Structures of Accumulation and Security:

Understanding Contemporary Farm Attacks Through Autoethnographic Reflections and Historical Inquiry of the Cape Colony

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the complex relationship between settler accumulation and security within instances of violence on farms in the Cape Colony, employing a dual methodology of microhistory and autoethnographic inquiry. This study seeks deeper insights into the enduring patterns that characterise settler colonies, particularly in relation to the perception of persecution of the settler group.

Through the lens of autoethnography, personal reflections are interwoven with microhistories of the early settler colonial period, revealing the structures that underpin settler security dynamics. By shedding light on historical precedents, the research aims to unravel the contemporary phenomenon of farm attacks. This interdisciplinary approach navigates through time and personal narratives to illuminate the settler colonial structure and its historic, as well as contemporary implications.

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My supervisor, thank you for your endless patience. My family, for their unconditional love, even when I “grawe ou koeie uit die sloot”. Thanks most of all to my Josh, for your jokes and the family I gained through you. Thank you to everyone who pushed a book into my hands and said, “You should read that!”.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Across the farms surrounding the Tulbagh area in South Africa, worrisome reports are emerging, raising concerns. Shortly after the livestock of Jacob Mostert and Joost Bervernagie were stolen, Pieter Rossouw's house was burnt down. It is said that the people in the area are so distressed and scared that they sleep with their guns at night.[1] Farmers have said that they would rather leave and abandon their farms instead of risking being subjected to violence or murder.[2] These reports raise several questions. Are these more examples of farm attacks? Is it possible that these attacks have been instigated by political leaders singing *Dubula i'bhunu*?[3] Are these attacks perhaps part of the political agenda to reclaim land from white people or an instance of white genocide or ethnic cleansing? Are these attacks clear proof that the government is not doing enough to protect white farmers?

These questions are not unfamiliar within the contemporary debate around farm attacks in South Africa. However, in this instance, they are tricky to answer because these events did not technically occur in the Tulbagh area. They occurred at a time when it was better known as the *Land van Waveren*, some 308

[1] "...benauwen en bang maken, dat des naghts nauwelijks als met geweer in de hand derven slapen..." (Böeseken, 1962: 478).
[2]Leibbrandt Manuscripts, 18, 29 September 1715,
[3] A phrase that can be translated to 'shoot the *boer*.'. The term boer is the Afrikaans term for farmer and can also be a reference to Afrikaans people as a whole. However, because of the song's origins from apartheid South Africa, 'ibhunu' can also refer to policemen (Broughton, 2022)

years ago, in 1715. I first came across this instance in Nigel Penn's book *The Forgotten Frontier* (2005: 50-52), a masterpiece which examines the northern frontier and numerous events around the 18th century. Arguably, a period which shaped and laid the foundation for contemporary South Africa (Penn, 2005; Elphick & Gilliomee, 1979). Intrigued by what I had read, I went to the Western Cape Archives and Records Service (WCARS) and read the reports collected there. Despite being a native Afrikaans speaker, the archaic Dutch that I found there was at times unintelligible to me but there were moments where the language was eerily familiar. Regarding the instance above, I read about how the free burgers in the area said that they were "benauwen en bang" (Böeseken, 1962: 478); it was a quick jump to the Afrikaans "benoud en bang" - to be anxious and scared.

However, more than the language, it was the fear that they reported that intrigued me. This fear seemed so similar to the one I experienced as a child visiting my grandparent's farm. On one such occasion, I thought I would die there.

For most of the time, my grandparent's farm felt like an endless stretch of land where I was allowed to run free. I spent my days playing with dogs, building mud cakes and hunting crabs with my cousins. On those hot December days, I would often go exploring on my own. The only thing that made me race back home was the irrational fear of velociraptors running towards me across the

horizon. Thanks to my overactive imagination, velociraptors were a serious threat to my life. However, once I was in my grandmother's embrace or under the stern gaze of my grandfather, smoking his pipe on the stoep, I knew, with the confidence of a 6-year-old, that those creatures could not get to me.

Unfortunately, this confidence in my grandparents did not extend to the evening hours. Even they seemed to distrust the night. The farm they lived on was outside of Ermelo, a small town in the South African province of Mpumalanga. It was the early 2000s. Even though my focus was mostly on trivial things like finding ways to avoid eating the bottled apricot pieces while drinking all the syrup, I remember some of my family's trepidations. There was regular 'adult talk' about things like guns being taken away and licences for firearms becoming harder to acquire. Guns played a vital role in warding off threats and making sure that others feared us. I knew guns were a sure way to keep my crazy uncle off the land. As far as I knew, his diagnosis as entirely mad came from the fact that he had once arrived for Sunday lunch wearing an ANC t-shirt.

Thus, even though I was focused on things important to a 6-year-old, I knew that the world was changing and that 'we' were under threat.[4] I knew that my favourite playmates - the drooling, doting dogs - were our first line of defence. The guns, another. Even the house was designed to keep potential

[4] The "we" in this conversation was always in constant flux. To some extent, it is a reference to my immediate family. However, the sentiment can also include all white South Africans or is mostly about other white Afrikaans-speaking people.

intruders at bay. The living areas such as the kitchen, dining and living rooms were segregated from the bedrooms by a metal gate that my grandparents religiously locked at night. I never stayed in my own room. I slept on a mattress next to my grandparents' bed where my grandfather's snores helped abate the quiet of the farm at night.

I clearly remember the night when that silence was broken. When everyone's fears came to fruition.

A loud bang rang through the farmhouse. The noise had come from the kitchen area. I do not exactly remember how I got from my mattress, which was next to my grandmother's side, to my grandfather's side of the bed. I believe I skidded underneath the old farm bed to where I knew my grandfather kept a gun in his bedside cabinet, ripping open the cabinet drawer for him to access it. I believe I screamed in Afrikaans, "*Hulle is op ons!*", which translates to "They are upon us!".

Whether I uttered these exact words as I remember them is unclear, but I know that in my mind's eye, our assailants were Black and that they were going to kill us without hesitation. I also knew that we needed to kill them first. Having riled up everyone in the house to confront the attackers, I was told that there were none. Rather the radio, which the farmers of the area used to communicate with each other, especially in times of danger, fell from the wall it was mounted on in the kitchen.

1.1 Positionality and Statement of the Problem

This incident, amongst my other experiences as a white, Afrikaans-speaking, South African settler, and my engagement with that positionality, is what drives this thesis. As I've grown older, I find myself intrigued by my younger self, especially by the unwavering confidence with which I once believed in my imminent demise at the hands of a Black person. In my imagination, I was the victim, vulnerable to violent onslaught, always prepared to fight, but never prepared enough.

I was raised in, and sometimes return to, a community where farm attacks were, and are, a serious talking point. Within these impassioned discussions, farm attacks are frequently perceived through an emotional lens. This is not to say there are no 'facts' since lots of statistics get included in conversations around the topic. This information is often gathered from political organisations which frame themselves as fighting for the rights of the South African white Afrikaner community such as the Freedom Front Plus or AfriForum (Southern, 2008; Van der Westhuizen, 2018).

However, these statistics are often partial or fall apart under critical engagement. Africa Check's Kate Wilkinson (2017) showcased the complexity of gathering accurate statistics on the issue because of a variety of complexities.

For instance, the issue with determining the correct parameters to calculate the rate of farm murders. When determining the rate, should all those involved in agriculture be included or only those on commercial farms? Depending on which parameter you choose the murder rate for 2015/16 can vary significantly, ranging from 5.6 murders per 100,000 to as low as 0.4 per 100,000 respectively (Wilkinson, 2017).

Nevertheless, with limited contextual factual evidence, the prevalence of farm attacks and farm murders has captured the imagination of many, even within the international community. Elon Musk tweeted “They are actually killing white farmers every day. It’s not just a threat,” and in another tweet, he insinuated that *Dubula’ Ibhuni* can incite a white genocide (Chetty, 2023). Donald Trump, while president of the United States, remarked in a tweet that there are “…large scale killings of farmers” in South Africa, also expressing concern about supposed land seizures (Williams, 2018). They are not alone in their concern. News publications, such as Food for Mzansi, report that farm attacks are on the rise (Mncwango, 2023). There are numerous Facebook groups and pages dedicated to the subject. For instance, the group *Stop Farm Attacks & Murders in South Africa* (n.d.) has about 11200 followers. In a petition that they conducted, it is claimed that Afrikaner farm owners are four times more likely to be murdered than other South Africans, claiming further that this is “including Black farm owners” (Avaaz, 2015). Again, these claims are usually backed up only by

hearsay, since they rarely cite any actual statistics, or in other instances, the statistics that are cited were gathered through flawed methodologies, as seen above. Additionally, the actual definition of what constitutes a 'farm attack' is rarely defined.

However, the precise definition and parameters that delineate farm attacks or murders appear to hold minimal significance within the common understanding of these phenomena - an issue I intend to delve into further within the literature review. At the end of the day, when you gather around the *braai*[5], there is only one story: victims of farm attacks are always white, and their perpetrators are black. Additionally, the victims are almost always brutally and violently murdered. According to Nechama Brodie (2022: 29) "…for the most part everybody knows what is meant by a farm attack, by 'plaasmoord' (farm murder)", emphasising the remoteness and whiteness of victims as being necessary components of farm attacks.

At the *braai,* in reference to farm attacks, someone will bring up the issue of land reparations, affirmative action, and Julius Malema singing *Dubula' ibhunu*. Echoing what is being said on an international level. Someone will bemoan that nobody cares about "us" anymore while sitting next to the Vaal River on a weekend getaway. In the background, Bok van Blerk and others would sing the song '*Die Land'* over the radio, a song that starts with a Steve Hofmeyr

[5] *Braai* is the Afrikaans word for barbeque.

monologue about hope in troubling times, and a chorus that promises that the land belongs to me (Van Blerk, Hofmeyr, Van Jaarsveld, Du Toit, Jay, 2009).

In my experience, attempting to challenge these ideas or asking for a more complex understanding of the phenomenon is seen as an attack in itself. To be fair, I was not always subtle in my disruptions. When I was younger, I was narcissistic enough to imagine myself as a kind of Socratic figure at these events, hoping to push people to think through their logic. Micro-analysing where they got their information from and trying to understand rural violence through a bigger picture. However, I quickly found that my reality did not include idyllic dreamscapes of an ancient Greek marketplace, only relatives in two-tones and K-ways who were so upset by my comments that they would end up giving me the *tjoppie*[6] that fell on the ground or worse, decide I am not worth their time at all.

My attempts at humour aside, there have been serious consequences for people who have tried to challenge the misinformation spread within this public discourse. My original plan for this thesis was to critically analyse how people speak about farm attacks on activist Facebook pages. These pages are replete with claims that farm attacks are proof that there is an ongoing white genocide in South Africa. While doing this preliminary research I came across a group called *Busting the Myth of White Genocide in South Africa (*also known as *Busting the*

[6] *Tjoppie* is a South African word for a meat chop, which is a specific meat cut and often enjoyed at a braai.

Myth). Their main goal was to correct misinformation online, but the reactions they received from people on these social media platforms were often aggressive. However, the extent of that aggression only became clear to me when I learned of what happened to Mandy Owens who was falsely accused by the far-right activist, Willem Petzer, of being part of the *Busting the Myth* campaign (Allison, 2020). After his accusation, she received numerous death threats and hate mail, her car tyres were slashed, and her home was vandalised - according to *The Daily Maverick* she even lost her job (Allison, 2020). However, she maintained that she had never even been part of the group and the group restated their commitment to protecting the anonymity of their members.

Nevertheless, *Busting the Myth* continued engaging with the misinformation found online. In one of their articles, they wrote about their hope to engage further with the history of the far right and its relationship with how people speak about farm attacks in post-apartheid South Africa (Busting the Myth, 2022). This suggestion that the contemporary phenomenon of farm attacks can be better understood through the context of a historical lens intrigued me. Yet, while they wanted to limit their inquiry to the far-right, I became more and more convinced that this narrow framing of the problem would be too limiting to my research and possibly anachronistic.

Instead, I went to the Archives looking for instances of rural violence involving settlers, in some way or another. What I found in the archives were

instances that were arguably very similar to what is commonly understood as farm attacks today. The main victims of these instances of rural violence were framed to be the white settlers, whether it was them that were or could be harmed or their property (human or other). Additionally, the perpetrators were often framed as the Indigenous population. Currently, I am aware of no other literature that has tried to make sense of the significance of this historical connection.

The current literature lacks a comprehensive exploration of settlers' responses and strategies in the face of perceived threats. This research seeks to address this gap by examining the nuanced dynamics surrounding historical farm attacks, specifically focusing on how settlers strategically employed the perception of being under attack.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Thus, the purpose of this thesis is two-fold. Firstly, it is to complete an exploratory investigation into farm attacks that occurred during the early settler colonial occupation of South Africa. These investigations were conducted through the methodology of microhistory. Five historic settlers were identified; thus, five microhistories were included. Each of these occurred between the arrival of settlers in South Africa and before the 19th century. Secondly, it intends

to make a comparison between these microhistories and my contemporary settler account of the phenomenon, by comparing the findings of the microhistories to my autoethnography. A comparison is made possible by viewing settler colonialism as a structure that continues today (Veracini, 2015). By uncovering these subtleties, the study aims to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the strategic use of perceived threats by settlers during the colonial period and its potential implications for contemporary discussions on farm attacks in South Africa. Aiding our understanding of the significance of farm attacks within the larger South African settler colonial structure.

1.3 Research Question

With this in mind and through careful refinements, the following research question that aids this exploratory investigation is as follows:

How can an examination of historical farm attacks at the onset of South Africa's settler colonial occupation enhance our comprehension of why contemporary farm attacks have assumed such prominence and focus?

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis explores the potential of gaining a deeper understanding of my contemporary experiences of farm attacks through a

critical investigation into historical accounts of farm attacks. By bringing my autoethnography and the five microhistories into conversation, this thesis explores the complex dynamics surrounding perceived threats within parts of the South African settler community.

The following chapters will build on the foundations of this chapter. Chapter 3 will delve into a comprehensive literature review of the academic research that has been done on the subject. Following this, Chapter 3 examines the theoretical framework, Settler Colonial Theory. Chapter 4 will detail the methodologies employed, clarifying the research design, data collection methods and ethical considerations. The subsequent chapter, Chapter 5, presents the 6 settler accounts, 5 microhistories and my own autoethnography. Chapter 6 presents the final findings and their significance, drawing on the insights from the previous chapter to answer the research question. Lastly, Chapter 7, concludes this thesis, providing a comprehensive overview, final reflections, and potential future directions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I look at the academic research on farm attacks and attempt to understand how it is conceptualised in the literature. Despite farm attacks being an issue that is reported on in the press and social media on a regular basis, the phenomenon has enjoyed limited academic attention (Strydom, 2022: 7).

Despite its relative sparsity, there is a growing collection of academic work which investigates the issue of “farm murders” or “farm attacks” within the South African context. The interest in the phenomenon has increased within the post-apartheid South African context. In my review of this literature, it was evident that the literature can be loosely categorised into two groups. The first group being those that focus on the phenomenon itself, which I refer to as issue-focus scholarship. This group focuses mostly on the social issue farm attacks represent. The second group looks at the discourse or the narrative that surrounds the issue and is identified for their discourse-focused scholarship. This literature is interested in how the phenomenon of farm attacks is discursively constructed and often uses critical discourse analysis to argue that the framing of how the phenomenon is spoken about has effects on how it is

understood and grappled with. This includes looking at how the discourse is reflected in newspapers, activism, literature, and visual arts.

Separating these groups in the discussion that follows does not imply that they do not coincide at times; on numerous occasions, the concerns overlap for a single researcher. To some extent, this thesis aims to straddle both categories in that it is interested in the historical antecedents of farm attacks and how these are reported in ways that position that phenomenon.

