

# THESIS

## WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS IN COLORADO: UNDERSTANDINGS OF APARTHEID AND POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

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## **ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

### **WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS IN COLORADO: UNDERSTANDINGS OF APARTHEID AND POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY**

This pilot study focuses on the experiences of two white ethnic groups within the South African immigrant population, Afrikaners and English-speakers, who came of age during two different phases of apartheid, between 1958-1978 and 1979-1993. Race, ethnicity, generational standing, class, and nationalism remain important fault lines, so my analysis is structured to differentiate between the entrenchment and reproduction of these identities during apartheid and the disruption of these in the post-apartheid era and in people's migration to the U.S. Using a phenomenological approach, I investigate three issues: experiences of being white, the culture of apartheid, and immigration. Among the themes that emerged from my interviews are the "schizophrenic" nature of life under apartheid; guilt and responsibility; questions of truth, propaganda, and brainwashing; "Afropessimism" and racism; what it meant to be white under apartheid versus the present 'box of being white'; the 'push factors' of affirmative action and crime; and perspectives of race and racism in the U.S. versus South Africa.

I also examine whiteness in these two white ethnic groups and as perceived by black and Colored (mixed race) informants. My research addresses the question of whether or not essential characteristics of whiteness exist, cross-culturally, based on a history of whiteness-as-domination. By applying Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory to whiteness studies, I attempt to account for the complexities of whiteness in this

population. Patterns within this population show how historical ideologies of whiteness-as-domination shaped the *habitus* of whites during apartheid. Yet, important exceptions to these patterns point to how people's *habitus* can change, moving whites out of the 'box of being white,' which remains a significant push factor for emigration out of post-apartheid South Africa.

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## CHRONOLOGY

1652	First European settlement at Cape of Good Hope by Dutch East India Company
1652-1795	Slaves imported from Indonesia, India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Madagascar (Malagasy), and Mozambique
1795	Initial British occupation of the Cape
1807	Abolition of the slave trade
1814	British gain sovereignty over the Cape
1834-38	Cape colonial slaves are freed
1836-54	Great Trek made by Boers into the interior
1838	Battle of Blood River in which Boers defeat the Zulus Boers form the Republic of Natalia
1843	Republic of Natalia annexed by the British
1852	Transvaal recognized as independent from the British, under Boer leadership
1854	Orange Free State gains independence from the British, controlled by Boers
1867	Diamonds discovered in Kimberly
1870	Orange Free State sells Kimberly to British
1877	Transvaal annexed by the British
1880	First Boer War or Anglo-Boer War between British and Boers; Boers win
1881	Independence is restored to Transvaal under control of the Boers
1884	Gold discovered in Transvaal
1899-1902	Second Anglo-Boer War; British win
1902	African Political Organization formed, a Colored political organization
1905	Territorial segregation of whites and Africans supported by South African Native Affairs Commission
1910	Union of South Africa founded
1911	Mine and Works Act legalizes industrial color bar
1912	South African Native National Congress created (later became the African National Congress (ANC))
1913	Native Land Act limits land ownership by Africans to the reserves or 7% of the land base
1914-19	South Africa participates in WWI as part of British Empire
1917	Anglo-American corporation founded
1921	Communist Party of South Africa founded
1923	South African Indian Congress (SAIC) created
1924	Jan Smut's South African party defeated by Hertzog's Nationalist-Labour party
1926	Colour Bar Act ensures a monopoly on skilled jobs for white mineworkers

- 1930 White women given the vote
- 1933 Coalition government under unified leadership of Hertzog's Nationalist Party and Smut's South Africa Party
- 1934 D.F. Malan forms the Purified Nationalist Party, representing Afrikaner opponents of Hertzog's coalition policy  
United Party created by supporters of Hertzog and Smuts
- 1939-45 South Africa participates in WWII on the side of the Allies
- 1946 70,000-10,000 African gold-mine workers strike for higher wages; forced back to the mines by troops
- 1948 Afrikaner Nationalist Party defeats the United Party; Grand Apartheid begins
- 1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act
- 1950 Population Registration Act, everyone classified by race  
Group Areas Act, forced residential segregation  
Suppression of Communism Act
- 1951 Bantu Authorities Act, put in place a system of government for African reserves
- 1952 Interracial Defiance Campaign against apartheid
- 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act
- 1954 Natives Resettlement Act
- 1955 Congress of the People adopts the Freedom Charter
- 1958-66 Verwoerd serves as Prime Minister
- 1959 Pan African Congress (PAC) formed
- 1960 Representation in Parliament by whites of Colored and Africans terminated  
Sharpeville massacre, 67 killed  
ANC and PAC banned
- 1961 South Africa removed from the Commonwealth, becomes a republic
- 1964 Nelson Mandela and other ANC and PAC leaders sentenced to life imprisonment
- 1966-68 Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland become independent states
- 1975-76 Mozambique and Angola become independent states
- 1976 Soweto riots; country-wide rioting; 575 dead
- 1976-81 Independence granted to these homelands: Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and the Ciskei; these are not recognized abroad
- 1977 Mandatory embargo on the supply of arms to South Africa; put in place by the U.N. security Council
- 1978-84 P.W. Botha serves as prime minister
- 1980 Zimbabwe becomes independent (formerly Rhodesia)
- 1981-88 South African forces invade Angola and make raids into Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Zambia  
ANC military wing makes terrorist attacks
- 1983 United Democratic Front (UDF) formed
- 1984 Tricameral parliament formed, giving Coloreds and Indians/Asians participation in central government
- 1986 Pass laws repealed

