes of Interaction

Another important aspect of boundary maintenance amongst this group was the restrictive nature of interaction. This usually included a significant difference in behaviour amongst members when in the presence of 'others.' Different, meaning that behaviour frequently followed a systematic set of rules that relied upon prescribed codes of interaction. These coded rules allowed for the articulation of some sentiments, while simultaneously protecting and insulating the group from

confrontation (Barth, 1969: 16). Concerning this particular group of men, there existed a marked difference in behaviour when in the presence of 'others.'

During the initial stages of participant observation, my presence as an 'other' among this group of white Afrikaner men can be seen as subject to similar prescribed codes of interaction. When in my presence, racial comments and jokes were rarely expressed, and interaction was steered towards common topics of conversation, such as travel, work, and family. Yet, my extended presence, the good rapport that developed between me and the group and the whiteness of my skin were important components in establishing to them that I was potentially 'playing the same game.' After many months of immersion in the group, these restricted codes of interaction became relatively relaxed, as certain sentiments were shared with me that were clearly hidden from 'others.'

When interacting amongst themselves, certain topics such as race were broached in a casual and nonchalant way. Racial comments and jokes were thrown around with casual abandon during interaction, and were received and validated by the other members of the group. Surrounded by individuals who could be seen as sharing similar thoughts and feelings, members were able to perform jokes and comments within the safety of the group. On one such occasion, Jaco placed a single potato chip on his shoulder and announced "Look, I am a Coloured person – I have a chip on my shoulder." Upon hysterical laughter from the group, he proceeded to put the entire bag of chips on his shoulder and said, "Look, I am a Black person. I have a whole bunch of chips on my shoulder. Give me a job now!" This performance personifies the idea that an individual's performance often exemplifies and incorporates accepted ideas and values of the group and/or society (Goffman, 1959: 45). This joke dramatised the perception among these men that Black and Coloured people use their race as a playing card for "getting what they want." In this particular case, the performative joke signified the accepted belief among these men that affirmative action has produced a "lazy attitude" among people of colour – an attitude that encourages them to demand success rather than work for it. This performance was successful because it adhered to ideal standards rather straying from them. And the fact that the other men laughed implied that Jaco's performance was successful in communicating its desired message.

The Oxford dictionary of English (2003) defines 'chip of the shoulder,' as a "deeply ingrained grievance," which in retrospect makes Jaco's comment oddly

ironic. Alongside dramatising the group's perception of entitlement among Black and Coloureds, this performative joke also accurately represents the post-apartheid ethos of justified and warranted embitterment on the part of Blacks and Coloureds. In performing, Jaco incorporated the justified sense of grievance and entitlement inherent in post-apartheid South Africa, while simultaneously putting forth his own interpretation as a white Afrikaner.

When in the presence of 'others,' the men's performances were significantly altered. In such circumstances, performative joking was fine-tuned and articulated in a very structured way so as to prevent interaction with 'others' from entering into racially sensitive domains. Often times when marked 'others' were present there was a complete absence of racial jokes and/or connotations. Also, when in the presence of 'others,' these men's political sentiments remained somewhat hidden, as did virtually all references to themes of 'adaptation,' 'survival,' and 'sins of the father.' It should be noted that extended interaction with 'others' over time was not common, and throughout my ten months of immersion, Divesh proved to be the only exception to this norm. Keeping this in mind, interaction with Divesh was significantly different and less subject to the restrictive codes followed when interacting with most 'others.'

One particularly potent example of this restrictive nature of interaction was the weekend I invited my roommate, Barbara, (see methods) to Stellenbosch to watch the Springbok rugby team face off with the French national team. It had been arranged weeks in advance that the game would be watched at the local rugby club, and after much speculation and hesitation on my part, I had arranged with Conrad that I would bring Barbara. My hesitations in bringing her to Stellenbosch were not unfounded, as both Barbara and members of the group had presented me with stereotypical racist comments about the others culture and race on several prior occasions. As an initial outsider to the group, many of the men were reluctant at times to throw racist jokes and comments in my direction. Yet, in my one-on-one conversations with Conrad, many of the men's racist comments were exposed, and I became startlingly aware of their thoughts and sentiments concerning the invite I had extended to Barbara. Regardless of this, and with the unfailing support of Conrad, I forged ahead with my plans to bring Barbara to Stellenbosch.