Lastly, this chapter examines how history is highlighted by academics in both groups as a means to help us understand both the phenomenon and the discourse that surrounds it. This engagement with the past prompts authors to confront South Africa's settler colonial history to some extent, albeit with few invoking the theories of Settler Colonial Studies.

2.2 Issue-Focused Scholarship

The writers within the first category examine the phenomenon of "farm attacks" rather than how that phenomenon is reported and spoken about. It is the issue itself that the researchers try to understand and unpack. This group often highlights the scale of the phenomenon; the profile of the victims and perpetrators; and offers some insights on why the phenomenon might be

occurring. However, it is also worth noting that this category typically fails to critically engage with what is meant by the term ‘farm attack’.

2.2.1 Farm attacks: a unique and pressing phenomenon.

Authors within this category highlight the severity of farm attacks in post-apartheid South Africa. The predominant argument, which emphasises that attention needs to be paid to ‘farm attacks’ or ‘farm murders’, often relies on the claim that the phenomenon is on the rise. On some occasions, the authors even go as far as suggesting that it is relatively worse than the rate of other violent crimes in South Africa (Pearce, 2016). For others, this claim is simply assumed as fact (Moolman, 2000). Others base their assessments on various statistics or on other research papers that cite statistics (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000; Swart, 2003; Matthews, 2008). For example, Schönteich and Steinberg’s research (2000), takes into account statistics gathered by the Crime Information Analysis Centre (CIAC) and also references private sources such as Agri South Africa.

Using different statistical sources is not necessarily a problem. Neither is relying on the evidence gathered and used by peers. Yet, this needs to be critically engaged with, or it can be seen as misleading or deceptive argumentation. For instance, in the case of Schönteich and Steinberg (2000: 13), they use these different statistics together as evidence that the number of farm

attacks and murders has increased significantly post-1994. However, in the footnotes of their research, they admit that these statistics are not “strictly comparable” since one set includes smallholdings and the other does not (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 18). Additionally, another footnote warns that the statistics by the CIAC were never independently verified (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 10). Disregarding these concerns about the accuracy of the statistics by relegating them to footnotes is irresponsible and arguably sets the stage for a larger argument that could be misleading and deceptive.

It can also have ripple effects that impact research communities since we are often reliant on other research to do our own work and so problematic statistics get repeatedly cited. For instance, Swart’s (2003: 40) research is reliant on the work of Schönteich and Steinberg to carry his argument that there has been an “…explosive increase of farm murders” and that “[f]arm attacks are a time bomb just waiting to destroy society”. There is a lack of critical engagement with the unreliability of these statistics or with their significance within a broader context of violent crimes. Swart (2003: 40), for example, notes that the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) has stated that there is a lack of reliable data but goes on to say that it is “clear that there are an extraordinarily high number of farm attacks”. The absence of critical analysis and reliance on unreliable evidence to substantiate strong claims renders the argument questionable and weak, as the unreliability and lack of critical scrutiny have undermined its credibility.

The research completed by Schönteich, Steinberg and Swart in the early 2000s continues to epitomise the way authors within this group, who grapple with farm attacks as a phenomenon, tend to deal with it. Concerns that the statistics are varied and even untrustworthy are pushed to the side and there is an insistence that there has been a rapid increase in this kind of crime and that it needs to be grappled with urgently.

Matthews (2008: 3) references the Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU) and their statistics on farm attacks. Without any critical engagement, these statistics are just assumed as facts to back up her argument that this is a critical issue in post-apartheid South Africa. Strydom's (2022) argument, a more recent article on the subject, is reliant on statistics garnered from the SAPS, Transvaal Agricultural Union of South Africa (TAU SA), and AfriForum. While she acknowledges that statistics around this topic are negligible and their credibility has been questioned, she does not offer an actual critical assessment of the compatibility of the statistics she has chosen and why the reader should trust them (Strydom 2022: 15-21). These statistics are also assumed to be true without being critically analysed.

In all of these instances, farm attacks are depicted as a growing concern, one believed to be exclusive to South Africa and distinct from the overall levels of violence in the country. Oftentimes, to bolster this argument, articles uncritically lean on statistics, either by assuming their accuracy without

verification or by employing a range of statistics that may not be inherently compatible.

2.2.2 Motivations of Farm Attacks

In 1998, the Rural Safety Summit was called together by Nelson Mandela on the basis that farm attacks were a serious issue (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 1). The Summit aimed at determining the effectiveness of the rural protection plan and instigating research, especially research conducted by academic institutions, to figure out the possible causes and motivations for the attacks (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 24). Admitting that their capacity was limited when it came to understanding the "range of causal factors and motives contributing to attacks on the farming community" (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 24).

Schönteich & Steinberg's (2000) research comes as a direct reply to the Rural Summit call for research into the motivations of farm attacks. In trying to understand the motivations of farm attacks, they consolidated six government research reports and evaluated the Rural Protection Plan. They identified the main motivation behind these attacks as "theft of firearms, cash or vehicles" (2000: 42 & 85). The government reports they reflected on showcased a similar verdict with most attributing the motivations behind farm attacks to common

criminality and possible financial gain (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 31). Through interviews with perpetrators, detectives and victims and their analysis of the reports, they conclude that the targeting of isolated farmers was primarily because they were seen to be 'soft' targets who were vulnerable with little in the way of security (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000).

Other authors in the group do not accept this as the root cause for the phenomenon of farm attacks. Another committee, appointed on the 4th of April 2001, delineated their finding in the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks (2003: 11) after numerous actors were dissatisfied by the government's response and the persistence of a variety of actors that motivations run deeper than just robbery. These actors included unions, such as Agri SA, and their members, mostly white farmers, who were voicing suspicions that farm attacks were orchestrated with too much militant discipline to be solely motivated by robbery, insinuating that the actual motivation was to scare white people off their farms (Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 16).

Matthews (2008: 12) further contends that attributing robbery solely to present circumstances is inadequate and lacks historical context, asserting that its roots lie deeper in the violent history of dispossession, conflict, and accommodation prevalent in white farming areas since colonisation. Her arguments ring true for the rest of the group and their attempt to move beyond

the explanation of common criminality occurring in a security-vulnerable area, as the government reports and Schönteich and Steinberg's research indicates.

A variety of other motivating forces are identified by these authors. For instance, Moolman (2000: 49) argues that the "…intense hatred which developed against the Afrikaner" is one of the main drivers of these attacks. He also cites a list of other motivations such as:

> "…negative perceptions and racial relations, lost morals, a culture of violence, illegal firearms, socio-economic conditions, farmers regarded as outlaws, unfulfilled expectations, public hearings of the TRC, redistribution of land, escaping justice and revenge" (Moolman, 2000: 49).

For Pearce (2016: 23) the motivations for farm attacks can be found within the complex accumulation of historical injustices that involve not only the dispossession of land but also South Africa's history of unfair labour practices, racist policing, and cultures of resistance that have impacts on "…the collective memory of rural African communities". She is not alone in her assessment. For Burger (2018: 8) and Akinola (2020), the unresolved 'land question' plays a major role in the motivations behind farm attacks. According to these authors, farm attacks can in part be accounted for by people's dissatisfaction with the post-apartheid government's attempts at rectifying historical injustices, especially the failure to institute meaningful land reform. For Akinola (2020: 80), it is the anger and frustrations at the historical injustices of enforced black poverty and historic

dispossession that are then expressed through farm attacks on white farmers. However, for Burger (2018: 8) it is the political construction of white farmers having “stolen the land” and politicians calling for land expropriation without compensation, that is fuelling hostilities in farming communities.

Thus, the scholars in this group often call for a wider social and deeper historical account of the motives of farm attacks.

2.2.3 Victims and Perpetrators

In addition to the assertions made by these authors regarding the prevalence and escalation of farm attacks, as well as the exploration of potential motives, there is a frequent emphasis on the racial identity of the victims as white and the perpetrators as black. To some extent, this can be statistically backed up (if one accepts that ‘farm murders’ do indeed constitute a separate category of violent crime distinct from others and look past the inherent complexities of coming to a specific statistic). For instance, Schönteich and Steinberg (2000: 32-33) showcase that 69% of the victims were white, whereas of those who were arrested as suspects, “…93% were black and 7% were coloured”. However, the racial identities of victims and perpetrators are often reported as being central to the attacks themselves, rather than indicative of larger socio-economic divides.

Additionally, authors often offer no evidence to support their assumptions of who the victims and perpetrators are of farm attacks. Akinola (2020: 79), who attempts to create a more complex understanding of violence in rural areas, is committed to the idea that white people are the victims of farm attacks, and that black people are the perpetrators of them in part because of these identities. Akinola provides no evidence for this except the expression that there is "...[n]o doubt, white farmers are the major victims" (Akinola, 2020: 81). Swart (2003: 43) makes a similar assumption of identity. He makes no mention of race as an important factor within farm attacks but then states, without evidence, that "[t]he profile of a typical farm attacker is an unemployed, black man from a broken family and with a poor education" (Swart, 2003: 43). This lack of a need for evidence, I call a 'common logic' fallacy. It is so because these authors assume that their statements are uncontroversial and do not need to be backed up with any evidence.

Apart from the 'common logic' fallacy, these examples also showcase another trend within this group of researchers, which is that often the white victim/ black perpetrator binary is used in the process of trying to understand what motivates farm attacks. Despite acknowledgements from others that there is scant evidence suggesting race as a primary motivating factor behind these attacks, the emphasis on racial distinctions persists. Those attacks that are

politically or racially motivated are fringe cases, rather robbery remains the primary motive in these crimes (Clack & Minnaar, 2018: 114).

Even where it is acknowledged that robbery is likely the main motivating force, it is then often discounted. Matthews (2008: 4), for example, cites the robbery as the main motivation but then moves on to a white victim/ black perpetrator binary to explain the crimes. Matthews (2008: 3) argues that the victims of farm attacks are "thousands of white farmers and their families" and even the "family's pets" and throughout the thesis, she implies that black people victimise farmers because these perpetrators were victims of land dispossession and labour exploitation. These reasons are seen as the real motivation behind farm attacks, and little is expounded on the issue of general criminality.

There is also little interrogation of farm attacks which do not follow the white victim/ black perpetrator pattern. Very rarely does the research acknowledge that any other population group can also be victims. An exception occurs when Pearce (2016: 7) states that she does “…not discount the frequent victimisation of other races during farm attacks, nor do I overlook the verbal and physical assault many farmworkers continue to experience from white farm owners and managers”. However, even though she acknowledges this, she continues to state that “nevertheless, I have chosen to focus this research primarily on those farm attacks that target white farmers and their families” (Pearce, 2016: 7). There is no explanation for why black victims are not included

in Pearce's study, or indeed many other studies on the phenomenon of farm attacks or murders.

2.2.4 The issue of security

Following this depiction of farm attacks, the group frequently shifts its focus towards addressing the issue, with many advocating for heightened security measures to varying degrees.

Schönteich and Steinberg (2000: 88) recommended that security forces in rural communities seek more funding than the private sector, suggesting that this funding be used to "…raid and close down shebeens and illegally operating taverns". They also recommend a more intensive screening of potential farm worker employees and emphasise the need to involve these employees in rural security forces (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 89). This recommendation came after noting that according to one statistic, at the time of the attacks, only 4.5% of those suspected of farm attacks were employed by their victim (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 32).

Akinola (2020: 88) makes a variety of recommendations when it comes to addressing farm attacks. For instance, increasing communication between government and communities, as well as instigating a group of elders of different farming communities to mediate issues on farms (Akinola, 2020: 88).

However, apart from these more mediative recommendations, he also recommends that the policing ability within rural communities be increased, through extra training and the prosecution of those who are guilty of farm attacks (Akinola, 2020: 88). Burger (2018: 9) recommends that the police should set up a special task team that deals exclusively with farm attacks and murders, while also releasing regular statistics that shed light on the matter.

Based on how the United States has dealt with limitations within their rural security sector, Strydom (2022: 53) recommends that "[s]eparate units should be implemented that are trained and knowledgeable on farm attacks" and that the response to farm attacks should be implemented in a manner of "...seriousness and urgency".

An increase in security measures is thus an important step in addressing the issue of farm attacks for these authors. Unfortunately, even if these recommendations are made in the hope that these security forces would protect everyone within rural communities, no consideration is given to how historically security forces have disproportionately protected white communities.

2.2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, scholars who focus on farm attacks as an actual phenomenon tend to highlight the scale of the issue utilising statistics that are

not always critically questioned. Nevertheless, this opens up room for them to identify supposed motivations for farm attacks, often rejecting the research which showcases that rural violence is caused by common criminality. By referencing broader historical and social factors such as colonization and exploitative labour practices, an understanding is established regarding the identities of the victims, who are predominantly white, and the perpetrators, who are typically portrayed as black, in the context of farm attacks. While this can be backed up by statistics to some extent, authors rarely do, instead depending on what was identified as a 'common logic' fallacy to make their claims. Finally, recommendations often mention increased security measures to combat farm attacks, with little critical attention paid to the historic ways in which security measures have only been exclusively used to protect white communities in South Africa.

2.3 Discourse-Focused Scholarship

Having discussed some of the literature on 'farm attacks' which focuses on the issue itself, I now move on to the second group, which consists of academics who have primarily investigated the discourses or narratives around farm attacks. This group's focus is less on the actual phenomenon, a phenomenon some of them question more than others, and instead they tend to examine the

complexities of how the phenomenon is named and spoken about. Focusing on the discourses or narratives that emerge. As well as how our views of the world and reactions to it can be shaped by how a phenomenon is spoken about in the press, in our lives and by ourselves. These authors were often interested in biases and ulterior motives for presenting 'farm attacks' in specific ways. The authors of this group tended to analyse a variety of sources - from newspaper articles to works of literature and visual arts.

2.3.1 The Issue of Defining Farm Attacks

Many of the authors within this group were interested in the range of definitions and interpretations of farm attacks. However, draw attention to the complexity of these definitions; how terms are defined; and whether these different definitions are compatible. Often, they are not and yet they are used interchangeably at times.

For this group, narratives are often not often critically engaged. The complexities in how farm attacks are represented and defined are often not engaged with. As Brodie (2022) points out, the word "farm" itself gets defined in different ways within different statistics around farm attacks. This is important since the statistics can be severely impacted by the inclusion or exclusion of smallholdings within the definition of what a farm is. For instance, depending on

the definition, smallholdings are either included or excluded within farm attack statistics. Smallholdings have the potential to have some agricultural activities but in other instances are purely residential. Whether these are included or excluded in the idea of what a farm is can severely impact statistics on farm attacks. Nevertheless, according to Brodie (2022: 29) "…more than anything else, a combination of whiteness and isolation or remoteness that…" determines whether a space counts as a farm rather than other practical defining features, such as if something is actually being farmed.

However, the debate around farm attacks is not the only one that struggles to define the parameters of a farm. South Africa's complex history adds to farms being defined in numerous ways without consensus as to what is or is not a farm. For instance, Allen Cook (1982: 20) showcases how many farms that utilised prison labour during apartheid, were protected from further scrutiny by being defined as 'prisons' in the Prisoners Act of 1959. Whether farms are seen as places for farming, for living, as military bases or prisons or frontiers, depends largely on an individual's standpoint.

Nevertheless, these complexities aside, one of the most used definitions of farm attacks can be found in the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks (2003). This definition was approved by the National Operational Coordinating Committee (NOCOC) and was at one stage used by the South African Police Force:

> "Attacks on farms and smallholdings refer to acts aimed at the person of residents, workers and visitors to farms and smallholdings, whether with the intent to murder, rape, rob or inflict bodily harm. In addition, all actions aimed at disrupting farming activities as a commercial concern, whether for motives related to ideology, labour disputes, land issues, revenge, grievances, racist concerns or intimidation, should be included. Cases related to domestic violence, drunkenness, or resulting from commonplace social interaction between people - often where victims and offenders are often known to one another - are excluded from this definition." (Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 23)

Where the first group of researchers often acknowledged this definition in their texts, many in the second group acknowledged it but did so with some criticality. They are specifically critical of the parameters which exclude domestic violence or violence which occurs between those who know each other (Brodie, 2022). On the latter point, Wegerif (2001) argues that part of the definition is adhered to depending on the communities involved, for instance, if a farm worker were to attack a farmer it would be considered a farm attack, but if the farmer assaults or unjustly evicts the farm worker it is not.