- Nationwide state of emergency
- Comprehensive anti-apartheid act passed by U.S. Congress over President Reagan's veto
- 1987 Three-week strike by 250,000 African mine workers
- 1988 South Africa begins withdrawal from Angola; cooperates with U.N. in securing independence for Namibia
- 1989 F.W. de Klerk succeeds Botha as leader of the Nationalist Party  
General election: de Klerk succeeds Botha as state president
- 1990 Mandela and other political prisoners released  
Namibia becomes an independent state
- 1990-91 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, Group Areas Act, Population Registration Act, and Separate Amenities Act repealed  
Political organizations unbanned  
State of emergency revoked  
De Klerk and Mandela negotiate new constitution
- 1994 Nelson Mandela (ANC) becomes first black democratically elected president
- 1999 Thabo Mbeki (ANC) is voted in as president
- 2004 Mbeki (ANC) wins presidency again

Sources: Fredrickson 1981; Thompson 1990; Crapanzano 1986

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

South Africa has featured prominently in the international media since apartheid was dismantled ten years ago and the government transitioned to a multi-racial democracy. Yet, international attention and scholarship has largely ignored the 'brain drain' that has occurred, which some say threatens South Africa's economy and welfare. The number of skilled workers who have emigrated remains difficult to deduce because of inadequate tracking of these migrants. However, with the understanding that the statistics from the government underreport actual emigration by a factor of three or more (Kaplan et al. nd), then it is possible to estimate that approximately 140,000 skilled workers migrated out of the country between 1994 and 2003, equivalent to about ten percent of the 1.6 million skilled workers who live in South Africa (Mattes and Richmond 2000).

While this emigration is a concern within South Africa, I found only two studies on this population by researchers in key destination countries. One study by Eric Louw and Gary Mersham (2001) focused on South African emigration to Australia, the second most popular relocation country after the UK. Another study, by David Baxter, graduate student in Geography at the University of Utah, examines how the South African diaspora facilitate community through electronic networks (Baxter nd). The U.S. is the third-ranking destination country.

The other matter of concern about the 'brain drain' has been these emigrants' race and ethnicity. Since the vast majority of recent immigrants from South Africa are white,

this movement has been called, not without contention, ‘white flight’. Unlike anti-apartheid émigrés who left between 1948 and the 1980s, these emigrants are visible in the public eye for how their emigration has been considered to harm South Africa economically. Similar to how the phrase is used in the U.S., these whites are seen as having abandoned their country for a safe ‘suburb’, which in this case are the white, western countries to which they immigrate. Many within the country pressure these emigrants to contribute their human resources to South Africa because they hold these skilled émigrés responsible for not investing their human capital in the country, now that public opinion largely agrees that their skills, capital, and privileges were acquired under an exploitive system. In post-apartheid society, a population that enjoyed privilege and power and access during apartheid is now ‘marked’ as white, privileged, and middle- and upper-class or, in other words, beneficiaries of apartheid.

Perhaps more complex than the issue of race, though, is the matter of ethnicity. In noting this emigration as a ‘white flight’, a judgment lies just beneath the surface as to *why* these individuals are leaving the country. The implication is that at least a fair number of these emigrants are racists, i.e., Afrikaners, who do not want to stay in South Africa now that it is under black rule. One of my Jewish/Colored informants echoed this assumption about Afrikaners who move to the U.S., arguing that she would assume they left South Africa because they did not want to live in a country with a black president. Louw and Mersham (2001) distinguish what they call ‘the fifth wave’ of South African migration by pointing out that this is the first time significant numbers of Afrikaners are migrating, whereas in the past South African immigrants were mainly English-speakers and black activists. The fact that Afrikaners are leaving in higher numbers than ever

before seems to prove the hypothesis that at least some of these emigrants are ‘racists’, because Afrikaners were the main white ethnic group that supported the Nationalist Party, the party that installed apartheid. In contrast, English-speakers were largely liberal or progressives who opposed apartheid.

Yet, Louw and Mersham (2001) also found English-speakers, Indians, and Coloreds migrating as well. The authors point out that these individuals also represent a wider range of class positions and political orientations than South African immigrants to Australia in the past, who were generally wealthy liberals. In this fifth wave, they found middle and working class progressives and conservatives as well<sup>1</sup>.

My research addresses these questions of who is emigrating, and why, by focusing on members of this immigrant population in the U.S. who live in Colorado. The goal of this pilot study is to examine experiences of these two white ethnic groups within this population, English-speakers and Afrikaners, who came of age during two different phases of apartheid. By employing a phenomenological approach, I attempt a broad analysis to begin investigating three topics: experiences of being white, the culture of apartheid, and migration. Race, ethnicity, generational standing, class, and nationalism remain important fault lines, so my analysis is structured to differentiate between the formation and reproduction of these identities among whites who grew up in South Africa and the disruption of these in the post-apartheid era and in people’s migration to the U.S. This qualitative pilot study also examines the ‘push factors’ that brought these individuals to emigrate, the role these immigrants feel they have, or do not have, in South Africa, and their perspectives of race and racism in the U.S. in contrast to South Africa.