Upon arriving at the local rugby club, I immediately noticed a lapse in the social ease that usually characterised Springbok rugby games. The atmosphere was fraught with a tension palpable by the uncomfortable silences that passed between the

group, and the absence of familiar jest. Essentially, the informality that should have occurred on a social occasion like this was replaced with a stringent formality and politeness. This is not to say that any of the members were unduly rude or impolite to Barbara, as their behaviour proved to be the opposite. Many engaged her in conversation, queried where she came from, and sincerely inquired after her studies at the University of Cape Town. The point is that there was a significant difference in their behaviour when in her presence. As an internationally educated woman from a similar class background as the participants, interaction was subsequently steered towards assumed domains of knowledge, such as education. These prescribed codes of interaction allowed the men to delve into certain topics of conversation, while at the same time preventing conversation from entering into a domain of assumed misunderstanding such as race.

Interestingly, on occasions where a *faux pas* in social etiquette was committed, the group quickly worked to steer interaction to an appropriate domain. One example of many was one afternoon braai on Divesh's *stoep*. The conversation became politically heated when the group began discussing politics. The different criteria that Divesh, as opposed to the group, used for interpreting South Africa's current Black government, led to a very heated political discussion. As the conversation continued, there emerged a lack of common understanding, as Divesh argued vehemently for the ANC, while Conrad, Kobus and Divesh's English South African neighbour, Michelle, retorted with impassioned indignation against its perceived innate corruption and nepotism. In a moment of frustration, one of the men, Kobus, expressed his distaste for politically heated conversations at friendly braais. In an attempt to structure interaction to a domain of mutual understanding for all present, Kobus quickly re-routed the conversation to focus on women.

> **Kobus**: You know, we all have our different beliefs. But, when you come to a social braai and the main topic of conversation is politics, it tends to ruin friendships. This lot goes this way, and this lot goes that way.
> **Conrad**: It can ruin a braai definitely. So, let's forget it. Divesh, please bring the meat here.
> **Kobus**: Divesh, let's talk about women. Men always agree about women (laughing.)
> **Divesh**: I don't have any women in my life.
> **Kobus**: I don't either, but as men we can always agree about women.

In the above example, interaction had obviously extended beyond a domain of common understanding, and was causing discomfort for the men. In order to ensure

smooth relations, interaction was re-structured to an assumed domain of familiarity, women. By re-working interaction in this manner, boundaries were allowed to persist and essential parts of the group were successfully insulated from confrontation. Through Kobus' efforts, the men's strong political sentiments were protected from further assault. By refusing interaction to enter fully into a sphere that might threaten or disrupt common sentiments of the group, the men participated in the creation and maintenance of a boundary.

When in the presence of 'others,' the primary coping function of the group was thus temporarily destabilized, resulting in an attempt, whether conscious or not, to structure interaction toward domains of alleged familiarity. In so doing, these attempts of insulation by the group can be seen as useful coping strategies that allowed the group's mutual understandings and sentiments to remain unharmed.

Honouring the Stigma

As a form of boundary maintenance, the men's ethnic identity was largely influenced by the categorization of 'others.' Yet, rather than always negotiating this dialectic where 'others' were actually encountered, labelling and categorization by 'others' was often imagined and communicated in their narratives. In situations where the purported perceptions of 'others' filtered into group conversation, the men actively resisted stereotypes and transformed them into something positive. In distinguishing themselves from 'others,' and asserting something positive about themselves, these men were involved in a complex matrix of boundary maintenance. My presence as a foreigner and an 'other' instigated these imagined dealings, as the men used my presence as an interested and sympathetic observer as an opportunity to actively assert these boundaries.

During social braais, the men would encourage me to speak Afrikaans, often rallying as a group to teach me fundamental Afrikaans sayings. As I stumbled over words, struggling to pronounce the guttural 'g's and the rolling 'r's, the men became very animated, complimenting me on my desire to learn their language. Some of the men used these informal language lessons with me to distinguish themselves from 'others,' such as English South Africans. On one such occasion, Danie drew an explicit boundary between Afrikaners and English South Africans, stating

emphatically that Afrikaners, unlike English South Africans, have great patience for anyone willing to learn their language.