To this point, Clack and Minnaar (2018: 108) argue that rarely are assaults on black individuals perceived or reported as farm attacks, especially if they were perpetrated by "…farm owner(s)/manager(s) themselves or even Farm Watch patrollers/security offices of private security companies". This is not only

an issue of perception but also one that raises further concerns about the validity of the statistics because, as Clack and Minnaar (2018) indicate, such incidents often go unreported to the police due to fear of reprisal or eviction. Given the vulnerable economic status of farm workers and widespread rural poverty, such underreporting is understandable (Clack & Minnaar, 2018: 108).

2.3.2 Definition Disregarded - Focus on White Victims

Many of the authors in this group of discourse-focused researchers lament that the actual definition seems to be less important than the characterisation of the victims as white and the perpetrators as black. These authors suggest that this racial parameter is never explicitly stated in definitions but is adhered to above any other parameter in determining what constitutes a farm attack. According to Steyn (2019: 59) "[i]n popular parlance, especially the rhetoric of activists, the categories 'farm attack' and 'farm murder' are often racialized and only applied to cases where the victims are white". Not only should the perpetrator be a black person, but the perpetrator cannot be a white person. This becomes a necessary "shadow" perimeter of what constitutes a "farm attack".

The 'common logic' trope present within the first group of researchers is commented on by those researching narratives and discourses surrounding

farm attacks. According to Brodie (2020: 29), "...for the most part everybody knows what is meant by a farm attack, by 'plaasmoord' (farm murder). And by this, I mean that everybody knows that the term refers almost exclusively to attacks on white people, and that is, more than anything else, a combination of whiteness and isolation or remoteness that, in this context, makes a location count as a 'farm' - more than whether or not they grow fields of mealies or herd cattle". Race then becomes central to how people speak about the identified phenomenon and how it is represented in the media.

The inclusion of the racial categories of white victim and black perpetrator acts as a kind of shadow Boolean variable which decides if something can or cannot be perceived as a farm attack. As Moth (2006: 1) argues, white victims are intrinsic to the term farm attack - "the term 'farm attack' has been widely used to refer to the myriad assaults on white South Africans at their homesteads. There is no such parallel term for such violence against black South Africans". Clack and Minnaar (2018: 108) similarly state that the official definition is often set aside and that the term 'farm attacks' has been politicised and focuses extensively on one section of the farming community, white farmers.

It is a defining feature of the discourse and key to situating it as a unique form of crime, separate from the wider criminality in the country. It is the acknowledgement of this 'shadow' perimeter that sets this group of researchers apart from the previous one.

2.3.3 Motivations Behind Farm Attack Discourse

As with the first group, motivations behind farm attacks are an important discussion point. In this case, the concern is more with how people speak about farm attacks and the possible motivations for why they might do so, rather than focusing primarily on the direct motivations that supposedly spur on farm attacks. Because the group acknowledges the 'shadow' perimeter of race they do not limit their concerns to why perpetrators commit farm attacks but also why certain actors represent farm attacks in the ways that they do. The goal is to further understand the motivations behind certain groups or individuals drawing on and reinforcing a particular discourse. These authors show how the discourse is reproduced through selective retelling of certain stories throughout different mediums. Brodie (2022) and Jacobs (2000) examine it in regard to newspapers. Holmes (2022) and Steyn (2019) examine activists and the media they create.

The starting point for many of this group is questioning the commitment many seem to have to the uniqueness of the 'farm attack' phenomenon as separate from the broader national context and the larger crime incidents and statistics. For instance, the political scientist Carolyn E. Holmes (2022: 368-369) examines the gruesome story of the Potgieter family who were murdered on their farm in 2010. What draws Holmes (2022: 368-369) to the story is how often

it is repeated by activists who draw attention to farm murders. Despite the murderers of Potgieter indicating during the trial that their primary motivation was to access the safe in the farmhouse, and despite their subsequent sentencing, various sources suggest that the level of brutality witnessed in that case is relatively uncommon. Nevertheless, it is frequently cited as a prominent example of the phenomenon. Holmes (2022) notes that there is a disparity between activists' emphasis on extra-lethal violence and the small minority of cases where there is evidence that this occurred.

Some authors within this second group question whether there are ulterior motivations when it comes to how certain groups speak about "farm attacks", given the disparity between the commitment to the phenomenon of "farm attacks" as pervasive and distinct and the uneven evidence for it. This is especially the case when it seems that victims of "farm attacks" are selectively chosen through exclusionary racial categories. Holmes argues that activist groups selectively focus on rare instances of extra-lethal violence because it helps "achieve their own political ends, like in-group cohesion and constituency engagement" (Homes, 2022: 369). By centring their attention on the deaths of White Afrikaner farmers, activists like AfriForum portray themselves as defenders of this minority group, solidifying their perceived victimhood and bolstering momentum for their movement. The resultant ingroup cohesion can be exploited in numerous ways, one of which is fiscal. As Holmes (2022: 327)

notes the AfriForum paid membership rose by 40% between 2015 and 2018, an occurrence she suggests is influenced by their campaigning.

Adriaan Steyn (2019) examined the film *Treurgrond*, which was about a fictional farm attack. Steyn (2019) suggests that this film positions Afrikaners as victims on their own land and exploits existing narratives of “farm attacks" to inspire fear. This fear is then used to mobilise people to join AfriForum and its activism, this is done in the form of an advertisement that appears on the screen after the movie is finished (Steyn, 2019: 78). Ultimately, the film is an advertisement for AfriForum and its ability to represent Afrikaners, the supposed victims of farm attacks.

The selective nature of storytelling for ulterior motives is not exclusive to AfriForum. In his study, Jacobs (2000) showcases how the newspaper, the Eastern Province Herald, reported on “farm killings” in the Eastern Cape. He concludes that it is the persistent nature with which the media has selected specific stories within the phenomenon to report on, which has cemented its perceived uniqueness. These stories sensationalise ‘farm killings’ while portraying the victims as vulnerable white farmers, and the perpetrators as violent black people. The ulterior motive is to sensationalise and sell more newspapers (Jacobs, 2000: 96).

It needs to be emphasised that this group of authors do not deny that there is violence happening on farms within South Africa. These authors lament the deaths occurring on farms but often seek to comprehend the violence through a more nuanced lens. Some prioritize recognizing additional victims, such as black farmers, their families, and black farmworkers (Steyn, 2019: 59; Brodie, 2022).

The historic nature of violence is also emphasised. For example, Brodie (2022: 15-16) states that "...[t]he story of slavery in South Africa, which remains quite stubbornly under-told, is one of the origin stories of modern agriculture in this country - and also where we come across some of the first accounts that describe the persistent violence and brutality that characterised farms, farming and farmers''. Amid a nuanced comprehension of violence, they refrain from aligning with a specific victim demographic, instead seeking to comprehend why certain researchers, activists, and journalists opt to interpret this violence as selectively targeting a particular group.

2.3.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this subsection explored the work of scholars who primarily focus on and investigate the discourses and narrative surrounding farm attacks in South Africa. This group highlights the complexities of defining the

phenomenon and argues that the term often carries racialised connotations, focusing primarily on white victims and black perpetrators. They critique the selective retelling of specific stories to fuel specific agendas, questioning the commitment to the uniqueness of farm attacks as a separate crime. Ultimately, these scholars aim to understand the motivations behind how certain groups represent farm attacks and the potential ulterior motive fuelling such narratives. While many of them acknowledge violence within rural communities, they urge for a more nuanced understanding than what is currently presented within farm attack narratives.

2.4 The Role of History

The phenomenon of farm attacks is generally presented in the literature as a contemporary phenomenon or possibly one which finds its roots within the apartheid struggle. Brodie (2022) drawing on news articles from the 1900s, claims that the notion of "farm attack" as we know it today did not exist until the 1960s and coincided with a rise in attacks in other settler states neighbouring South Africa. She states that "…events that were, initially taking place hundreds of kilometres away from South Africa's borders began to shape an emerging and specific narrative of 'farm attacks', where such attacks were targeted, coordinated and militarised by black insurgents against white farm owners"

(Brodie, 2022: 30-32). However, scholars from both groups recognize the significant influence of broader historical contexts when assessing the phenomenon of farm attacks.

Primarily, the role of history is understood to contribute to the motivations behind contemporary farm attacks. For instance, Pearce (2016: 3) contends that comprehending the potential motives behind farm attacks necessitates adopting a historical framework. For some, this historical lens is often invoked to showcase the diversity of rural violence historically even if farm attacks are seen as a contemporary phenomenon. Nechama Brodie (2022) argues that violence has been an active part of rural South Africa since the beginning of the settler period. Arguably, this is done to showcase that rural violence is nothing new even if contemporary farm attacks are the current focus.

However, in other instances, the history of wider rural violence is acknowledged but mostly as a factor that contributes to contemporary farm attacks. That is, even if it is acknowledged that historically, settlers were the biggest perpetrators of rural violence, they continue to be framed as the only victims of contemporary farm attacks. For instance, Pearce (2016: 2) "...attempts to determine whether the collective memory of dispossession and oppression, coupled with forms of African resistance that developed in response to colonial and apartheid injustices, has influenced the incidence of attacks on white farmers in the post-apartheid era."

From this perspective the dispossession that different marginalised communities experienced historically is not understood by itself. Rather these histories become the reasons why members of these indigenous communities are identified as perpetrators in contemporary instances of violence such as farm attacks. For instance, Matthews (2008: 5) envisions current farm attacks as a symptom of "land dispossession, labour exploitation and violent law enforcement". Additionally, Akinola (2020) recounts the role land dispossession played within settler colonial and apartheid South Africa which allowed white domination and black disempowerment. Even though he tries to disrupt the understanding of the phenomenon, Akinola's (2020) argument is built on the assumption that black people are perpetrators of farm attacks because of this history of dispossession.

These researchers often point out that it is not only that land was taken away historically by settlers but also that post-apartheid South Africa has sparked an increase in claims for reparations and these dual histories collectively drive farm attacks. In Steinberg's (2002: 173) interview with Peter Mitchell, a white farmer whose son died in what was deemed a farm attack, his son "...would still be alive if talk about taking back land were not in the air".

Thus, these authors suggest that an understanding of contemporary farm murders requires a reflection on history. However, it is seldom acknowledged that the fear of farm attacks existed long before the end of apartheid. To my

knowledge, there has never been an attempt to trace that fear or compare it to the fear that is present today. The current literature lacks a comprehensive exploration of settlers' responses and strategies in the face of perceived threats. This research seeks to address this gap by examining the nuanced dynamics surrounding historical farm attacks, specifically focusing on how settlers strategically perceived being under attack.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a look at the research on farm attacks and suggested that there are two main groups: one of which attempts to identify and understand the motives behind the phenomenon itself and the second which treats the phenomenon as primarily discursive and attempts to identify how and why these discourses emerge. What is clear from the discussion thus far is that there is neither a clear definition of what constitutes a ‘farm attack’ nor how pervasive such crimes really are. It is also clear that a historical lens would be useful, and possibly one that goes beyond the focus on the apartheid era and recent land reforms.

In my next chapter, I outline the theoretical lens I have used in this thesis – a lens that calls for a wider historical view that includes but goes further back than the apartheid and immediate post-apartheid eras.

Chapter Three: Settler Colonialism

3.1 Introduction

Settler colonial theory (SCT) has emerged as a key lens for understanding the enduring legacies and continuities of colonialism around the world. The theory emerged at the turn of the 21st century as scholars tried to understand the perseverance of settler colonies in the post-colonial world. It helps researchers examine how settler societies are established and maintained. SCT is used across multiple time periods and geographic settings and has aimed to account for the displacement and elimination of Indigenous peoples since the arrival of settlers and the resilience of settler society postindependence.

Even when settler colonialism is recognized, it is frequently treated as a historical event—a chapter in the past that may still exert influence today but is nonetheless considered concluded. SCT challenges this notion, arguing that settler colonialism is not a closed historical phase. Patrick Wolfe, a prominent scholar in the field, states that settler colonialism should be understood as "structure not an event" (2006: 388). And this structure still affects our contemporary world today. SCT is particularly relevant to South Africa, not only because it is a settler colony but because that history is often overshadowed by the focus on apartheid and its demise. SCT sees apartheid instead as an

important historic phase, but one that is best understood as a part of the larger structure of settler colonialism (Park, 2022).

In this chapter I delve into the concept of settler colonies; outline the core insights of SCT and consider how the framework can aid contemporary understandings of farm attacks in South Africa.

3.2 Settlers Come to Stay

One of the core insights of SCT is built on is that settler colonies are different to other colonial contexts, such as colonies that are solely or predominantly colonies of exploitation and resource extraction (Johnston & Lawson, 2000: 360). Colonies of exploitation and resource extraction tend to be signified by their relationship and ongoing rule through an external Empire, by a coloniser-colonised binary, with the colonisers imposing minority rule, and importantly they are characterised by a temporality based on the exploitation of resources (Free, 2018).

Settler colonies, on the other hand, are signified by the presence of settlers, and the numerous implications of this. Settlers are a class of people who emigrate from the Empire and come to stay in the colonised places. Thus, at its core, SCT tries to deal with those instances where a class of settlers were a

vital part of the colonial process, especially as it became clear that it was a much harder type of colonialism to unseat.

Settlers are different from immigrants or colonial sojourners. As Mahmood Mamdani indicates (2020: 21), the settler has the intention of establishing a permanent presence and claiming ownership over land whereas immigrants are seeking better economic opportunities, not necessarily intending to alter the demographic or political landscape of the host society. Colonial sojourners also differ from settlers as they come with a purpose (to save souls or to make money) but have the intention to return (Veracini, 2010: 6 & 53). The narrative of the sojourner is one of return, whereas for the settler there might be no possibility for return or no intention to do so (Veracini, 2010: 98). Stated simply, where settlers differ from these other entities is that they come to stay, to claim land and power, and often to replace (Wolfe, 2006; Macoun & Strakosch, 2013; Veracini, 2010: 91).

3.3 Population Economy

The population economy of settler colonies is also different from other colonial formations. The population economy represents the mechanism by which power and privilege is divided within a society (Veracini, 2010: 16). For instance, within other colonial situations, such as colonies of exploitation, the

population economy has been understood as a dichotomous relationship, between the colonised and the coloniser.

However, Veracini (2010) argues that such a dichotomous relationship does not account for what happens within a settler colonial situation, where it is arguably far more complicated. The population economy within this context consists of the settler population, the Indigenous population, and the exogenous population (i.e. enslaved or indentured labourers) (Veracini, 2010: 17). The latter two are seen, by the settler, as the 'other'. They are generally viewed as inferior, whereas the settler regards themselves as righteous and superior. Thus, rather than a dichotomous relationship, the population economy should be understood as a triadic relationship.

Often racial logics play a role in defining these categories. This is not surprising since settler colonialism has been known for its employment of the "…organizing grammar of race" (Wolfe, 2006: 387). The classification of the 'other,' whether indigenous or exogenous was often along the lines of anyone who was not European (and thus not among the settler population of that time). The example that Wolfe (2006) uses to illustrate this point is that historically within the settler colonial context of the United States, there was a big difference in how racial classification was inherited. The indigenous others, Native Americans, were subjected to blood quantum laws which stipulated that a certain percentage of your ancestry had to be Native American for you to be so.