In my research, I discovered that these immigrants have a dual experience in the U.S. On the one hand, as white, middle- and upper-class whites who are highly skilled and who know English, they can blend into the dominant culture with much more ease than most immigrants. On the other hand, they encounter Americans who assume that all white South Africans are “big racists.” White informants, both English-speaking and Afrikaner, told me they have been shunned by African Americans, sought out by bigots who want to share a racist joke, and asked the question, “How many blacks have you killed?” They explained that most Americans do not understand that some whites were involved in the anti-apartheid struggle and assume that white South African = Afrikaner = racist, right-wing extremist. Despite being targeted in this manner, however, these informants still possess the skills and financial resources required for successful immigration.

The issue of whether or not this is a flight of ‘whites’ or skilled workers in general hits a nerve because these discussions center around whiteness as symbolic of privileges wrongly gained under apartheid—a system that was overtly racist. In South Africa, being white became a highly politicized identity because apartheid was a structure that gave enormous power and privilege to whites as a racial group. As a result, in the post-apartheid context, there are those who want to pin blame on whites who were not only part of the system but who benefited from it. Out of this polarization of guilty/innocent, and victim/oppressor, have come attempts to define what racism is and who is racist.

Instead of following suit to find out whether or not these white informants are racist and “to blame,” I have employed an anthropological perspective to understand their point of view, their concerns, and their understandings of apartheid and post-apartheid

society and their migration to the U.S. With these perspectives as my starting point, my analysis takes a deeper look at the culture of apartheid that shaped white society and the individuals who grew up within it.

My resistance to looking for who is “to blame” lies in the fact that despite legislative, political, and social changes in the U.S., racism remains woven into American society. Changes that might alleviate racial inequality are challenged on a number of levels by many whites in this country. Why is this resistance so persistent? What underlies attacks on affirmative action, school busing, and welfare? In attempting to ‘get beyond racism’, what other avenues have been overlooked? How can whites move beyond the issue of guilt to transform practices that support racist structures?

In light of the political changes that have occurred in South Africa, people inside and outside of South Africa hope that racism can be transformed and its effects ameliorated. However, if the civil rights struggles in the U.S. serves as a warning, white resistance to change will persist. The analogy has limitations because whites are a numerical minority in South Africa. Yet, because the white South African minority still controls 70-80 percent of the economy, their resistance to change poses a significant challenge. Understanding the perspectives of white South Africans, particularly those that have left, remains of key importance to the goal of moving into a nonracial future in South Africa.

### **Apartheid and post-apartheid South African identities**

Apartheid in South Africa was the most extreme case of overt racial ordering any nation has ever attempted. As an extension of the segregation put in place under British colonialism, in 1948 the (Afrikaner) Nationalist Party employed social engineering,

Grand Apartheid, on a massive scale to segregate the races. The 1950 Population Registration Act required people to be registered as members of one of four racial groups. This extreme form of segregation was supported by the majority of Afrikaners in an attempt to secure the dominance of whites and defend Afrikaner culture, language, and religion.

As a result of this apartheid legacy, it is important to differentiate between skin color as a racial marker and language as a signifier of ethnicity (Louw and Mersham 2001: 304 footnote). The four racial groupings in South Africa are black (African or Bantu), white (European), Colored (mixed = Khoi, San, Dutch, Indonesian and/or black), and Indian/Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Malay, Chinese, other Asian ancestry). The major white ethnic groups are English-speaking (British descent), Afrikaners (Dutch/German), Jewish, and Portuguese. The following are black ethnic groups: Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Venda, Ndebele and Tsonga. Though these black ethnic groups have different languages, those languages all have Bantu-language origins.

Under apartheid, the formal encoding of racial identities became the basis for a whole-scale relocation program in which whites forcibly moved an estimated 2.7 million black Africans into Bantustans, or reserves (James and Lever 2001:36). In this way, the 1913 Land Act, enacted by the British, which had allocated only seven percent of the land to African ownership, finally became fully implemented during apartheid. Closer to urban areas, townships were created for Africans, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians. One million people were moved to townships to achieve this urban segregation under the Groups Areas Act of 1950 (James and Lever 2001:37).

For whites, and particularly Afrikaners, such laws as the Job Reservation Act of 1954 acted as an aggressive affirmative action program, elevating poorer Afrikaner whites to new positions within the economy, particularly in the civil sector. ‘Petty apartheid’ existed alongside Grand Apartheid laws such as these, which required segregated bathrooms, drinking fountains, post offices, beaches, and the like. These are only a few from a long list of laws that created the apartheid state led by the Nationalist Party from 1948 until 1994. (See the History chapter for more.)

Out of this history has come extensive scholarship about the nature of apartheid and the Afrikaner Nationalism that drove it. The peculiarity of such a racialized state emerging at the same time other nations in Africa were decolonizing drove researchers to ask how apartheid came to be, how it survived so long, and how it could be overturned. The majority of this work was anti-apartheid and focused on the extreme white supremacy defended by the Nationalist government. This admirable and often risky work exposed the racism of the Nationalist Party and, by extension, the Afrikaner population in South Africa. It also popularized the anti-apartheid struggle, in all its permutations throughout the apartheid era. During apartheid, the boundaries between oppressor and oppressed were more clearly defined than they are today. Most of the work from this time period reflects the more modern, racialized political struggle that existed in South Africa under apartheid.