> **Danie**: *Dis 'n plesier* (it's a pleasure) to teach you Afrikaans! You know, unlike the English, when someone tries to speak our language, we are very happy to help them. We encourage them, and help them out as much as possible. But you know what English South Africans do when we speak English to them? They will always laugh when we don't pronounce something correctly, or make a point of always correcting how we say things. When someone wants to speak our language, we will do everything in our power to help them. We won't laugh at them. *Afrikaners is die beste!* (Afrikaners are the best!)

The above example demonstrates how these men transformed a perceived stereotype of Afrikaners as speaking English poorly into something positive, in this case their steadfast patience and good manners. In reversing the stereotype into something affirmative, they were attempting to differentiate themselves from English South Africans.

This bears many similarities to Cohen's (1985: 60) premise that a group often honours a stigma that represents their felt marginality and asserts it positively as a boundary marker. These men used their perception of the growing marginality of their mother tongue, Afrikaans, as a boundary marker. In transforming this felt marginality into something positive, in this case their encouragement of and patience with those who attempt to speak the language, they stripped away the stigma they felt as Afrikaans-speakers. Indeed, Conrad believes that English South Africans always address Afrikaans-speakers in English, even though they may be fully fluent in Afrikaans. Despite understanding what is being said in Afrikaans, he perceives them as always replying and steering the conversation towards English. This was exacerbated by many of the men's awareness of the general stereotype of Afrikaans as the 'language of the oppressor.' This contributed not only to their felt marginality, but their awareness of the stigma of being an Afrikaans-speaker in the new South Africa. The men used my interest in the Afrikaans language to transform the stigmatisation they felt regarding their language into a positive boundary marker.

These examples, which show the verbal way in which boundaries were created amongst this group, parts company with Cohen's idea that boundaries are created wholly through an unspoken element of ordinary symbolic behaviour (Cohen, 1985: 14). For this group, boundaries were also reaffirmed through language verbalizing, instead of exclusively through the silent nature of routine social life.

Conclusion

The ritual social life of braais provided this core group of seven men with a social space to play out the dialectics of their individual and social identity. Braais were an arena where the performative aspects of their social identity were not only enacted but also validated. Effective performances did not occur randomly and arbitrarily, but rather required an identifiable 'setting' to be in place. Nestled in the comfort of an appropriate braai setting, and including things such as an outdoor *stoep* and a fire, these men were able to engage in the social routine of cooking *die braaivleis* while socializing and participating in social conversation. The absence of this required setting created large lapses in conversation, uncomfortable silences and prevented social performances from reaching their desired goal.

Social performances allowed the men to play up to certain ideals of the group. As upper-middle and middle class men, they strove to give the impression of financial and occupational prestige, and either consciously or unconsciously filtered out information and actions that did not live up to this idealized standard. The consistency of these men's 'impression management strategies' shows us how powerfully homogenizing the art of practicing social identity was within this particular group.

When interacting with 'others' across the boundary line, a distinction was drawn between those who were perceived as 'playing the same game' and those who were not. The strictness of these boundaries was facilitated by a desire on the part of the group to distinguish themselves from those who represented something they wished to shy away from. Their aversion to what they saw as "excuses of race," by people of colour was in fact a desire to distinguish themselves from those perceived as having "a lazy attitude and sense of unwarranted entitlement." In explicitly outlining the difference between themselves and 'others,' these men were in fact putting forth something positive about themselves, hard work.

These boundaries were able to persist and continue due to restrictive and prescribed sets of rules that governed interaction with 'others.' When interacting with 'others,' conversation was restricted to familiar domains of interest and tended not to extend into realms that opened the group up to social assault or attack. If, by chance the prescribed set of rules lost ground momentarily, individuals would quickly steer interaction towards a topic of assumed mutual agreement.

The perseverance of boundaries was also strengthened by an imagined categorization by 'others.' Narratives, as well as physical interactions, served to mark explicit boundaries between themselves and 'others.' Narratives that spoke of perceived labelling by 'others' were sharply resisted and transformed into something positive, marking them as a boundary.

Ritual social life in the form of regular social braais, has provided this group of men with an insulated and protected space to express their sentiments on what they perceive to be deep-seated changes in their lives. The existence of the group is, in itself, an effective coping mechanism and has provided the participants with a safe space to practice aspects of their social identity.