Whereas with the exogenous other, in this case, African Americans, the legal principle of the one-drop rule characterised anyone with a Black ancestor as Black. According to Wolfe (2006), this organising language created a bigger exogenous population to exploit and a smaller Indigenous population that could lay claim to the land.

Within the South African context, the triadic relationship can also be seen. The settler population became primarily signified by Afrikaners and English-speaking people, all from Europe or, later, descendants of those from Europe. The settlers worked to dispossess the indigenous others across South Africa from their land and prevent them from accessing natural resources. Exogenous others were those brought as slaves to the Cape Colony, mainly from Madagascar; the Indian subcontinent; and South-East Asia. The complexity of this triadic relationship should not be ignored in understanding the social and economic relations of this country.

However, as much as there are real identities that fall under the categories in the settler-indigenous-exogenous triad, some have warned against turning the triad into an identity spectrum where it is “thought of as points on a graph and individuals or ethnic groups can be located partway between different categories” (La Paperson, 2017). Rather, La Paperson (2017) suggests that the triad be seen as technologies which are context-specific, and might operate directly at times, or in intersecting ways but then also at other times in

contradictory means. La Paperson (2017) explains how this triad is best understood as a set of structures or technologies, rather than as groups of people. They are:

> "[t]echnologies of alienation, separation, conversion of land into property and of people into targets of subjection, continue to mutate … Settlers become protected by rule of force; their violence against black "squatters" becomes legitimate; state violence becomes normalized repertoire. Black bodies become exchangeable juridical objects to be recast as needed for settler property making. Settler colonialism is about the land. Yet technologies to make land and to property also remake Indigenous African bodies." (La Paperson, 2017)

Seeing this triadic relationship as technologies rather than identities is also why Veracini's (2010) naming of the triad, settler-Indigenous-exogenous, is preferred over Tuck and Yang's (2012) naming of the triad, settler-native-slave. Using terms such as exogenous rather than slave helps us separate the identity category from its effects as a technology. Additionally, it helps us acknowledge the complexity of the settler colonial situation. For instance, across time the idea of 'exogenous other' rather than slave is preferred since long after the identity of 'slave' is no longer directly applicable, the impacts of its history remain. Additionally, even where there was no history of slavery, some populations who

enter the colonial context do not get included within the settler population and yet are also excluded from the Indigenous groups and are not necessarily slaves.

In the end complexity and uncertainty are valued within this thesis. I have tried to align myself with the following sentiment in Taylor's (2020: 357) research, which is that the analysis has to acknowledge "positions of ambiguity within a rigid racial system [because this] …offers a more complex locus of thought because it builds-in a critique of the binary itself, as well as the racist policies that it spawns".

From this perspective, settler colonial theory emphasises an approach that recognizes the complexity and fluidity of these technologies in asserting power while also recognising the very real impacts of them.

3.4 Logics of Settler Colonialism

For some academics in the field, this project of replacement is characterised by the 'logic of elimination', which goes beyond exploitation, to displacement and dispossession. Patrick Wolfe (2006: 387) identified this eliminatory logic within settler colonies to provide an insight into the tendency of settler colonies to become genocidal. Here the logic of elimination underscores the structural nature of settler colonialism, wherein the settler colony continuously endeavours to dissolve the indigenous population and to build a

new polity on the land it has expropriated. In essence, settler colonialism emerges as a political project that involves the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories for the benefit of the settler population. This logic of elimination can manifest in different ways. For instance, it can take physical forms, such as overt violence, and can escalate to blatant acts of genocide. However, it can also take more subtle expressions, such as the denial of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and the erasure of Indigenous history and culture (Wolfe, 1999: 163).

However, other scholars have pointed out that the settler colonial project should also be understood as a failed project in the same breath as the "...continuous character of dispossession" is recognized (Brown, 2014: 6). This process has been identified by others as the logic of accumulation by dispossession (Englert, 2020).

This logic of accumulation through dispossession is argued to be just as relevant, if not more, to settler colonial structures in Africa and South America as the logic of elimination, which is arguably more relevant in settler colonies such as Australia and the United States (Englert, 2020). Scholars such as Wolfe and Veracini look at a variety of settler structures but are themselves situated in the Australian one, which may explain their emphasis on the elimination rather than the exploitation of indigenous populations, as the defining feature of settler colonialism. However, scholars such as Englert (2020) and Brown (2014)

emphasise that the logic of elimination, on its own, does not fully capture the realities of all settler colonies. Preferring to understand settler colonial accumulation through a complex interplay between exploitation and/ or elimination identified as the logic of accumulation by dispossession.

The notion of 'logic of accumulation by dispossession' is founded on the materialist paradigm. This logic of accumulation itself, coined by scholar David Harvey (2003), was built upon Karl Marx's notion of primitive accumulation. However, while Marx emphasises that exploitative accumulation is the violent start of capitalism, Harvey (2003) argues that dispossession remains not only a foundational aspect but also an ongoing dynamic within contemporary society. It is important to recognise that there is a structural tenet to the logic of accumulation, it is not simply just an event at the beginning of capitalism. Within this understanding, it is easy to see why settler colonial scholars, who are themselves aware of the structural nature of settler colonies, are intrigued by this argument.

Thus, scholars of settler colonial structures such as Brown (2014: 6) bring together these reflections on the structural and continuous nature of both settler colonialism and 'primitive accumulation'.

Englert (2020) also identifies the logic of accumulation through dispossession to be an important part of understanding certain settler colonies

and how they are reproduced. He argues that it is "...through the process of dispossession, displacement, exploitation and/or elimination that the indigenous and the settlers are made and reproduced—the former as its target and the latter as its beneficiary" (Englert, 2020: 1663).

It is within this conception of settler colonies that theorists, and their work, who would not necessarily see themselves as scholars of settler colonialism make sense. For instance, Mahmood Mamdani writes about settler colonies such as South Africa and Israel. He identifies issues such as conquest and how it plays a role in this process of settlement and that tends to "...buttress the conquerors and isolate the conquered, politically" (Mamdani, 1998: 1). This finding around conquest is much more relevant to the logic of accumulation by dispossession than to just the logic of elimination.

Additionally, it helps us include the observation of other settler colonial scholars who have not necessarily written about the logic of accumulation by dispossession directly but who have touched on similar observations. For instance, Rose (2001: 251) identifies the "...[t]raditions of dispossession" that are present within settler colonial structure.

Additionally, the logic of accumulation through dispossession allows us to understand the tensions within the settler population with more complexity.

Whereas the logic of elimination is more relevant where programmes of replacement are at the heart of the settler colony.

3.5 Settler Narratives

Another insight from settler colonial theory which aids this thesis relates to settler narratives. These narratives are the stories settlers tell and what they indicate about settler perception. For instance, settler narratives often include reflections on founding violence against Indigenous populations (Veracini, 2008: 366). This violence is rarely framed as violence for the sake of participating in the settler colonial project and creating the settler state, rather it is seen as necessary and as acts worth celebrating. This narrative portrays violence as courageous acts of self-defence intended to safeguard the settler community (Veracini, 2008: 366).

Mimicry also plays a role within settler narratives and can showcase the settlers' relationship to things such as the imperial power and or the Indigenous and exogenous others. For instance, according to Johnston and Lawson (2000: 369) “[t]he settler subject is signified… in a language of authority and in a language of resistance”. Settlers tend to mimic the Imperial power but at the same time distance themselves from it. Mimicking the Imperial power could enable a claim to authority but there might also be the need to resist that

authority (Johnston & Lawson, 2000: 374). Additionally, mimicry exists in the relationship settlers have with the Indigenous population. The settler wants to rid itself of the Indigenous and become the Indigenous since the settler desires the supposed authenticity and entitlement to the land that such an identity might provide (Johnston & Lawson, 2000: 369).

Most studies which examine settler narratives do so by looking at how the settler speaks about the past, whereas Dalley (2018: 31) recommends that there should also be an inquiry into the “problem of futurity”. In addition to scrutinising settler narratives through an analysis of historical retrospection, Dalley’s call for an inquiry into the “problem of futurity” within settler colonial theory underscores a critical shift in perspective. It prompts exploration beyond historical constraints, advocating for research that delves into settlers' aspirations and anxieties regarding the future, and how these factors influence their narratives about the past and present, all in pursuit of an envisioned future. This invites an opportunity for deeper analysis of how settlers, historically and within our contemporary society, conceptualise their ongoing relationship with the Indigenous or exogenous other, how they envision the evolution of their communities and the intergenerational transmission of settler identities.

This can potentially enrich our comprehension of settler colonial dynamics by showcasing the interplay between historical consciousness and futuristic imagining within the narrative construction of settler communities. In

the end, Dalley's "problem of futurity" within settler colonial theory challenges us to broaden the scope of analysis to recognize that, just like settler colonialism is not confined to the past, settler narratives are not confined to a retrospective account but are actively shaping the unfolding settler colonial experience to some extent or another.

3.6 Why is it Relevant?

"The question is not what we can see in the future but what we do not see in the present. Since the structures sustaining the logic of elimination have not been unequivocally dismantled, we can be confident that they will not go away" (Wolfe, 1999: 203).

It is this process of reckoning with the structural project of replacement, in all its facets, that makes confronting settler colonies relevant. For instance, it can be used to examine the continuities and differences throughout the settler period or examine the "underlying similarities between conservative and progressive approaches" of the settler population indigenous people (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013: 427). Additionally, as Macoun and Strakosch (2013: 427) point out, confronting settler colonies within the past and in our contemporary world showcases the "...intimate connections between settler emotions, practices, knowledges and institutions".

Settler colonial theory also helps us grapple with the tension between settler agency and larger settler structures. Usually, the focus is on settler actions, which are confined to the past, and the larger settler structures are often neglected or absented in research (Veracini, 2010: 7). By recognizing a dynamic relationship between settler agency and the settler colonial structure, a better understanding of how individual actions contribute to and are influenced by, broader structural forces. SCT encourages a more holistic approach to studying settler actions. It does not only urge critical engagement with both individual settler decisions and narratives but also unravels the systemic frameworks that perpetuate ontologies of domination and material dispossession.

3.7 The Settler-Colonial Present

Contemporary South Africa is often referred to as post-apartheid South Africa. From an optimistic point of view, post-apartheid South Africa has been lauded by many as a country which, more peacefully than expected, ended the 'racial segregation' that was upheld by the Apartheid system. As Mamdani (2020) says, it was a unique case where numerous nations chose, through democratic elections, to be represented within the state system rather than a nation being emblematic of the state. From a more pessimistic point of view, one might

question all the ways post-apartheid South Africa has failed to address the legacy of that history, enabling the country to continue aspects of its settler colonial legacy. Apartheid did not just appear out of nowhere and neither did it follow on from a distant colonial past. Rather apartheid should be seen as a part of the larger settler colonial structure.

According to Veracini and Verbuyst (2020: 262) "[p]ost-apartheid South Africa inherited settler colonialism as structure without understanding, discussion or detection. It is as if apartheid was let go so that settler colonialism could endure". This insight often gets obscured by the focus on apartheid relations and histories. The contemporary South African situation is arguably a settler-colonial present emerging from a settler-colonial past (Veracini & Verbuyst, 2020).

3.8 SCT Criticism

Settler colonial studies can be seen as a field that is in conversation with, and arguably in debt to, numerous other academic movements such as Indigenous studies and postcolonial studies. Within this engagement, settler colonial theory (SCT) was developed. However, both SCT as a theory and a field of study have been, and should continue to be, treated with a fair deal of scepticism. This study embraces these critiques as not only valid but also as

applicable to this particular study. Thus, in working with these critiques, I hope to demonstrate the relevance and significance of settler colonial theory, despite the inherent challenges within it.

Numerous critics have noted that settler colonial theory is used by settler scholars rather than indigenous scholars. According to Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch (2013: 426), it "...remains a largely White attempt to think through contemporary colonial relationships". Nevertheless, I have tried to craft my understanding of settler colonies through a variety of academic disciplines and movements. However, I am guilty of still referencing within the popular settler colonial framework, which usually consists of Veracini and Wolfe. They were some of the first thinkers I was exposed to within the field, and for now, I continue to rely on them within this thesis.

Nevertheless, the critique that settler colonial theory has the potential to replicate settler colonialism should be taken seriously. According to Kēhaulani Kauanui (2021: 292), "settler colonial studies erase or otherwise overemphasise settler colonialism at the expense of attention to Indigenous resistance in ways that misunderstand, misrepresent or wilfully misconstrue scholarship in the field".

I acknowledge the potential limitation of focusing on the actions of settler colonists at the expense of focusing on the actions of others. However, as seen

within the literature review, there is a trend within contemporary literature on farm attacks to understand what motivates someone to commit farm attacks. This inquiry is often built on the most important parameter within the common understanding of what a farm attack is, being that the perpetrator is Black and the victim white. Again, as seen in the previous chapter, these supposed motivations are often explained through detailing the violent history Black people were subjected to. I am concerned about this trend since it seems to be acknowledging past experiences of victimization, only to use them as an explanation for why black people have supposedly become perpetrators in farm attacks in contemporary South Africa. On the other hand, this trend also seems to acknowledge white people as perpetrators and historically as a large instigator of violence as a social group, only to now frame them as the victims of farm attacks in post-apartheid South Africa.

To some extent, I believe this trend can be disrupted by focusing on the actions and perceptions of settlers who perceive themselves to be under attack. This approach encourages an investigation which is not led necessarily by assumptions around who the actual perpetrators or victims of farm attacks are. Instead, it prompts an exploration of the complexities of the larger settler colonial structure, which continues to impact contemporary South Africa and sentiments surrounding farm attacks. Nevertheless, even though this is my goal,

I remain aware of the criticism and continue to aim not to dismiss or undermine Indigenous people or any resistance efforts.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I briefly outlined Settler Colonial Theory as a lens through which phenomena can analysed. SCT provides me with the theoretical framework by which I can analyse both historical accounts of farm attacks and my own experiences with the phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa.

I now move on to the multiple-methods approach used within the study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

A methodology is more than the selection and implementation of methods. It includes an awareness that research is inherently subjective and ideological, despite the researcher's attempts to provide a coherent and transparent analysis of a phenomenon. It is thus important to make explicit the research design choices I have made and to offer them up to scrutiny. It is crucial for these design choices to harmonize with the research's purpose, questions, and theoretical frameworks discussed in the preceding chapter, ensuring their suitability for the endeavour. Just as a reminder, the purpose of the research is to get an in-depth understanding of the strategic use of perceived threats made by settlers during the colonial period and whether this understanding has potential implications for contemporary discussions on farm attacks in South Africa, thus aiding our understanding of the significance of farm attacks within the larger South African settler colonial structure.

This thesis aims to answer the following question: How can an exploration of historical farm attacks, during the beginning of the settler colonial occupation of South Africa, contribute to a deeper understanding of why contemporary farm attacks have garnered such significance and emphasis?

This thesis is a qualitative study that uses a multiple-methods approach. Qualitative studies “emphasise the value of individual experiences and views as encountered in real-life experiences” (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001: 39). In tackling complex social events and experiences, qualitative research acknowledges that much of our knowledge of the world cannot be reduced to numbers.

Three research methods were identified. Since I judged the issue to be both complex and volatile, I thought it best to draw on research methods from a variety of academic disciplines. Microhistory, a method primarily used within historical studies, is drawn upon, alongside autoethnography, which stems from the discipline of anthropology. Lastly, the study used a comparative analysis which is often used within political studies.

In a multiple-methods approach, researchers employ multiple qualitative research methods to investigate an issue more comprehensively (Frost, 2013). This approach allowed me to compare what is happening in contemporary society, specifically through my own experiences, to historical occurrences at the beginning of the settler period. According to Frost (2013: 1) multiple methods help researchers “…to bring nuance, identify multiplicity of meanings of lived experiences and to generate new ways of understanding complexities of social interaction”. By engaging with multiple methodologies and acknowledging the subjective nature of research, this thesis strives to offer a nuanced and insightful

exploration of historical and contemporary farm attacks, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of their ongoing significance in South Africa.