My thesis diverges in that I attempt to address current boundaries between race, ethnicity, class, and nationalism that have been challenged and now remain more blurred than in the past. In the New South Africa, my informants tell me that a small black elite now exists while the majority of the black population remains impoverished.

Indians/Asians and Coloreds say they are still stuck in the middle—they were not white enough in the past and now they are not black enough. My informants tell me that there is a growing population of poor whites that can be seen begging on the streets. Yet, in attempting to grasp these blurred boundaries, I have tried to account for the past in a way that recognizes the origin of these inequalities.

My thesis is not a counterpoint to previous work on apartheid, but rather a model for framing this next phase of South Africa's history. In this phase, racial and ethnic differentiation merges more strongly with class and status hierarchies to blur and confuse the line between oppressor and oppressed. In particular, the political economy of South Africa has been greatly impacted by the emergence of South Africa as a democracy in the context of the current global economy. I attempt to capture some of the complexity of this phase in order to contribute to the debates on how South Africa can recover from 300 years of colonialism and racism. As a part of this goal, I am interested in the potential role of whites in that recovery.

I have divided the analysis in Chapter Five into short themes, like vignettes, which are grouped into two sections. The nine themes fall into two sections: 1) Growing up in South Africa and 2) Migration. I have done so for two reasons. As a pilot study, this format allows me to discuss a variety of subjects that arose in my interviews, all of which articulate areas for future research. Secondly, these vignettes provide a collage of snapshots rather than one overarching cause/effect or one grand theory of what motivates people or informs their view. This kind of presentation is distinguished not only in content, but also in form—to encourage a more nuanced perspective of a population that has been highly criticized by outsiders for their racism. Before discussing this research

project and my analysis any further, however, I want to place this analysis of South African immigrants within the context of South Africa and within anthropological research about immigrant populations in the U.S.

### **South African Immigrants**

*The importance of South African immigrants to South Africa.* In general, migration out of South Africa fell in the early 1990s when negotiations between de Klerk and Mandela took place, but then rose again in 1994 and 1995 after the African National Congress (ANC) won the country's first democratic elections. Numbers lowered between 1995 and 1999, but then surged again after 2000, particularly in 2003. Yet, estimates of the number of skilled South Africans abroad are disputed, owing to a lack of adequate tracking of migration out of South Africa, different ways of measuring skills, and surveys that do not differentiate between permanent and short-term migrants.

Research by Kaplan et al. (nd), from South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA)<sup>2</sup>, highlights the confusion in tracking this migration. While official Statistics South Africa (SSA) records show that 82,822 individuals migrated to the UK, US, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada between 1989 and 1997, the records in these destinations reveal that a total of 233,609 South Africans immigrated to these countries during that period.

Of great concern to those who remain in South Africa are the skills, education, and capital these migrants take with them. Compared with other countries, the percentage of emigrants who are skilled professionals is very high. SANSA research shows that between one-eighth and one-fifth of the South Africans who have tertiary education (education beyond high school) are now residing abroad (Kaplan et al. nd.).

Emigrating out of South Africa has become so popular that television programming and newspapers have ads for migration consultants who help people move out of South Africa.

The predominant race group of the skilled population is white. Researchers estimate that whites comprise 72 percent of the skilled population while blacks comprise 18 percent and Coloreds and Indians/Asians make up ten percent (Mattes and Richmond 2000). Within the skilled workforce, income disparities between blacks and whites remain. In this same study, these authors found that three-quarters of skilled blacks make less than R8000 compared with less than one quarter of skilled whites who earn less than this amount.

No reliable numbers exist, but estimates suggest that over 90 percent of emigrants are white. Because they comprise approximately ten percent of the country's population, many argue that this has been a 'white flight,' though some South African newspapers emphasize that skilled blacks are leaving too. The flight of whites is not unexpected since they have the skills, capital, and education required to make a successful transition overseas. Most whites who emigrate say they are leaving because of affirmative action, crime, opportunities for their children, a decrease in the level of services, and a decrease in the overall quality of life.

*Atypical Immigrants to the U.S.* Most recent research on immigrants to the U.S. centers around individuals from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America who are refugees, unskilled workers, those who do not speak English, and who become members of a minority racial group in the U.S. These populations have captured the attention of researchers because they make up the majority of immigrants entering the U.S. In 2003,

2220 South Africans immigrated to the U.S. out of a total immigration of 705,900 individuals (2003 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics). In 2002, the number was 3,880 and 4,100 in 2003 (Office of Immigration Statistics 2004). No firm figures exist, but approximately 72,000 South Africans live in the U.S. ([www.comehome.co.za](http://www.comehome.co.za)).

Despite the fact that South Africans make up a small portion of the immigrant population in the U.S., this population is distinct for largely being composed of whites who are also middle or upper class, speak English, and have advanced education and skills. In contrast to most other immigrants who have to learn a new language, new cultural and dress codes, and often, new work roles, these immigrants have fewer problems assimilating to U.S. society.