7. Findings and Conclusion

This study is an example of how one particular group of white Afrikaner men in Stellenbosch are negotiating their way through a new democratic space marked by radical social change. The upper-middle and middle class white Afrikaner men in this study found themselves in an ongoing flux between a past that imparted to them high expectations of privilege and their present status as one of several minorities, rather than a privileged and protected one. Following this, the aim of this study has been twofold. Firstly, it has attempted to trace the exact nature of this felt dissonance, as well as outlining the coping strategies used to alleviate and overcome the prevailing dissonance. The second task of this study set out to explore how vital aspects of the men's social identity were practiced and performed during ritual social life, in addition to examining how ritual performances aided the group in alleviating the growing uncertainty of South Africa's new democratic space.

The Heterodoxy of the Past

An examination of the men's narratives about the past revealed the strong sense of patriarchal and institutional authority internalized by the men through the Christian National rhetoric of the NGK, Christian National Education and the SADF. A strong theme developed that drew attention to the men's experiences of dissonance between a past that imparted strong values of generational respect, discipline and unfailing work ethic, and what they perceived to be a new world order of crumbling integrity. These values were shown to be an integral part of their identities, both as adolescents and full-grown men. Whether evaluating crime, employment, sport or relationships, the members of this group tended to frame current events and processes as problematic in light of what they perceived, on the basis of past expectations and socialization, to be rational, moral and appropriate. The rising crime rate was attributed to an inherent lack of generational respect and deference to authority among the new generation that was implicitly linked to race. This was seen as problematic precisely because the new system was perceived as negating an essential value of the men's upbringing – respect. The sport of rugby and employment, more than the other themes, reflected the men's ingrained perceptions of entitlement, and thus became a

powerful rallying point behind their simmering feelings of agitation, frustration and dissatisfaction at a system perceived as downplaying core values of discipline, skill and merit.

A Partnership between the Past and the Present

The institutional recruitment procedures and the privileging of resources for whites during apartheid has now been replaced by a system that allocates identities and resources in a contrary way to which these men are accustomed. The institutional order of the ANC, an antithesis to the institutional order of apartheid, has instilled a profound sense of dissonance in the participants. This discrepancy was confounded by the taken-for-granted assumption among these men of easy accessibility to forms of 'cultural capital.'

In attempting to bridge this felt dissonance, the participants engaged in a revision of fundamental domains of identification. A pronounced sense of agency was consciously exerted in the spheres of religiosity, employment and relationships, allowing them to feel that they had not lost all power and control in all areas of their lives. The public domain of religion, epitomized by the NGK, was revised and reformatted to accommodate a more individualized notion of faith. Yet, instead of relegated to the periphery, these men's newfound sense of individualized faith remained just as strong and in so doing, can be seen as an act of meaning-making. Like Geertz's (1975: 5) premise that 'the webs of significance' created by man can be seen an interpretive act in search of meaning, these men, in seeking to understand and make sense of profound changes around them, were involved in fundamental transactions of meaning to prepare them for a world that no longer exists.

In attempts to come to terms with a world perceived as discounting fundamental truths, these men enlisted the repeated motifs of 'adapt or die,' 'educated for a world that no longer exists,' and 'sins of the fathers.' These motifs proved as vital coping mechanisms in attempts to bridge instances of felt dissonance. As an underlying motif in Afrikaans culture since as early as the 1920s, the cultural assumption of the precariousness of Afrikaner survival became internalised to form an essential part of the participants' identity. It was taken up and used in conjunction with 'educated for a world that no longer exists,' to bridge the dissonance between

their expectations of occupational and financial privilege, and their perception of present economic marginalization.

'Sins of the fathers,' on the other hand, was used by the participants to come to terms with a public rhetoric that was perceived as disdaining and criticizing fundamental truths and narratives of Afrikanerdom. It not only embodied feelings of victimization, but also served to situate the group as a unique and specific generational cohort of men in the new South African dispensation. Using this motif as a guide, the men were able to contest traditional definitions of an Afrikaner, proving that these categories were neither fixed nor unchanging, but rather the subject of persistent negotiation.

All three motifs proved to be instrumental coping strategies that were practiced and brought to life during ritual social life. When conceived and validated within the traditional cultural setting of braais, these ritual performances allowed members to adapt to perceived changes in their external environment, allowing them to realign themselves along a continuum of both past and present.