4.2 Microhistory

Microhistory is a qualitative methodology that centres on everyday events and is characterised by three attributes. It has an emphasis on agency; it focuses on smaller-scale events; and it stresses that broader historical questions can be addressed through carefully examining smaller-scale instances (Robisheaux, 2017: 9). Historians such as Peter Burke (2001), argue that while the focus of microhistory is on specific events, there should be substantial attention paid to the larger structures that are at play in the emergence of these events.

My adoption of microhistory as a methodology was inspired by a mixture of academic curiosity and personal ethics. Academically, microhistory provides a lens that takes agency seriously while enabling an attempt to understand the broader structure of settler colonialism. Through this approach, an individual's potential agency through a variety of actions within a structure can be better understood.

On a personal level, these same points are appealing. Having come across Hannah Arendt's (1971) lectures on the *Banality of Evil*, I have been fascinated by her argument that there is an everydayness and thoughtlessness behind evil

rather than the more ominous and intrinsic evil of devils and monsters. She suggests that our tendency to seek simplistic good-versus-evil dichotomies and to attribute evil events solely to individual actors obscures the role of larger structural forces (Arendt, 1971). A shallow engagement with ethics, combined with the ambitions of our communities and personal ambitions, can allow us to live with structures without seeing their harm to others or without meaning to commit harm ourselves (Arendt, 1971: 417). It was through Arendt's exploration of how ordinary individuals can contribute to horrific acts by thoughtlessness and the desire for conformity that my personal conviction on the importance of examining the everyday choices and behaviours that sustain harmful structures grew.

Microhistorians recognize that there is power in analysing these small-scale events provided there is the intention of making the reader aware of the overarching structure (Burke, 2001: 293-296). It becomes possible for the researcher to ask large-scale questions but seek answers through explorations of small events (Robisheaux, 2017: 18). Microhistory thus urges us to move beyond the description of small-scale events to analyse them within the large-scale structures from which they emerged.

Conversely, microhistory researchers recognise that many studies focused explicitly on large-scale structures fail to articulate how these structures, or technologies, emerge in small-scale events. According to Robisheaux (2017: 17),

"...microhistory can be helpful to understand even the present day, because we too easily think on the scale of global networks, missing the local and individual". Thus, while working with theoretical understandings of the technologies at play in settler colonialism, focusing on microhistories helps us find the agency within the sources that we study. It also emphasises our own agency, which in my case is my agency as a settler. Focusing on the small scale does not narrow our understanding of an event. It means giving serious attention to the details that transpired, or at least those details we can glimpse through the sources that survived. Crucially, it entails understanding that these sources themselves do not represent objective facts but rather are stories told and retold by particular people with their own narratives and agendas (Burke, 2001: 284).

Microhistorians understand that "...most of us experience the global through personal networks and small-scale interactions" (Robisheaux, 2017: 13). Microhistory provides a lens that takes agency seriously while investigating the dynamics of settler colonialism. While settler colonial theory often examines overarching structures, microhistory enables a closer examination of agency within these structures and how specific events emerged shaped by these structures. This integration presents a more comprehensive understanding of settler colonialism by addressing both structural forces and individual actions (Robisheaux, 2017: 13).

The data utilised within this thesis was collected through both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included archival sources found in two main spaces. The first, and most intimidating, was the archival materials housed in the Western Cape Archives and Records Service. Once I spent an embarrassing amount of time mulling over an old Dutch manuscript only to figure out that it was in English all along. Secondly, archival materials that are available online. These digital archives were invaluable when it came to ease of access.

The secondary sources included numerous dissertations, articles and books written by historians about the beginning of the settler colonial period in South Africa. These books offered a variety of analyses of this time and introduced me to numerous events that occurred. They have been invaluable to my understanding of the archival material since I am still learning how to interpret these sources, especially those that are in old Dutch.

Five microhistories are told within this study. These microhistories were identified through my interaction with both primary and secondary sources. These microhistories were selected while taking into account the overarching research purpose and question. The research question has been framed as follows: How can an examination of historical farm attacks at the onset of South Africa's settler colonial occupation enhance our comprehension of why contemporary farm attacks have assumed such prominence and focus?

Microhistories allow me to satisfy the first part of the question by giving me the means to investigate instances of rural violence which are similar to the contemporary “common” understanding of farm attacks, of which the most important characteristic seems to be that the victim is white and the perpetrator black. However, with our understanding of settler colonial theory, it can also arguably be that the victim is the settler and the perpetrators are either the indigenous or exogenous others.

However, in order to effectively address this question, I established specific criteria to determine which events to prioritize for focus. Notably, these events had to occur at the beginning of the settler period, before 1800, and they had to feature either an actual attack, a threat of attack or some kind of complaint related to indigenous violence or resistance. These instances were deemed to allow an understanding of the dynamics of violence and exploitation that shaped settler interactions with Indigenous populations. I also sought out diversity and variation among the cases to provide a more comprehensive understanding of settler experiences. By considering these factors, the selected cases have not only contributed to the narrative coherence of the study but have also laid the foundation for meaningful comparative analysis, thereby enhancing reflections on settler agency and the complexities of settler futurity.

The analysis of microhistorical narratives centred on a comprehensive examination of historical records and primary sources related to the settlers'

experiences during the early settler period before the turn of the 19th century. These records were subjected to a thorough textual analysis to extract key details about settlers' interactions with the land, Indigenous populations, and the instances of violence. The goal was to reconstruct the historical contexts of these settler stories and discern the dynamics of exploitation, vulnerability, and agency. I then made comparisons between these microhistories to identify recurring themes, variations and contrasts that highlight the broader patterns of settler-colonial relationships. The analysis also involved critically assessing the historical context, potential biases, and limitations of the available sources to ensure as rigorous and comprehensive an understanding of the settlers' experiences as possible.

The methodology encourages a dialogue between the historian and the reader, inviting engagement and a critical interpretation of historical narratives. “So much of microhistory is a conversation between the writer and the reader” (Robisheaux, 2017: 35) and I have attempted to stay true to this by outlining my own attempts at building these cases through my analysis of the data. Some microhistorians emphasise engaging readers within the investigation of the past (Robisheaux, 2017: 12). By “…bringing the reader to the problem, to the person, or to the puzzle, laying out its essentials and its human and historical interest, and encouraging the engaged reader to make arguments and reach individual conclusions about what it contributes to our understanding of the past”

(Robisheaux, 2017: 12). In undertaking this analysis, I actively attempted to open the cases to the reader. In building my claims about how these microhistorical cases allow us to understand farm attacks, I attempt to demonstrate explicitly and transparently my own thinking and my application of SCT.

A central ethical concern for me was the potential for selective storytelling. Microhistory, by its very nature, necessitates a focused examination of specific individuals, events, or communities within a historical context. One of my main concerns was that "...[p]ersonification blurs distinctions between leaders and followers and encourages literal-minded readers to assume the consensus of groups who were often in conflict" (Burke, 2001: 286). In outlining the events of these selected cases, it needs to be remembered that they are specific events captured only partially in historical documents. The beliefs and actions of those included in the cases may be lost through the capturing of the historical documents or my retelling of the events. Additionally, the beliefs and actions of many who may have been central to the events might have been absented entirely from the historical records. While the microhistorical approach offers the opportunity for nuanced insights, it also carries the inherent risk of inadvertently reinforcing particular narratives or omitting key perspectives. For instance, in trying to understand the contemporary settler experience, I continue to centre historic settlers and their experiences of rural violence simply by using

archival documentation which generally dismisses the views and experiences of indigenous or exogenous populations.

The process of selecting which microhistories to examine requires careful consideration to mitigate bias (or at least to make any bias I have as clear as possible) to ensure a well-rounded representation of historical events where the reader seriously engages with issues in the settler colonial structure. The act of choosing specific stories can inadvertently skew the overall narrative, reinforcing pre-existing assumptions or emphasising certain aspects while sidelining others. I recognize my responsibility within this approach and take seriously the possibility of rendering certain bodies invisible through my research. To address these ethical concerns, this study has undertaken a deliberate and transparent approach to the selection of microhistories. This involves a systematic exploration of primary sources, meticulous cross-referencing of accounts, and a commitment to including as diverse a range of perspectives as possible within the limitations of textual histories. By actively seeking out narratives that challenge dominant narratives of farm attacks today and by being constantly open to revisiting initial assumptions, I aimed to minimise the risk of perpetuating selective and potentially distorted storytelling.

In microhistorical research, where in-depth analysis of specific cases is paramount, the researcher's perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and preconceptions can inadvertently shape the portrayal of events and individuals.

My positionality as the researcher impacts how I retell this story and it needs to be acknowledged that microhistories are always told from a particular point of view (Burke, 2001: 290). This subjectivity introduces a layer of complexity, raising questions about the objectivity of the resulting narrative and the potential for unintended misrepresentation. Furthermore, the early settler colonial period in South Africa poses particular challenges in terms of limited access to sources within archival materials.

Historical records from this era are often fragmented, incomplete, or influenced by colonial perspectives, which can hinder a comprehensive and accurate reconstruction of settler experiences. The scarcity of first-hand accounts and the potential for archival silences amplify the difficulty of capturing a holistic understanding of the multifaceted dynamics that characterised this historical context. However, it is also in this caveat where microhistory appeals to me since this brings me to a place where I have to confront the "incompleteness of knowledge" and live with the "fractal nature of ignorance" (Robisheaux, 2017: 35). When using archival material, the data that is there is not factual, but already retold through different lenses (Robisheaux, 2017: 35). Throughout the process, I undertook careful reflection on various ethical considerations, and I attempted to maintain transparency in disclosing the rationale behind the case selection.

Thus, while microhistory provides a valuable lens through which to examine individual experiences, the dual limitations of subjectivity and constrained source availability underscore the need for a cautious and critically reflective approach to interpreting the historical narratives of the early settler colonial period in South Africa. Through the comparative analysis of microhistory and autoethnography, this study offers a methodology that delves into the complexities of historical events while unearthing the deeply personal dimensions of settler lived experiences that continue to this day. Microhistory, with its focus on specific individuals, communities, or events, provides an avenue for uncovering the small details that might have escaped within broader historical narratives and structures.

In parallel, autoethnography, grounded in the researcher's own lived encounters, lends an intimate and empathetic lens through which to apprehend the emotional resonance and subjective realities that underlie these historical occurrences. The fusion of these approaches is particularly suited for comparative analysis, as it engenders a multi-layered examination of historical dynamics. By combining carefully researched microhistories with autographic reflections, I explored settler colonialism as a structure and settler agency within it. This multi-method approach was designed to harness the power of lived experiences to imbue historical narratives with deeper human insights, and simultaneously to employ microhistory to ground personal reflections within

broader historical trajectories. Ultimately, this holistic methodology presented me with a dynamic and multifaceted framework for uncovering the profound resonances that bind the past, present, and the individual's place within them.

The microhistory approach aligns with the study's overarching inquiry, allowing for a deeper understanding of individual actions and their implications within broader historical contexts.

4.3 Autoethnography

In trying to find an ethical entry point to comprehend the complex phenomenon of farm attacks, I decided to employ autoethnography. This approach embraces the power of personal experience to facilitate a nuanced exploration of the subject matter while maintaining respect and rational compassion. This section looks at the rationale behind using autoethnography; autoethnography as a method; how data was collected and analysed for this aspect of the study; ethical implications; potential limitations; and autoethnography’s relationship within the multiple-methods study.

Autoethnography, as a qualitative research method, centres on the researcher's personal experiences and reflections within the research process (Pitard, 2017). It aligns with the heart of this study, which seeks not only to

deepen understanding of the contemporary phenomenon of farm attacks but also to foster a compassionate, informed dialogue on the issue.

In my experience, research on the discourses surrounding farm attacks often introduces the topic to readers by recounting a harrowing incident involving a white victim. For instance, Holmes (2020) starts her research article by mentioning different activists and their accounts of the gruesome murder of the toddler Wilmien Potgieter and her family. She does this purposefully and ultimately it is a good example of her larger argument which is that despite there being a lack of evidence for farm attacks, activists garner support by highlighting shocking and sensational cases of violence (Holmes, 2020: 15). Nechama Brodie (2022) does the same with recounting, in detail, the gruesome death of Brendin Horner. Again, arguably, it is an effective means to begin discussing how the farm attacks can bring forward racial tensions (Brodie, 2022: 12). Yet it needs to be noted that both of these authors are critical of the conventional understanding of farm attacks. Nevertheless, even with this critical stance, they found it necessary and effective to first capture the attention of the reader through visceral examples fitting the conventional framing. Thus, though I understand why researchers would do this, I did not want to replicate this trend – at least not with contemporary victims of rural violence.

For me, it became an ethical concern to refrain from recounting contemporary cases of rural violence out of respect for both victims and their

families. Susan Sontag's (2004) reflections regarding the suffering of others resonated strongly with me while trying to find a respectful way to deal with this subject matter. One of her arguments is that gruesome war photographs are often displayed and circulated without taking into account the potential emotional impact they can have on the families and loved ones of those portrayed (Sontag, 2004). Though Sontag's (2004) critique primarily addresses visual imagery, I argue that similar ethical concerns arise when recounting narrative stories of present-day rural violence. Often, it seems that the point that is being made with the use of those examples overshadows consideration of the victim's wishes or potential impacts on their loved ones.

I became increasingly aware of this ethical concern since I started recognizing that my thesis was less about the phenomenon of farm attacks and rather about how settlers perceive threats and utilize that perception to their own ends. I realised that for this thesis to work, I would have to vocalise an entry point that I had hoped to avoid - parts of my own story. A story which would force me to question my positionality and that of my community. Autoethnography gave me a way to do just this.

The purpose of using autoethnography was both to find an ethical entry point into understanding the phenomenon of farm attacks and to reflect on my positionality in this thesis. Autoethnography involves a great deal of self-narrative, but the engagement does not end there. Rather it aims to delve

deeper into and engage with a wider culture through the personal story of the author (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022: 197). Malhotra (2013: 3) states that "[a]utoethnographers describe and analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience". I employed autoethnography to provide a subjective account of my experience within a settler identity, of which I am already a part, and to contextualize the contemporary understanding of farm attacks. This was done to understand some of the complexities in the discourse around farm attacks. Thus, in doing so, I sought to "produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011: 5).

This subjective experience was collected through a process of memory mining. I did a combination of free writing around one particular experience, where I was under the impression that we were going to be victims of a farm attack, as discussed in the first chapter, and by answering a set of questions which aimed at increasing my self-reflexivity of my overall experiences of my visits to the farm. These questions included:

- How did my childhood visits to the farm, after apartheid ended, shape my perceptions of rural spaces and land ownership?
- What emotions and memories arise when I think about those visits to the farm? How do these emotions influence my understanding of the phenomenon of farm attacks?

- In what ways did my interactions with farm owners, workers, and the farm environment contribute to my developing awareness of social and economic changes post-apartheid?
- How did my experiences on the farm during my childhood visits challenge or reinforce my understanding of settler power dynamics in the South African context?
- What role did fear play in my childhood experiences on the farm, especially considering the historical context of farm attacks and the broader political atmosphere?
- How do I perceive the concept of vulnerability when reflecting on my childhood visits to the farm? How has this perception evolved?
- How did my ambitions, dreams, and aspirations intersect with the farm environment during those visits?
- How can my own narrative and memories provide insights into the complexities and nuances of the farm attacks phenomenon, particularly concerning the interplay of fear, vulnerability, and personal ambition?