This horizontal movement into U.S. society symbolizes the social and economic power these immigrants have, making them able to blend into American society as easily as they have in Australia (Louw and Mersham 2001). All of these people chose to leave their home country and none of them are refugees, though many of them feel they were pushed out of South Africa. Many of my informants are similar to the early exiles from Cuba who migrated to the U.S. between 1959-1962 and built up the first Cuban diaspora in the U.S. (Grenier and Pérez 2003). When Cuba became a socialist country under Castro, they left because they were targeted as elites. Like these early Cuban immigrants, many of my informants have skills, attitudes, capital, and a skin tone that helps them acclimate to life in the U.S. One distinction from these initial and very urban Cuban immigrants is that South Africans can be found in a variety of regions, from urban to suburban to rural. Websites for South African clubs show individuals living in northern California, Chicago, Boston, Indiana, Austin, Atlanta, New York/New Jersey, and

Phoenix. David Baxter, University of Utah graduate student, found that the largest populations of South African immigrants are in California, Texas, Georgia, Florida, New York, and Massachusetts (Baxter nd).

The majority of the anthropological research about immigrants concerns individuals who become members of minority groups in the U.S.; in these studies, the aim is to understand how individuals and households navigate a climate where they are excluded from the dominant group (Heisler 2000:81). The focus is largely on how social networks serve to maintain cultural difference and impact people's incorporation into society. This is examined with regards to how identities such as nationalism, ethnicity, race, and gender are negotiated *in situ* in the host country and in migrations between the home and host countries. As a result of this work, a number of anthropologists argue that race and ethnicity should be considered in examinations of the construction of immigrant identity (Brettell 2000:115). My work addresses this need by focusing on 'whiteness' in two different ethnic groups, English-speakers and Afrikaners, within a portion of the South African immigrant population in Colorado. This focus centers on immigrants who enter into the dominant sector of U.S. society.

Anthropologists studying migration also argue that the historical construction of race is entrenched within global capitalism (Glick Schiller et al 1992b). Therefore, rather than examining this population from the view that the racial hierarchy of South Africa's apartheid was unrelated to our own informal racial hierarchy, I work from a framework that assumes a global 'racial order' (Glick Schiller et al 1992b) has informed both societies as well as the global environment within which these immigrants are moving

and living. In doing so, I assume that the whiteness of these immigrants not only has significance in South Africa itself, but also in the U.S. and globally.

### **Formulating the Research Project and Goals**

My research interest in the migration of white South Africans solidified as I found that very little scholarly work had been done on this population to understand how they perceived their own emigration, and to find out their perspectives of South Africa. Since the majority of research has been about immigrants who become part of minority groups in the U.S., I realized that an important component was missing, i.e., an understanding of how those who are white and who possess resources, education, language skills, etc. enter into U.S. society. I also was surprised by the dearth of scholarship on South African immigrants in general. Who are they? Why have they come? How do they perceive their own migration?

At the beginning, I wanted to interview equal numbers of black and white informants with a focus on how their experiences shaped their perspectives of race. However, I could not find enough black South Africans living in Colorado. In the meantime, I discovered the informal club *South Africans in Colorado (SA Colorado)*, which consists of whites and Coloreds, and meets in the Denver region two to three times a year. Therefore, the majority of my informants were those I met while attending two *braais* (barbeques) sponsored by *SA Colorado*. As a result, I changed my focus from black and white informants to two different ethnic groups, Afrikaners and English-speakers.

In my ignorance about how white South Africans are often targeted as “big racists” by Americans, I naively arrived at the first *braai* with flyers in hand that

explained my research goal as “looking at generational patterns in experiences growing up in South Africa and how these experiences inform perspectives of race.” I asked the ‘gatekeeper’ to look over the flyer and she quickly got me “sorted out”! I stuffed the flyers back in my bag and fumbled around for a way to answer her incisive question, “Are you just looking for a bunch of racists?” My heart beat strongly as I explained that no, I wanted to understand how apartheid impacted people in their daily lives, how it came to mean something and how those meanings were passed down and whether or not this differed generationally.

I took her advice and rewrote the flyer, explaining my research goal solely as investigating generational differences in experiences of growing up in South Africa. I stepped back from framing my research in terms of race for three important reasons: I would alienate people by bringing up race, which would result in an informant pool of only liberal or progressive informants rather than those who were Nationalist or more conservative; I had to carefully find out what people were invested in, what drove them to emigrate, and what shaped their feelings about South Africa now; and I found that in conversations with people, discussions about racial issues would arise without prompting on my part. Explicit talk about race was not unusual for South Africans, which was a welcome surprise for me because most white Americans avoid speaking about race out of an allegiance to colorblindness. During my interviews, I heard people’s views about race as long as I did not appear to be searching for their perspectives *and* as long as I remained neutral about my own beliefs.

My interest in looking at generational differences arose from reading Lisa Rofel’s (1999) book *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism* in which

she discusses her ethnographic research in China. She uncovered three cohorts of women that roughly parallel three different time periods and regimes in China. In terms of South African immigrants, I wanted to see if there were cohorts based on age that differed between the 'golden age' of apartheid and the final decade of apartheid in the 1980s. The historical period from 1958-1978, when my older informants came of age, was the era when Grand Apartheid solidified and whites were very removed from the experiences of people of color. In contrast, the younger generation, which came of age between 1979 and 1993, was shaped by the turbulent decade of the 1980s when civil war between the apartheid government and the black resistance movement caused national unrest. Younger informants also experienced some desegregation in the workforce and in education, so more whites, blacks, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians were work and schoolmates—unlike most of the older generation.

In her book, Rofel (1999) examined gender norms in generational groups based on when the women came of age. She found that gender ideologies were shaped by three different historical time periods in China: socialism and the Revolution in 1950, the Cultural Revolution, and the post-Mao period. The way these women thought about themselves as females led them to differentiate themselves along generational lines in their factory work lives.