Practicing Social Identity within a *Laager*[7]

Ritual social life amongst this group proved to be a transformative cultural process where the internal and external forms of identification coalesced, and major themes, motifs and contradictions were revealed. 'Impression management strategies,' including a showing of professional skills, and an adherence to commonly ascribed-to ideals, played an important role in producing a sense of identification amongst the group. This, as we saw, exemplified the premise that external validations play an important role, giving weight to the argument that social identity is an indisputable and central aspect of one's overall identity. The commonly held assumption among members of the group that all were 'playing the same game,' imparted not only a sense of belonging and camaraderie, but also provided the men with an indispensable coping mechanism for alleviating much of the unease of radical social change.

[7] The term *laager* is historically connected to the Battle of Blood River, where the *Voortrekkers,* anticipating an attack from the Zulus, formed a circle of ox-wagons to protect themselves. Metaphorically, the term refers to an attitude of closing oneself off from the world and is understood by all South Africans in this sense.

Physical bodily interactions between members of the group also proved important in piercing the threshold between the individual and the collective, as well as reinforcing a sense of commonality among members. The comforting intimacy of regular braais made regular coming together possible, and provided a social space where individuals were able to commune with similar others through the physical interactions of their bodies. This familiarity allowed members to reach out and understand one another when touching upon a shared repertoire of stories. Yet, more than just a means of reasserting group cohesiveness, the physical connection produced by ritual social life provided a familiar space that drew a heavy distinction between the security and safety of the group and the tenuousness of the outside world.

As a group strongly demarcated by race, language and ethnicity, this study has revealed how the tightly closed interactions of one particular group of white Afrikaners has endured despite a non-racial ethos that has de-legitimated the *laager* mentality of apartheid.

The 'Total Onslaught' of the new South Africa

This group of white Afrikaner men are an example of a group that is struggling to realign itself in the emerging space of post-apartheid South Africa. Engaging in an active deconstruction of the boundaries of identity, the men in this study are simultaneously clinging to selected prescribed identifications of the past. In bringing the past forward into a new world that, in many ways, represents an antithesis to prescribed ways of knowing, a heightened dissonance has developed between the world as it was the "world that no longer exists."

Nestled comfortably within a social sphere that, to a large degree, harmonizes their sentiments, experiences and life chances, these men are finding solace from the perceived 'total onslaught' of the new South Africa as they prepare for a world that no longer exists. The re-working of new boundaries of identity within this space is not, however, wholly absent, but rather can be seen as taking place within the fortified walls of their modern day *laager*.

Glossary

Al lê die berge nog so blou – Although the mountains lay so blue

Afrikaners is die beste – Afrikaners are the best.

bakkie – small truck

boerewors – spicy sausage

boer – farmer

boertjie – small farmer

braaivleis – bbq meat

braai broodjies – bbq sandwiches

Die Stem – The Voice (old national anthem)

Dis 'n plesier – It's a pleasure.

Dis 'n pragtige dag – It's a beautiful day

gatvol – fed up

Hoe gaan dit met jou? – How are you?

kak - shit

kuier – socialize

lapa – an enclosed outdoor braai area.

Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk – The Dutch Reformed Church

'n Boer maak 'n plan – an Afrikaner farmer makes a plan

niks nie – nothing

regtig! – really!

sondes van the vaders – sins of the fathers

stoep – veranda

veld – bush/savanna

volk – Seen as the essence of Afrikaner culture, this notion was based on values of God-fearing Calvinism that originated in structures of patriarchal authority among husbands, fathers, priests, school principals, and political leaders.

voortrekkers – Afrikaner men, women, and children who took part in the Great Trek.

Appendix A

Class Delineation of the Core Group of Seven Men

The Professional Managerial Class (PMC):

- **Pieter**: Industrial Psychologist; owns his own strategic planning Consultancy Company. (Masters in Industrial Psychology, University of Stellenbosch)

- **Alfred**: Town Planner (B.A, Honours in Geography, Archaeology, University of Stellenbosch; Masters of Arts in Regional and Town Planning, University of Stellenbosch).

The Middle Class:

- **Danie**: Farmer (Diploma in Mechanical Engineering from Cape Tech),

- **Deon**: Freelance Real Estate Agent (Masters of Arts in Xhosa, University of Stellenbosch)

- **Conrad**: Professional Hunter who owns own hunting business (Honours in Industrial Psychology)

- **Jasper**: Financial Advisor for Vodacom (Honours. in Economics),

- **Jaco**: Farm Manager (Diploma in Marketing, Stellenbosch College).

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