The data that was collected with this method consists mostly of memories and memories are subjective. However, one of my main concerns was that some of these personal experiences included others. Informed consent is regarded with some scepticism within anthropology, a scepticism that is particularly valid since most of those involved in my memories are people that I have a personal

history with and can thus complicate the consent-seeking process (De Koning, Meyer, Moors, & Pels, 2019). Where I could, oral consent was asked. Moreover, the principle of doing no harm was taken seriously. A level of self-censorship through anonymization of my memories of others was included to protect those individuals (De Koning, et al., 2019). Additionally, both the subjectiveness of my experiences and their potential fallibility were emphasised throughout the research.

In analysing the autoethnographic narratives, a reflexive approach was employed. The primary focus lay on critically examining my own subjective experiences of growing up on a farm in South Africa and the visceral fear of potential farm attacks. Emotions, memories, and personal reflections were scrutinised to uncover underlying patterns that contributed to the shaping of these experiences. The analysis also involved a continuous process of self-reflection to acknowledge and address any biases or preconceptions that might have influenced the way the narratives were constructed. Through this method, a deeper understanding of the subjective dimension of the settler-colonial experiences was achieved.

The inherent subjectivity of personal experiences introduces the potential for bias, warranting a cautious interpretation of the findings. Moreover, it needs to be noted that the selectivity of memory recalled through the memory mining of my early childhood is fallible and prone to feature gaps or omissions in the

narrative. This research does not pretend to be objective which can be seen as an inherent limitation to utilising this method. However, throughout the research, I aimed to highlight the subjectiveness of the autoethnographic narratives. As well as balancing the autoethnographic accounts with other research methods.

Arguably, this emphasis on subjectivity contributes to the validity and rigour of this study. In an article on the rigours of autoethnography, Cheryl Le Roux (2017: 204) tentatively suggests that subjectivity can be seen as one of the criteria with which the rigour of an autoethnography can be judged. She also mentions self-reflexivity, resonance, credibility, and contribution (Le Roux, 2017: 204). This study emphasises self-reflexivity and resonance since introspection and engagement with the reader are some of the driving forces of this thesis. Thus, I have strived to meet Le Roux's criteria but to what extent I was successful is for the reader to judge.

The use of autoethnography should then be seen as intricately interwoven with the other two methods used, microhistory and comparative analysis. Autoethnography served as an ethical entry point into the contemporary phenomenon of farm attacks and the settler experience. The personal dimension introduced by autoethnography provides a unique vantage point, while also enabling a comparative examination of the broader historical contexts. This integration enhances the richness of the study, enabling a

comprehensive grasp of the complex interplay between personal narratives and larger historical forces.

This method facilitates a compassionate examination of the subject matter, grounding it in lived experiences while fostering a meaningful dialogue with the reader. The study builds upon this foundation with the intention of culminating in a comprehensive and informed exploration of the contemporary settler experience.

4.4 Comparative Analysis

By bringing the five microhistories and my autoethnographic reflections into conversation with each other, I attempted to answer the research questions. This comparison was not so much to validate or to hold the stories in some kind of hierarchical differentiation but rather that the juxtaposition of these cases would allow, through the application of SCT, a wider account of the phenomenon of farm attacks than is perhaps possible through current accounts focused on contemporary events only. Hewitt-Taylor (2001) argues that qualitative studies are well-served by constant comparative analysis as insights from one data set can illuminate aspects of another. The micro-history settler accounts and my own autoethnography are thus brought into conversation through the application of SCT.

The microhistories are showcased below. The analysis in the subsequent chapter alternates between the cases, aiming to shed light on aspects of farm attacks that contribute to our historical understanding of the phenomenon, as well as its relevance within our present-day context.

Chapter 5: Six settler accounts

Six settler accounts were investigated in this thesis. Five of which were microhistories and the last was my autoethnography. The six settler accounts included within this thesis were chosen because all of them were either *perceived* to be victims of farm attacks to some extent; they were fearful of the possibility of a farm attack; or they were in the business of trying to curb supposed farm attacks.

For the sake of historical accuracy, it needs to be emphasised again that the microhistories and the primary and secondary sources that inform them, never referred to what was occurring as 'farm attacks'. Neither do I remember the term being used directly within my own childhood on the farm, which informs the autoethnography. However, they are not far off from the contemporary conventional understanding of farm attacks in the sense that within the settler imaginary/perception, there is a clear victim and perpetrator, and it is the settler group who is under threat by the indigenous or exogenous population. This narrative is evident in each of the cases. Usually, this is where the story ends in most accounts of farm attacks.

However, this is not where the story ends in these accounts. Rather, I have also aimed to include other instances from the lives of the chosen settlers that showcase their role, and often their active participation, in rural violence.

Because of the word limitation of this thesis, this chapter acts more as a chronological introduction to each of the settlers. It came to my attention that for the reader to fully participate in the critical analysis that occurs in the next chapter, it is important that a rudimentary understanding of our six settlers is gained first. Most of the settlers presented in these accounts were farmers and tended livestock, with the exception of Estienne Barbier, who was a soldier and ended up intermingling with farmers because of his outlaw status.

5.1 Gerrit Cloete

What first drew me to the story of Gerrit Cloete was that he was one of the first instances of rural violence I came across that reminded me of contemporary farm attacks.

In 1701 his post was attacked by 'Ubiquase Hottentots', 40 of his cattle were stolen and his servant was shot with arrows (Böeseken, 1961: 380-381). The archival documents report that the attackers also threatened the following “eerst de vrijluijden wilden arm maken, en dan daar na de Comps. posten aandoen” (Böeseken, 1961: 381; Verbatim Copies, 1699-1789: (15) 895-902, Penn, 2005: 33-35). Meaning that they would impoverish the farmers and then further attack the VOC's posts. He did not take the attack lightly and pursued the attackers without the consent of the VOC (Penn, 2005).

However, this was not the first time Gerrit Cloete interacted with the Ubiqua people. In 1686 he and other free burghers had reportedly captured 30 oxen and cattle from the Ubiqua people after they had attacked the settlers while hunting hippopotamus (Moodie, 1838: 413). Of this livestock 20 were requested as compensation, by the free burgers, for their valiant acts against the Ubiqua people who were described as 'murderers and thieves' and who were cited for their supposed aggressive behaviour in the years prior to the incident (Moodie, 1838: 414).

5.2 Jacobus Overny

The story of Jacobus Overny interested me because it showcases the fear of farm attacks and the response it can solicit.

In 1712 he started a rumour that 5000 members of the Great Namaqua people were assembling on the Olifants River, readying for an attack on farms in the region (Leibbrandt Manuscripts, 1709-1732: (18)). This impending attack was taken very seriously to the extent that the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), the colonial authority at the Cape, gathered a force of 185 men to search for this threat only to find no sign of any great gathering (Leibbrandt Manuscripts, 1709-1732: (18); Penn 2005: 48). It was later ruled that Overny had instigated the rumours because he feared the retribution of the Little Namaqua

after he had stolen cattle from the San of the Little Namaqua (Leibbrandt Manuscripts, 1709-1732: (18); Penn, 2005: 48).

5.3 Jacobus van der Heijden

Jacobus van der Heijden, the third settler on our list, first caught my attention when I read about how 700 of his cattle were stolen after an attack on his post in 1719 (De Wet, 1964: 329-330).

At the time of the attack, he held part of the meat contract in the Cape. At different times this was an extremely profitable position to be in. However, there had been a cattle sickness that seriously impacted the number of cattle available in the Cape (Penn, 2005: 52). Though the attack was not levelled on his person, it had great implications on his standing in the Cape Settlement.

Van der Heijden blamed the VOC and their cattle bartering exhibitions of the previous year, stating that they had taken the cattle by force and thus made Indigenous groups vengeful (De Wet, 1964: 329-330). However, van der Heijden himself can be levelled with the same accusation of playing a role in taking cattle by force. Firstly, for the role he played, though minuscule, in the Christiaan Voyage of 1702. A trading exhibition occurred after the ban on trading cattle with Indigenous people was lifted. However, rather than trading the exhibition ended up attacking different indigenous people for their cattle. The settlers

would surround camps at night and ambush them, seizing the cattle after those who survived had fled (Leibbrandt Manuscript, 1679-1760: (4) 137). Van der Heijden himself was not part of this group but had told them that the Governor had given permission for the exhibition to occur and that they could “proceed in the name of God” (Leibbrandt Manuscript, 1679-1760: (4) 139).

Even though he did not commit the actions himself, he and a fellow settler had sold them supplies and rented out wagons for their journey. Van der Heijden received 11 cattle for hiring one of his wagons to the group (Leibbrandt Manuscript, 1679-1760: (4) 147). His culpability in this instance can be questioned. Unfortunately, he was part of a very similar instance later in his life.

The second instance happened sometime after his post was robbed in 1719. Around 1722, van der Heijden equipped seventy men with goods with which they were expected to barter for livestock with indigenous groups (Böeseken, 1965: 287-288; Penn, 2005: 53). However, Petrus van Arkel, a minister at Drakenstein church, noted that the goods received for bartering were so minimal that it seemed more like a facade of choice in the exchange with local communities rather than genuine negotiations (Böeseken, 1965: 287-288). The expedition ended up being a massacre of the Gonaqua people and the dispossession of their livestock (Penn, 2005: 53).

5.4 Estienne Barbier

Of all the settlers I chose, Estienne Barbier's story has been given the most attention. For instance, Andre P. Brink (1993), a prominent South African writer, loosely based his historical fiction, *On the contrary,* on his life. Within the academy, his story has fascinated academics like Nigel Penn (1988) because of his role as a social bandit and his rebellion against the corruption in the Cape Settlement.

Barbier was arrested in 1737 after he drunkenly accused his superior, Lieutenant Allemann of being a thief. He had only been in the Cape since 1734, having been born in France in 1699, but during his trial, he tried to prove the corruption that was part and parcel of how the Cape was being managed (Penn 1999: 111). Nevertheless, it is a case he did not win. After he realised that his final appeal had been censored, he realised he would not be getting justice through the Cape legal system. Thus, in 1738 he escaped from the Castle into the interiors (Penn, 1999: 111).

These first acts of rebellion are fascinating. However, what first drew me to Barbier was the group of men he joined after escaping his imprisonment in the Cape and the complaints they had against the VOC's rule.

Around the same time Barbier made his escape from the Castle, the group of settlers he would later join, crossed the Orange River on an expedition

for cattle (Penn, 1999: 111; De Wet, 1981: 257-258). There they instructed their servants, who they promised to pay with cattle, to attack the Great Namaqua people. With the cattle in tow, the settlers made their return but ended up attacking another kraal of the Little Namaqua (De Wet, 1981: 257). In both of these instances, the settlers appropriated cattle while leaving death and devastation among Indigenous people in their wake. The stolen livestock, which amounted to more than a thousand cattle by some accounts, was taken to the region of Piketberg and the loot was distributed amongst settlers, their promise to pay their servants forgotten (Penn, 2005: 61). When the VOC heard of the exhibition, they had to act against the actions of the settlers for various reasons. Firstly, because the disgruntled servants and the survivors of the attacks all went to seek justice (Penn, 2005: 62-63). Yet, this might have been easy to skirt off. However, at the beginning of 1739, the occurrence of Indigenous resistance on the frontier was increasing to such a level that it could be considered an act of war (Penn, 2005: 62-63).

The VOC's attempt to assuage the Khoekhoe and the San came in the form of Carel Chrisoffel Counitz, the deputy *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, who received permission from the likes of the *landdrost* of Stellenbosch, Piet Lourensz, to command the settlers who went on the exhibition to appear in front of the Court of Justice (De Wet, 1981: 255). Yet, more controversially, he received permission to confiscate those cattle he deemed illegally acquired. In

the end, Counitz confiscated 279 cattle (De Wet, 1984: 3; Penn, 2005: 63). Limited as this number might be, it created an uproar amongst farmers in the area.

It is here where Barbier joins their struggles after having made his escape into the interior. He helped the farmers write their grievances down. The first letter he helped write, expressed their dissatisfaction and their request for the return of all livestock taken from them (Penn, 1999: 115).

However, it is the second letter that is most fascinating. The letter expressed discontent with the high price of loan farms and the lack of support farmers were receiving to begin farming. Additionally, the letter lamented the actions of the Governor, and other high-ranking officials in the Cape, arguing that it had increased the likeliness of Indigenous attacks on settlers for they now believed they had more rights than the settlers (Pheiffer,1980: 26-29; Penn, 1999: 116; Penn, 2005: 64). It continued by stating that the officials were robbing honest settler farmers so that they could give those cattle to their "hottentot cronies" (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29). The letter also aggrieved those officials who believed the statements of "unbaptised hottentots, who know nothing of salvation and damnation (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29). Lastly, the letter said that "...hottentots wish to violate the worthy Christian women: Saying that they have nothing to fear: alleging that the landdrost shall listen to them rather than to the Christian people" (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29; Penn, 2005: 64). Apart from the rebellious nature of the contents of the letter, its delivery was also shocking. The

group of settlers, Barbier amongst them, nailed it onto a church door which was the privilege of the VOC only (Penn, 2005: 64).

The VOC, realising Barbier was at the helm of the social unrest, announced him to be an outlaw who should be apprehended dead or alive (Penn, 1999: 117). However, the group he had joined were loyal, none giving him up even when they were promised a pardon themselves for their social transgressions. They remained in hiding, only interacting with lower-ranking VOC officials who had requested a meeting. In one such meeting, Barbier spoke of the Stellenbosch *landdrost* as follows: "You damned Piet Lourensz, you scoundrel. Why did you order my livestock to be stolen. My house to be burnt, my wife to be violated, with your damned brothers the Hottentots; and you would not give back all of my livestock; why have you allowed me to be robbed?" (Penn, 1999: 118).

It is these enduring expressions of opinion, which can be partially attributed to Barbier and the sentiments of those around him, that I found particularly intriguing. Unfortunately, for Barbier and many others, the VOC officials changed their strategy to the indigenous resistance from something akin to assuaging to one of attack (Penn, 1999: 121). They returned the cattle to the settler farmers and organized commandos, those who associated with Barbier could join and receive a free pardon. With the repossession of the cattle

and a means to fight the indigenous attacks, Barbier lost his followers (Penn, 1999: 124).

Barbier's story ends with his death since he had given himself up, most likely with the hope of being pardoned. However, he ultimately faced execution in a particularly gruesome manner, serving as a chilling example (Penn, 1999: 126).

5.5 Adriaan van Jaarsveld

The last settler on my list was chosen for his role in the commando system. In 1771, farms in the Koup area, part of the modern-day Karoo, were attacked to such an extent that farmers fled temporarily. Van Jaarsveld led the commando that was sent to sus out those Indigenous groups that were responsible for the attacks (Moodie, 1838: 9-10). The report indicates that 92 people were killed by the commando in retaliation for the attacks on farms in the region (Moodie, 1838: 9-10; Penn, 2005: 101).

Van Jaarsveld shows up on numerous other occasions in regard to commando business. He wrote a request in 1773, after having moved to the Sneeuberg, that San attacks were increasing and that something had to be done (Moodie, 1838: 33; Penn, 2005: 114). He requested permission to attack the San in the winter months where they would give away their positions with fires to

keep warm and summer rain would be less of an obstacle for settler weapons (Moodie, 1838: 33).

With San attacks increasing and their settler attempts to crush resistance failing, van Jaarsveld and his commando continued to try to find ways to attack the San. Thus in 1775, his commando shot several hippopotami under the pretence that they were hunting (Adhikari, 2014: 48; Penn, 2005: 126; Moodie, 1838: 44-45). They left the carcass on the riverbank to attract the elusive San population, returning at dawn to attack them. Van Jaarsveld and his men took 21 prisoners and ended up massacring 122 people (Moodie, 1838: 44-45).