In terms of South Africa, I wondered if there might be similar groupings based on different experiences of apartheid depending on when my informants came of age. What I found is that in contrast to China, differences based on race, ethnicity/tribe, political orientation, and geographical location (urban/rural) were prominent fault lines that existed *within* generations and overwhelmed people's experiences of different historical

eras. Therefore, though historical periods have shaped people's perspectives, this has not occurred smoothly among those in the same generation. Though strong generational patterns do not appear to exist, I did discover some general differences between these two generations, which I highlight in the analysis along with the racial and ethnic patterns I found.

After my interviews with 36 South Africans, I was faced with the challenge of organizing these diverse perspectives and backgrounds. I interviewed individuals who fall on very different points on the political spectrum and though most of them grew up with some level of economic security, their class was not uniform. Further, individuals came to the U.S. for a variety of reasons. Some people have been invited by U.S. companies to come to the States and serve as a business link to Africa. Others were offered jobs at hi-tech companies, mining companies, or other types of businesses. Still others have come independent of business ties in order to obtain a degree here and they plan to go back to South Africa. A few individuals told me they left during apartheid because they were staunchly anti-apartheid. Others said they felt uncomfortable staying in South Africa now that the country is run by blacks. The majority wanted to escape crime and the decreasing quality of life (for whites). Still a handful of others wish to go back, but have married Americans and, at least right now, are unable to move back. The challenge of bringing together and honoring these divergent voices led me to analyze my data according to nine significant themes within the sections on Growing up in South Africa and migration. However, a significant organizing identity for 32 of my informants was their shared experience of growing up white in apartheid South Africa.

## **Being White and Privileged**

As I progressed through the interviews, I became increasingly interested in the larger question of how white South Africans negotiated their privileged past now that South Africa is democratic. What became evident with white informants is that everyone recognized that they had privilege in the past, but everyone differed in their responses to that fact. For some, white privilege has led them to feel they are in a 'box of being white', i.e., in contrast to the past, they are seen more for their race than for who they are as individuals. They argue that they are made to feel guilty for the past, though they do not believe they had any power to change it. This kind of racism, where whites are primarily seen for their skin color, is uncomfortable, but from an outsider's view, it simply appears that the racism of the past has finally included the majority of whites.

In South Africa, these individuals face the question of how to negotiate their privileged pasts in the current society where the old racial order has been toppled. How can they negotiate the New South Africa in a way that does not defend the old privileges, disengage from the present reality, or lead them to emigrate? How can the social and economic inequalities of the past be made right? What is the role of whites in this 'making right'? In the midst of wanting race and racism to be a thing of the past, all South Africans struggle to answer the question of who is responsible for the past and how they should be held accountable. These types of knotty conundrums remain, concerning responsibility and guilt and morality. In my interviews, it was these questions that hovered silently nearby. Most informants found safety and jobs in the U.S. and a setting where they do not need to resolve these questions, but not a way out of these conundrums in their relationship to South Africa.

Recent work by social scientists, historians, filmmakers, and artists in the U.S. who have contributed to whiteness studies offers a way to address some of these questions. Whiteness studies scholars examine how whiteness as a racial category has been historically constructed and how being white carries particular meaning in specific locations and social contexts. The larger context this research falls within is that of scholarly, literary, and political writings by African Americans, Chicanos, Latinos, and Native Americans who critically examine white people and whiteness. In contrast, whiteness studies in the U.S. and Britain has been undertaken by white researchers who seek to responsibly understand themselves as whites and respond to a collective history in societies where white skin has meant privilege, domination, and greater access to social and economic capital.

As Steyn (2001b:xxxix) has argued, comparative work needs to be done to examine the “white diaspora” out of South Africa. Doing so would “throw light on racial dynamics within the center,” i.e., in Euro-American quarters (Steyn 2001b:xxxix). In answer to this call, I have expanded the lens of whiteness studies to make a cross-cultural exploration of these issues by focusing on white South African immigrants in the U.S. This kind of research is critical for understanding ‘whitenesses’ that emerge from different societies and different white ethnic groups within various societies. In a larger sense, I hope to contribute to scholarship on transnational patterns of white identity and the way race shapes how power operates in post-colonial and post-apartheid societies. Racial categories are not stable and it is in their instability and diffusion that we can learn how and why they carry meaning and discover which aspects of identity are the same across societies.

*Collapse of the 'master narrative of whiteness'*. In the case of South Africa, the transition to democracy meant a breakdown in the racial hierarchy in which whites had privileged access to education and employment. Now, affirmative action policies require that the employee and management bases of companies and government services reflect the racial demographics of the country. This has meant a whole-scale shift in the opportunity structure in terms of whites' automatic access to levels of privilege previously denied to nonwhites. Melissa Steyn (2001b) argues that this has meant a collapse of what she calls the 'master narrative of whiteness,' which was previously used to justify apartheid and colonialism. This collapse has meant culture shock for whites as the social order is reshuffled. What is it in this dislocation that influences some whites to emigrate? Do white South Africans who leave attempt to salvage a 'master narrative of whiteness' in the host country or do they create new ways to be white that do not rely on privilege or domination or racism?