Farm attacks continued to increase, resulting in van Jaarsveld and other settlers having to abandon the Sneeuberg (Penn, 2005: 129)

5.6 Carla Botha

Born almost 300 years after most of these men, my story is somewhat different. Firstly, I was identified as a woman at birth. I was also born in 1995, after the first elections of post-apartheid South Africa. Yet, as I delved into historical accounts of commandos—groups implicated in the murder of Indigenous communities—I imagined them engaging in relatable activities such as sitting around a fire, eating biltong and recounting stories in a language I could possibly understand (Adhikari, 2014: 89). This, and my acknowledgement

that settler colonialism is a structure, prompted a shift in my perception of the culture and context I was raised in. It shifted because the familiarity of that scene made me question how far-reaching and entrenched our more violent history was and how connected that was to the parts of myself, and my community, that I truly love. This might seem obvious to some or silly to others to question these far-reaching connections, but it felt like an important starting point.

Having already accounted for some of my memories at the beginning of the introduction, I will not repeat the autoethnography here. However, I still felt it pertinent to mention myself in this chapter and as one of the settlers that are considered in this thesis. Not because I am proud to be a settler or count myself amongst them out of some virtuous “good white” sentiment or guilt. Rather, I add it here because it continues to feel as if I am part of a societal group that believes they know what is best for South Africa. Even if that vision comes at the expense of people and different ways of being. A societal group that feels like it does not want to be changed by this land unless it is on our terms.

While I draw connections between my experiences and those of early settlers, it is crucial to emphasise that I am not asserting a perfect correlation or claiming that my culture is a direct, unchanged reflection of theirs. Rather, I am open to exploring the historical impacts and continuities that may exist, while also acknowledging the significant changes, adaptations, and diversifications

that could have occurred over time. This critical approach allows for a nuanced examination of settler colonial structures.

5.7 Conclusion

Having provided an overview of the methods used in this study and a brief overview of the accounts I drew upon; I now move on to offer my findings and discussion chapter.

Chapter Six: Findings & Discussion

6.1 Introduction

During the literature review, several trends emerged. Two of which are relevant here. Firstly, there is a prevalent tendency towards the white victim and black perpetrator binary as an essential parameter within what is deemed a farm attack. Secondly, there is a trend within the literature to engage with history to explain why farm attacks are happening. However, this literature frequently depicts the violence endured by Black South Africans solely as a means to rationalise why Black individuals are often portrayed as the primary perpetrators of farm attacks.

However, when viewed through the lens of Settler Colonial Theory (SCT), as examined in Chapter 3, these patterns take on a troubling dimension, appearing to exploit violence that has victimised Indigenous communities in South Africa to portray them as the aggressors. To disrupt these trends, a sustained focus on the actions and the perceptions of settlers is preferred over ready assumptions about who the actual victims or perpetrators of farm attacks are.

As stated in the previous chapter, six settler accounts were included in this thesis. Five of which were microhistories that occurred before the 1800s and my autoethnography. They were chosen because all of them were either

perceived to be victims of farm attacks to some extent; they were fearful of the possibility of a farm attack, or they were in the business of trying to curb supposed farm attacks. It is also this list of criteria, even when time sets these cases apart, that gives me the ability to compare them.

This chapter presents several findings, categorised into two groups for clarity. These categories represent an overarching theme within their findings, namely settler accumulation and settler security. The category of settler accumulation is defined by material accumulation and ontological dispossession. On the other hand, the category of settler security consists of the following findings: the heightened importance of settler security; proactive and reactive security measures; how protection for indigenous people is often perceived as an attack on the settler; and settler extinction fantasies. By categorising the findings, we can examine them individually within their categories while also highlighting the complex relationship between the two overarching categories.

Finally, upon reflecting on the six settler accounts in the previous chapter, this chapter sets out to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategic use of perceived threats by settlers and its potential implications for contemporary discussions on farm attacks in South Africa. Additionally, as I delve into the intricacies of settler colonial dynamics and farm attacks, it is important to keep the research question at the forefront of our exploration: How can an examination of historical farm attacks at the onset of South Africa's settler

colonial occupation enhance our comprehension of why contemporary farm attacks have assumed such prominence and focus? This question serves as a guide within the upcoming analysis.

These findings and the discussion that follows add to our understanding of the significance of farm attacks within the larger South African settler colonial structure.

6.2 Settler Accumulation

The first category, namely settler accumulation, is defined by two findings. That of material accumulation and ontological dispossession. Within these findings, settler accumulation, defined here as the act of taking and keeping resources by settlers, is central to both. The microhistories of the previous chapter provided some examples of violent settler accumulation and instances of Indigenous resistance. However, as remarked earlier, within the contemporary literature on farm attacks, the trend up to now was to find a direct cause and effect between the historic violence of settler accumulation and Indigenous resistance.

Without diminishing or disregarding Indigenous resistance, I think it is important to understand the inherent violence within settler accumulation, rather than using it as the starting point to understand Indigenous resistance

and whatever violence that entails. The goal is to prevent settlers from deflecting responsibility by pointing to Indigenous resistance. By centring the settlers, their actions, and their perceptions – I also aim to centre settler violence so that false equivalences or minimisation of rightful resistance of Indigenous people can be avoided. Where there is a relationship between accumulation and resistance, the complexity of this relationship is unpacked rather than just accepted as a story of direct correlation.

In this category I look at the central role settler accumulation plays within the settler colony, and examples of how it was embodied within the six settler stories and their circumstances. The logic of accumulation has been discussed by numerous theorists who examine settler colonialism. A more in-depth understanding of their work can be found within the discussion on the theoretical framework of Settler Colonialism in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, because acknowledgement of this logic is crucial to this chapter, I will briefly revisit it now. Built on Marxist thought, the logic of accumulation mostly focuses on the material accumulation within settler colonies. As Englert (2020) argues it is the centrality of accumulation by dispossession that most clearly characterises the settler colonial condition.

However, the data I collected within this thesis has also forced me to consider not just the accumulation of material wealth (i.e. that of land, cattle, and people) that occurred in these microhistories but also to reflect upon the

ontological dispossession (i.e. undermining beliefs, norms, and values) within the settler colonial context. Before delving further into the implications of this discovery, it is essential to unpack the material accumulation incurred through dispossession in the Cape settlement.

6.2.1 Material Accumulation in the Cape

This thesis has found that material accumulation plays a role in most of the settler accounts seen in the previous chapter and can be said to play a huge role within settler society, often at the expense of others. As stated earlier, Englert (2020) identified how this happens through the logic of accumulation by dispossession. This logic is often present within the settler group since wealth was acquired and maintained at the expense of other settlers. Estienne Barbier was initially arrested because he called out the corruption within the VOC, particularly how higher-ranking officials took advantage of their station at the expense of those who held a lower rank (Penn, 1999: 111). Additionally, in the letter he nailed to the church door, he complained about the price of loan farms and the lack of support the VOC was giving in regard to supporting farmers who are trying to start farming (Penn, 1999: 115).

This observation aligns with Englert's argument that within the logic of accumulation by dispossession, the settler working class is both exploited by

settler bosses and complicit in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Englert (2020: 1658) continues by stating that "…class struggle within a settler society has a dual character: it is waged over the distribution of wealth extracted from their labour as well as over the colonial booty". This exploitative nature within settler societies, often exacerbated how working-class settlers treated indigenous populations. As much as Barbier complains about the VOC, he is just as vocal about their supposed protection and preference for Indigenous populations which he sees as coming at the expense of settlers (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29).

A vicious cycle gets introduced, where for the settler working-class dispossessing others becomes the means by which they can make themselves less vulnerable through the acquisition of material wealth. Gerrit Cloete, chronologically our first microhistory and arguably one of the first victims of a "farm attack" in 1702, exemplifies this (Böeseken, 1961: 380-381). However, Cloete was also a hunter. A practice that some settlers used for a variety of reasons, ranging from sport to being a vital part of wealth creation. Nevertheless, this practice took place by taking advantage of the world which surrounded them. Hunting was permitted at a fee by the VOC, these hunting licences allowed settlers to venture beyond the established frontier in search of game. According to van der Merwe (1938: 43), by the 1670s, loading up your wagons and going had become a way for settlers to maintain their families and

lifestyles. However, hunting activities were occasionally disrupted. For instance, in 1673, two Dutch hippopotamus hunters were killed by Gonnema, the leader of Cochoqua Khoekhoe. Settlers were warned off from hunting until 1677 when a “steady peace” had been declared (van der Merwe, 1938: 43; Böeseken, 1961: 319-320).

Moreover, the popularity of hunting introduced its own set of obstacles since the practice dispossessed nature in an unsustainable way. It did not take long for hunting big game to become a challenge, requiring settlers to travel further inland to be able to hunt successfully. By 1686 the hippopotamuses were so rare around the Cape that settler hunters were reported to have to travel days before spotting them, some even travelling as far as the Olifants River (Van der Merwe, 1938: 44).

Despite Cloete probably being aware of the dangers of going hunting and the decreasing likelihood of finding a hippopotamus to kill, Cloete set out with a group of settlers to hunt for them sometime before 1686 (Moodie, 1838: 413). Their venture, however, was not successful in yielding any hippopotamuses. Instead, they returned with thirty oxen and cattle which they reportedly captured from the Ubiqua people (Moodie, 1838: 413). The settler party informed the VOC officials that the cattle were captured because the Ubiqua had attacked them while they were hunting hippopotamuses. The free burgers described the Indigenous people they encountered as “…thievish, treacherous,

and murderous" (Moodie, 1838: 413). Of this livestock twenty were requested as compensation by the settler hunting party, citing valiant acts against the Ubiqua people who were again described as 'murderers and thieves' who were known for their supposed aggressive behaviour in the years prior to the incident (Moodie, 1838: 414).

The fate of the Ubiqua Khoekhoe, who supposedly threatened Gerrit Cloete and his party, remains uncertain as I found no further accounts of the actual interaction within the archival resources. Nevertheless, it is plausible to assume that they may have suffered fatal consequences, which allowed the settlers to lay claim to the cattle. None of Cloete's party were hurt, or at least no evidence of injuries was found in the archives. All we have are the accounts of the settler party, who believed that the aggressive behaviour reported as being displayed to Cloete and his party warranted the use of force. If we had to take the archives at face value, we would have to trust that it was indeed the fault of the Ubiqua and their aggressive behaviour.

A different interpretation allows us to question whether it was rather the fact that Cloete and his party had failed in their mission to hunt any hippopotamuses, which then had made the bounty of the Ubiqua cattle all the more appealing. Making Cloete's story a prime example of accumulation by dispossession. However, even if they had succeeded in finding game to hunt, the logic of accumulation through dispossession is present in hunting itself.

The impact of settler accumulation through dispossession within hunting affects both the natural environment and local communities who are, materially and ontologically, dependent on it. As previously observed, the introduction of settler hunting practices had an almost immediate and adverse effect on wildlife after the arrival of the settlers in the Cape. According to Mohammed Adhikari (2014: 36), it was not simply because of the popularity of hunting but also because of the extremity of the practice. The ability to preserve and sell meat, in the form of biltong, played a role in driving over-exploitation, resulting in the decimation of entire herds of game to meet demand (Adhikari, 2014: 36). While settlers found an opportunity in the destructiveness of their behaviour, particularly in terms of sustenance and profit, it was a different story for Indigenous communities in the Cape and surrounding areas. For communities such as the San, the destruction was an attack on more than their means of subsistence but also on their spirituality, since species such as the eland were central to the belief systems of the San (Adhikari, 2014: 37). While the consequences of settler hunting practices on both the environment and indigenous communities is evident in the archives, the extreme weight of this onslaught is not acknowledged.

Thus, settlers accumulate material wealth without seriously regarding the negative effects their accumulation would have. Additionally, this accumulation is dependent on dispossession. Other examples can be found in the previous

chapter. The stories of Jacobus Overny and Jacobus van der Heijden, the second and third settlers on our list, showcase this as well. Both can be linked to expeditions that violently dispossessed Indigenous populations of their cattle through a logic of accumulation.

These microhistories also contain instances where these settlers aimed to protect and maintain the material accumulation which they had acquired. In two of the microhistories, those of Gerrit Cloete and Jacobus van der Heijden, their posts were attacked after which they both instigated commandos (Böeseken, 1961: 380-381; De Wet, 1964: 329-330). These commandos were often led by individuals like van Jaarsveld, the fifth settler microhistory accounted in the previous chapter, with the aim of finding and punishing the perpetrators of the attacks, as well as collecting any of the livestock that were stolen.

When it comes to my own childhood on the farm, I can now reflect on the central role maintaining and accumulating material accumulation played in my childhood. I remember the pervasive anxiety around wealth. Constant suggestions to sell the land to mining companies from certain family members, fuelled by a perceived scarcity, contrasted sharply with the almost religious reverence with which the farm was treated. This created a narrative of sentimental attachment and financial entitlement, used to justify the fierce possessiveness of the land.

Nevertheless, the logic of accumulation by dispossession remains present since it maintains itself at the expense of others. With the heightened awareness of our safety, any trespasser, particularly Black individuals, was viewed as a threat to that safety. However, it wasn't just about our safety; it also encompassed the preservation of accumulated wealth and the fear of any potential loss. This culminated in a horrifying incident where a family member attempted to assault two Black children who he deemed to be trespassing on the farm. I remember them distinctly since I had recognised that our age difference, I was approximately eight, could not have been big. While I cannot claim to articulate the precise sentiments that motivated my family member's actions. Potentially, this can be explained by the racism harboured by said family member. Nevertheless, I believe my family members had to make those children feel unsafe on the land, since to some extent there was a belief present that they posed a threat to our safety as well as the material we had accumulated. Objectively, those children posed no real danger to our safety or any substantial material that had been accumulated. But even the possibility that they could do so seemingly warranted enough vigilance to take action.

While the microhistories and my autoethnography provided ample evidence of a logic of material accumulation by dispossession driving the actions of individuals, they also highlight the dispossession of indigenous ideas, values, and ways of life – as will be seen in the next finding.

6.2.2 Ontological dispossession

Settler material accumulation is only one aspect of what settlers accumulate through dispossession. A way of being needs to be created or established to legitimise such behaviour and the violence it often requires. Arguably, this requires an ignorance or exclusion of indigenous ontologies. This will be understood as ontological dispossession. As we saw in the theoretical framework, settlers come to replace and rebuild. However, this is not just done materially but throughout the colonising process which involves legitimising particular ways of being over others.

In the account of Gerrit Cloete, he was able to find approval for his actions against the Ubiqua people by describing them as "...thievish, treacherous, and murderous" (Moodie, 1838: 413). This can be attributed to the biased nature of the archives themselves. It is within such instances that the archives showcase how settlers are often positioned as the arbiter of 'good' when they were not objectively so. The actions of the settlers were only perceived as a problem when it affected the agenda of the VOC. In this space, Gerrit's acts of returning from a hippopotamus hunt with thirty cattle belonging to Ubiqua can be hailed as not only legitimate but valiant (Moodie, 1838: 413).

Barbier commits similar means of ontological dispossession while trying to win sympathy for a settler cause against those in power of the VOC. Barbier draws on racist tropes of the day, stating that the "...hottentots wish to violate worthy Christian women" (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29; Penn, 2005: 64). This is done to make his case around the dangers of the VOC choosing to protect Indigenous people over Christian people. Through emphasising the Christian ontology, Barbier can undermine other ways of life.

In one of the microhistories, Jacobus van der Heijden, could give God's blessing for the settlers to start their trading exhibition which ended up being one of murder and thievery (Leibbrandt Manuscript, 1679-1760: (4) 139). Though his culpability in their final actions is questionable, the use of a divine power to bless the actions of settlers demonstrates how the religious authority has been entangled in the colonial narrative, illustrating how divine endorsement was invoked to sanctify settler actions, despite the subsequent morally dubious outcomes.

As seen above, for ontological dispossession to be successful, it requires more than undermining indigenous ways of life and being but also requires adherence to the belief that the settlers' own ontologies are more worthy. In this way, Barbier can make the argument that it is Indigenous people who should be feared since they are not Christian, even though he had joined a group of settlers who had participated in massacres and thievery against Indigenous

peoples (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29). According to Burow, Brock and Dove (2020) much of the conflict in settler colonial contexts emerges from conflicting ontologies. They indicate that “settler ontologies work to dispossess, commodify, and extract economic value from land … Indigenous ontologies of land seek to revitalise and maintain relationships of mutual obligation among humans and the other-than-human” (Burow, Brock & Dove, 2022: 59).

By dispossessing Indigenous ontologies and undermining them through the above portrayal, settlers can establish a narrative that justifies their actions and legitimates the exploitation of land for economic gain. This manipulation of religious authority and the undermining of indigenous ontologies reveals the intricate web of power dynamics at play in settler colonial contexts, where the imposition of one worldview over another becomes a tool for justifying acts of violence, dispossession, and economic exploitation.

In the end, there is a vicious relationship between the ontological dispossession of indigenous populations and settler material accumulation. Each requires and validates the other.

I can recognize this relationship through my early childhood memories. I recall the farm as a space that was often viewed in a deeply sentimental manner. For instance, I affectionately referred to my grandparents as "Ouma Plaas" and "Oupa Plaas," which translates to "grandmother farm" and "grandfather farm"

respectively. Their identity was, at least to me, tied to that of space. Nevertheless, they were owners of that space. According, to my recollection of their sentiments, it was the fact that they had bought the farm as a commodity which was to their reasoning, why the farm could not be expropriated. Additionally, it is this claim to the land that allows for a swift punishment for someone who tries to undermine it. Something as innocuous as walking over a field is an act of aggression for a particular body. However, this ownership can only be legitimate if a certain way of life, or ontology, is being valued over another.

These justifications for ownership and the ability to punish, echo the historic tactics used by settlers to try and establish dominance over indigenous populations. However, arguably, now it is there to maintain that dominance.

6.3 Settler Security

The second category is namely, settler security. This category is defined by four findings including, the heightened importance of setter security; proactive and reactive security measures; any protection for indigenous people being viewed as an attack on the settler; and settler extinction fantasies.

Due to the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis, namely settler colonial theory, it is imperative to analyse security measures and discourses

within settler colonies. Especially when considering the amount of violence Indigenous communities have been exposed to in the name of security. Security within settler colonies often prioritises the settler population and is better understood as settler security.

Similarly, as seen within the literature review, the issue of security is a crucial point of debate when it comes to farm attacks. Often those who are issue-focused scholars, investigating farm attacks themselves, recommend more security measures as a means to deal with farm attacks.

Weighing historic insights around security with sentiments of security in contemporary farm attacks is what first drew me to understand the issue differently. I found familiarity between my own experiences and certain early settler colonial accounts. Without reiterating the introduction, I briefly summarize it here: the familiarity arose from my recollections of my grandfather sleeping with a gun next to his bed in the early 2000s, echoing instances of farmers doing the same in the *Land van Waveren* during the early 18th century. If one takes seriously the claim that settler colonialism is a structure and not an event, the comparison between my own experiences and those of the settlers at the beginning of the Cape settlement becomes an interesting vantage point to critically understand the issue of security and farm attacks.

The four findings discussed in this section were identified with regards to the previous chapter and the six settler accounts.

6.3.1 The Heightened Importance of Settler Safety

When it comes to issues of settler security, settler safety concerns are taken very seriously. Especially, if the threat came from indigenous or exogenous others. Instances where settler safety were threatened often triggered a defensive response. For example, in 1712 Jacobus Overny started a rumour amongst his neighbours that 5000 members of the Great Namaqua people were assembling on the Olifants River, readying for an attack against the VOC and the farmers in the region (Leibbrandt Manuscripts, 1709-1732: (18); Penn 2005: 48). This impending attack was taken very seriously to the extent that the VOC gathered a force of 185 men to search for this threat (Leibbrandt Manuscripts, 1709-1732: (18); Penn 2005: 48). However, there was no great gathering. It was ruled that Overny had instigated the rumours because he feared retribution after having stolen cattle from Indigenous communities (Penn, 2005: 48).

With the spread of the Cape settlement, the institution of the commando became a big part of keeping settler communities secure. Both Gerrit Cloete and Jacobus van der Heijden, had their posts attacked and their cattle stolen

(Böeseken, 1961: 380-381; De Wet, 1964: 329-330). After these attacks, they called upon commandos to track down and punish those indigenous groups that were deemed guilty of the attacks. In the end, whatever the reasons for the attacks were, they mattered very little to the settlers. What matters is simply stopping them, as we will see in the next finding.

While growing up, my family were not involved in any official commando groups that I was aware of.[7] However, along with other farmers in the area, my family ran patrols at night. Equipped with a bakkie, some flashlights, a gun, and the dogs. It remained clear that an attack was always imminent and that a security structure needed to be present to combat it.

In the end, it is settler security that mattered and whether the Indigenous person was perceived as a threat. Whether the Indigenous person is actually presenting a threat does not really matter since by claiming self-defence the settler can defend their actions. For instance, Gerrit Cloete was not punished for killing the Ubiqua people, since his actions had been seen to be an act of self-defence. These microhistories also showed that even though the term “farm attacks” has only recently entered our lexicon, the trepidation of becoming a victim at the hands of the Indigenous population is not. There has been and

[7] These commando groups were phased out in the early 2000’s.

continues to be an acute awareness of security within the settler community. Especially if that security is threatened by indigenous populations.

6.3.2 Proactive and Reactive Security Measures

The specific security measures taken by settlers also offer insights into their perceptions of being under attack. Arguably these security measures can be divided into proactive and reactive measures.

One of the more salient and controversial examples of proactive measures within settler security can be found within the commando system. Adriaan van Jaarsveld, who was a commando leader for part of his life, wrote to the VOC to ask for permission to attack the San in the winter (Moodie, 1838: 33). His logic was that they were more likely to make fires which the commandos could use to track them down. Additionally, the commandos' firepower would be less affected by rain (Penn, 2005: 114). His letter was sent around 1775 and came from a place of wanting to curb the material losses and fears of frontier farmers. To some extent, this can be viewed as a proactive security measure that pre-emptively assigns blame to Indigenous populations for the security concerns of settlers.

It is crucial to scrutinise the implications of these kinds of security suggestions. Arguably the request made by Van Jaarsveld is indicative of a

paranoic settler mindset which deems the taking of pre-emptive actions to be a necessary precaution. It is this anticipation of danger that drives actions fuelled by fear and suspicion.

However, to some extent, his suggestion can also be seen as an example of a reactive security measure. Especially, considering that since settler colonies came to replace and because of this indigenous populations would always be perceived as a threat. Van Jaarsveld's request echoes patterns observed in other settler colonial contexts. Deborah Bird Rose's observations, on Australian settler colonial situations, drew attention to the inherent biases ingrained in similar settler security measures. She remarked that First Nations people "...got in the way just by staying at home" (Rose, 1991: 46). Arguably, there is an assumption that Indigenous people pose a threat by simply existing with self-determination on their ancestral lands. These assumptions foster active violence against Indigenous people through the notion that their mere presence is a provocation.

Van Jaarsveld being a leader of a commando, and even the earlier example of Overny being able to create such a large response on false information, showcase the historical context of settler paranoia and how it affects issues of security. When proactive security suggestions are rooted in pre-emptive assumptions of guilt, they actively undermine any prospects for peaceful coexistence. That being said, the insights from settler colonial theory

argue that coexistence was never the goal, but rather replacement and exploitation.

Nevertheless, livestock raids meant that many settlers were vulnerable to financial ruin at any moment (Adhikari, 2021: 125). As seen in the finding on material accumulation, settler society is dependent on the accumulation or maintenance of material wealth. Therefore, the reactionary security measures were a response to what was perceived as an immediate threat to the material accumulation of the settlers, such as Van Jaarsveld, Cloete and van der Heijden.

However, the more proactive aspects of these measures within settler safety should also be recognised as opportunities these settlers took to gain more opportunities for material wealth and accumulation through dispossession. Arguably, it is not enough to see Van Jaarsveld's proactive murder of the San as a supposed attempt at protecting farmers from attack. It must be recognised that these tactics also opened the possibility for the Indigenous population to be indiscriminately killed. This could have ultimately ensured that there were fewer Indigenous people with a claim to the land or resistance to occupation.

To some extent, there are parallels and differences between these insights and my experiences growing up. As stated in the previous section, security patrols were a part of the norm. There was always the acute danger that

my family would seriously harm strangers they encountered on these patrols. Especially, if that person was Black, wherein the assumption would be that they posed a threat to our security, even if they did not. As with the example of the two children. However, by emphasising farm attacks and the threat they supposedly pose to settler security, there is the possibility that we are continually looking for justification to enact violence on Indigenous bodies and to continue our hold on historic material wealth.

6.3.3 Indigenous Security is an Attack on the Settler.

Any indigenous security measures were interpreted as a direct attack on settlers. An example of this can be found in the microhistory of Estienne Barbier. In this instance, the VOC punished settlers by confiscating cattle that they had stolen after their thievery included murdering numerous Indigenous peoples (Penn, 1999: 111; De Wet, 1981: 257-258). The punishment was met out not so much for the transgressions of settlers massacring Indigenous peoples and stealing their cattle, but because it instigated great social unrest on the frontiers since it instigated large Indigenous resistance (Penn, 1999: 111; De Wet, 1981: 257-258).

However, Barbier played a big role in helping settlers express their discontent with this punishment. In one of the letters, he wrote that he

lamented the actions of the Governor and other high-ranking officials in the Cape. Blaming them for the increase in Indigenous attacks on settlers, since they allowed Indigenous groups to believe they had more rights than the settlers (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29). The letter continued, stating that the officials were robbing honest settler farmers so that they could give the cattle to their "hottentot cronies" (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29).

In another meeting, Barbier spoke of the Stellenbosch landdrost as follows: "You damned Piet Lourensz, you scoundrel. Why did you order my livestock to be stolen. My house to be burnt, my wife to be violated, with your damned brothers the Hottentots; and you do not give back all of my livestock; why have you allowed me to be robbed?" (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29). Thus, to Barbier, any attempts to prioritise indigenous security was a direct attack on settlers.

This finding is a pertinent insight that can be related to how farm attacks are viewed today by the settler community. Within my own family, there was the expectation that the post-apartheid government would support Black people and their claim to land. The very fact that there is the potential for the post-apartheid government to take the side of Indigenous communities and further their land claims, had been enough to see it as an attack on settler security itself.

6.3.4 Settler Extinction Fantasies

With settler security being such a big topic within settler communities, it should not be surprising that there are instances where settlers are obsessed with their own ends. Arguably, this expectation or extinction fantasy in return also plays an important part in sustaining this need for security over the safety of others.

A trace of this expectation can be found in the following examples. After Gerrit Cloete's post was attacked, it was reported that the attackers also threatened that they would impoverish all the farmers and then further attack the VOC's post (Penn, 2005: 33; Böeseken,1961: 381). A threat that was followed by the Company ordering a commando who was tasked with tracking down the perpetrators and killing anyone who resisted.

Another example is that of Estienne Barbier, who suggests that the VOC punishing settlers for their actions against Indigenous people has given the latter party permission to attack farmers, burn their houses, and assault settler women (Pheiffer, 1980: 26-29). Additionally, I would also argue that the extreme military response to Jacobus Overny's warnings that there was an imminent Indigenous revolt speaks to the real concern the society around him had for their security.

This finding is an interesting insight into the contemporary understanding of farm attacks. Especially in those instances where it is referred to as a white genocide. As we have seen earlier, critical statistics on the subject are hard to determine (Wilkinson, 2017). However, as a child on the farm, there were already expectations that we would be targeted because we were white. A racial identity that we could lay claim to through our positionality as settlers.

Additionally, I have had numerous interactions within my community that continue this view of farm attacks today. With very little proof to back up this claim, this finding offers another explanation as to why we remain obsessed with self-prophesising our own end. Dalley (2018: 30) discusses the intricate interplay between settlers contemplating their demise and seeking methods of symbolic preservation, which he describes as "a technique for delaying the end, for living on in the contemplation of death." This sheds light on settlers' complex relationship with their imagined future. Through this the settlers…

> "…make their own redemption, an extinction that is an act of self-preservation, deferring the hard reckoning we know we lack the courage to face, and avoid making the real changes – material, political, constitutional, practical – that might alter our condition of being and set us on the path to a real home in the world. We dream instead of ends, imagining worlds without us, thinking of what it would be like not to be. But at every moment we know

> that that the dream is nothing but a dream; we know we will awake and still be here, unchanged, unchanging, living on, forever." (Dalley, 2018: 44)

Essentially, these settler-colonial narratives of extinction begin as contemplations of potential endings but have evolved into mechanisms for settlers to persist, while remaining unchanged. It offers us a future where we do not have to interrogate the settler colonial structure that has had such a massive impact on who we are as individuals and as a community.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This study sheds light on the relationship between the larger settler colonial structure and the contemporary understanding of farm attacks.

The first category settler accumulation presented two main findings on material accumulation and ontological dispossession. These findings drew on the microhistories and my autoethnography to understand their historic significance and their continued relevance today. Throughout these accounts, there was evidence that the desire for material accumulation, usually land and cattle, was a driving force in the violence between the settlers and indigenous people. This material accumulation was made possible through ontological dispossession. Whereby the ideas about land and private ownership held by the settlers came to dominate, often using force and the imposition of legislation.

The next category of findings, settler security, becomes especially interesting in connection to the previous category since it showcased the logic of accumulation through dispossession within the archives and its relevance within our current context. However, the section on settler accumulation purposefully avoided using the settler logic of accumulation through dispossession as the stepping stone to understanding any opposition or resistance to this logic. In the end, the focus remains on that accumulation process and the violence that surrounds it. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that this chapter on its

own can end up being problematic. The current framing, like other histories that have tried to understand the violence of settler colonial accumulation, can rob Indigenous people of their agency. Painting them as a passive victimised population who would have inevitably lost to the all-powerful settler colonial structure (Zimmerer, 2008: 331). However, by focusing on the settler, insights can be gathered into how settlers perceive threats and what potential implications this has for contemporary discussions on farm attacks in South Africa.

Thus, in tackling the issue of security, it does become important to acknowledge accumulation by dispossession. However, the findings showcase where there is a relationship, the complexity of this relationship rather than the direct correlation between them. This is an important distinction from the current literature on farm attacks and addresses the gap there.

Another limitation is the time gap between the five microhistories and my autoethnography. Much has transpired between the era of our last settler, Van Jaarsveld, just before the 1800s, and my own life, which began in the 2000s. The validity of this study could have been enhanced by either comparing timeframes that are closer together or by conducting a comprehensive examination of South Africa's entire history. However, for this study, that would have most likely meant comparing the apartheid period with my autoethnography. Since this study has aimed to bring to light the larger structure, I thought it better to focus

on the beginning of the settler period. Nonetheless, while a larger study which focuses on settler experiences with rural violence across South Africa's settler history would be illuminating, it would not be practical for a master's thesis. This remains an opportunity for further study.

Nevertheless, this thesis investigated the intricacies of settler colonial dynamics and farm attacks. The exploration of historical farm attacks allowed me to critically unpack the complexities within these instances. With these findings, I was able to find unique insights into the possible reasons why contemporary farm attacks have garnered such prominence and focus within the settler community.

This thesis contributes to the literature on farm attacks by emphasising self-reflection regarding larger structures at work. This is made possible by a multiple-methods approach which combines microhistory, autoethnography and comparative analysis. While the theoretical framework of settler colonial theory provided a guiding structure in the assumptions, it was through the analysis of the six settler accounts I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the theory itself.

In conclusion, this thesis advances our understanding of how settlers have accumulated wealth and how notions around security have been used within the colonisation process, offering valuable insights into how the contemporary

settler colonial structure tries to maintain itself and how contemporary settlers can remain complicit.

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