### **Practice Theory**

My research addresses such questions and contributes to the debate in whiteness studies about what whiteness is in light of ideology, identity, and institutions. Is there something universal about the white experience, cross-culturally? Or, does being white vary by specific locale and political context? In this thesis, I show how practice theory offers a way to address these overarching questions yet account for their local complexity. Using practice theory, the material *and* ideological bases of apartheid can be examined in a historical perspective. At the same time, the practices of actors within the structures of apartheid can be understood for how they reflect a coming together of the material structures and ideological beliefs that underpinned apartheid.

As expressions of practices that have been shaped by apartheid structures, such cultural matters as identity and discourse demonstrate this intersection. In particular, I focus on how an ideology of whiteness as domination gave support to the symbolic capital of whiteness. This ideology, however, was not merely based on beliefs or attitudes; rather, it had become solidified in the economic, social, political, and racial *fields* of apartheid. *Field* corresponds to a field of forces that is dynamic, where “various potentialities exist” (Mahar et al. 1990:8) and where individuals act out of different capacities to succeed within this field, which are determined by the distribution of capital. Whites growing up in apartheid society were shaped by their orientation to economic, political, and racial *fields*. As a result, being white in South Africa carried with it social, cultural, symbolic, and economic capital—where each of these different capitals reinforced the value of the others. As such, dominance was reproduced by whites who acquired what Bourdieu (1998) calls a ‘feel for the game’ that led towards greater success in the political, economic, and social *fields*. This feel for the game was reflected in the everyday rituals and practices of segregation that comprised these cultural *fields*.

By using practice theory to look at practices that have intentional and unintentional political consequences, I show how and why whites are marked in the New South Africa and how that contributes to the emigration of skilled whites out of South Africa. Seeing how practices, or *habitus*, are oriented towards certain ends provides a framework for understanding both the manifestation of an ideology of ‘whiteness as domination’ and the fluidity of the expression of this ideology within *fields*. I move away from looking at racism as an expression of individual prejudice to show how practices can reproduce structures that are based on implicit notions of white supremacy.

The skills and knowledge that whites in South Africa gained during apartheid not only led to success in various *fields* within South Africa but now contribute to their success in international arenas and, usually, in their immigration. Yet, the limitations of having grown up within a dominant group remain. In some ways, white South Africans are limited because they are, as some of my informants noted, “not equipped to compete”, “can’t take criticism”, and have been blinded by their privilege through their own ‘apartheid of the mind’. For whites who stay in South Africa, the reality of this inheritance is more evident on a daily basis than for those who have moved to the U.S., Australia or New Zealand, Canada, or the U.K. In these five white-dominant countries, white South Africans are sometimes marked as these “big racists” but they still possess the economic, political, racial, and social know-how to immigrate successfully.

Yet, the *fields* that existed during apartheid are not wholly replicated here in the U.S. or elsewhere. These immigrants, therefore, are forced to adapt to this new global social space. In this sense, they are not entirely able to salvage a ‘master narrative of whiteness’ based on domination and privilege; the system does not allow for this to occur. However, as I argue in the Analysis chapter, it is still possible to use “Afropessimism” to orient oneself to the world as a white South African (see Analysis) and defend white privilege on the basis of individual rights and conservatism, i.e., new racism (see Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks).

Alternative whitenesses have emerged, however, in three populations: in this immigrant population, in white South Africans who have stayed, and in some whites who emigrated but who now return to South Africa. These new identities emerge from a recognition of how the past has shaped the structures of the current society and impacted

the identity of whites and out of a willingness to adapt to new *fields* that are not oriented to implicit notions of white superiority.

To conclude this introduction, I want to make it clear that I have provided a window into just one segment of the South African population abroad. Therefore, generalizations ought to be understood in light of that fact. The informants I spoke with were only those I met who were willing to speak with me. There are many others in the *SA Colorado* club and outside of it that I did not meet or who rejected my request for an interview.

I also want to note that identities in South Africa are especially confusing around their borders. Therefore, in one case, I classified one informant as Afrikaner, even though this person was 'mixed' English and Afrikaner. This person's cultural and social framework reflected Afrikaner sensibilities more strongly than English. In another similar case, I classified the person as English-speaking, since that was the language spoken in their home and they specified that they were raised English. Since my research compared English-speakers versus Afrikaner and these were the only two people who identified as 'mixed', I chose to take this route. This is just one example of the limitations of trying to track patterns in groups according to an ethnic identity. It is also important for the reader to keep in mind that for South Africans, different identities are important at different times, depending on the context. These include race, tribe or ethnic group, generation, gender, and geographical locale (urban, suburban, rural, and/or peri-urban).

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<sup>1</sup> The terms conservative, liberal, and progressive should not be confused with similar terms in the U.S. First, in South Africa these terms apply to the political spectrum among whites, not blacks. Blacks were not allowed to be part of any of these white parties and could not vote. See my discussion of the resistance movements in the History chapter for more about black politics. Second, in South Africa, conservatives

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historically supported the Conservative Party or the Herstigte Nasionale Party, both of which were to the right of the dominant Nationalist Party. Nationalists, who implemented Grand Apartheid, in this context were viewed as centrists. To the left were liberals who generally supported the United Party, which opposed apartheid but only to a degree, critics argued. Left of this group were progressives who were members of the Progressive Party and who supported human rights for blacks and fought for a new constitution that included a Bill of Rights. Third, before the 1970s and 1980s these political parties were differentiated according to specific white ethnic groups, which were distinguished by language: the Conservative Party and Herstigte Nasionale Party by Afrikaners, the Nationalist Party by Afrikaners, the United Party by English-speakers (dissolved in 1977; members joined Progressive Party to form Progressive Federal Party), and the Progressive Party (formed in 1959) by English-speakers and later, some Afrikaners. During the second phase of apartheid, the 1970s and 1980s, membership in these political parties was not aligned with one's ethnicity, the boundaries were more fluid; however, general patterns still reflected the historical ethnic roots of these parties.

<sup>2</sup> In 1998, in response to the worrisome outflow of skilled migrants, SANSA was established to track skilled South Africans overseas and encourage their participation in development projects within the country.

## **Chapter 2    Methods and Ethnographic Experience**

I began my search for South Africans living in Colorado with the intent of finding an equal number of black and white South African informants from two generations. I wanted to find out if there were generational patterns in the experiences of those who grew up in South Africa and understand how these experiences shaped people's perceptions about race. Therefore, I initially attempted to find black and white informants from across the political spectrum and from two different generations.

In November 2001, I contacted the International Education offices at Colorado State University, University of Colorado campuses in Boulder, Denver, and Colorado Springs, the Colorado School of Mines, Denver University, and Metro State University. Through these contacts at the International Education offices, I sent an e-mail to international students soliciting interviews with those who were here from South Africa. I also posted fliers in these offices. In addition, I contacted professors at CU-Boulder who I knew were from Africa, hoping they might have connections to South Africans here. I also visited and phoned African dance studios, stores that sell African goods, and other African venues in Fort Collins, Boulder, and Denver. All of this networking yielded only a handful of informants. I also met Americans who lived near or were friends with South Africans, so a few of my informants were people I met through more serendipitous means.

I also started a literature review to see what research was being done in the U.S. on South African immigrants. During this time, I found *South Africa Colorado (SA*

*Colorado*) online (www.sacolorado.org). I e-mailed the two contacts on their website in July of 2002. Neither of these individuals responded to my email. In March 2003, the Institute of Behavioral Sciences at CU-Boulder held a weekend event entitled “Africa in the Rockies.” I contacted the hosts as well as all the participating groups. I found no South African contacts.

Despite these discouraging results, I persisted in my database and online research and found one person doing research on this immigrant population. David Baxter from the University of Utah is working on an extensive dissertation to understand the electronic community networks used by what he calls the South African Diaspora in the U.S. (Baxter nd). Through an electronic survey, he has collected information on the socioeconomic profile of these individuals, their immigration history and history of their international and national moves, the integration level of the community, sense of the community, and the use of internet to maintain a sense of community. He found that these individuals were between ages 21 and 50, left South Africa beginning in the 1990s, and had skills in accounting and finance, computers, engineering, medical/healthcare services, and management.

I e-mailed the contacts on the *SA Colorado* website again, to no avail. At this point, I did not know if I would be able to pursue this research project. I continued to check the website regularly, looking for an announcement of their next event. Finally, in August 2003, after more than a year since first contacting this group, the website featured an announcement that a *braai* (barbeque) was to take place in Denver. I contacted the hosts and was invited to attend. The Denver *braai* had been arranged to gather people together before the school year started. At the same time, unbeknownst to the other

hosts, someone else had been planning to host a *braai* in Longmont. Therefore, I attended the first *braai* in Denver, on August 10, 2003, and then a week later, I attended the second *braai* in Longmont, on August 17, 2003. This gave me the long-awaited opportunity to meet people (some of them twice) and collect the names and phone numbers of those who wanted to participate in an interview. From these two gatherings, 32 people said yes and of these, I interviewed 26 people. Some were unable to do the interview due to work, family, or school schedules and others declined an interview later on for personal reasons.

### **Interviews**

Nearly all of these individuals were white and of two different ethnic groups, so I changed my research focus to looking at English-speakers and Afrikaners, not black and white South Africans, while retaining the focus on generational patterns. Therefore, I interviewed 20 individuals from the ‘younger’ generation—between 25 and 39. Fifteen informants came from the ‘older’ generation, ages 40-60, and one informant was from the next older generation, aged 80. Eighteen were English-speakers, 14 were Afrikaans-speakers, two were black, and two were Colored<sup>1</sup>. Two individuals also identified as Jewish (mixed with English or Colored).

In terms of length of stay in the U.S., three people came to the U.S. during the apartheid years. Nine people came during the transition between 1990 and 1994 and 23 individuals arrived between 1995 and 2003. Of the 36 people I interviewed, three were students and one was a visitor.

I met people in their homes, at schools, coffee shops, libraries, in parks, and at their workplaces. Informants filled out a two-page survey and participated in a semi-

structured interview. I had planned to do a free-listing exercise in which people list all the traits they associate with whites, Coloreds, and blacks; however, I found that this came out during the interview when I asked people about stereotypes and racism. The interviews usually lasted between 90 minutes and two hours. In some cases, it was extremely difficult to find a time for the interview due to people's work and family schedules. I also found out that within South African society, it is expected that you just 'drop by.' Planning to meet someone a week or more ahead of time is antithetical to how most South Africans operate. It took me a while to understand that this was often behind people's hesitancy to make plans to meet a week in advance. Many people said, "Oh, call me again next week and I'll see what my schedule is like then."

The first question people asked often was, "Why are you interested in South Africa?" In many cases, the question came with body language that seemed to imply they were skeptical about my intentions—crossed arms, sideways glances, a backing away slightly after asking the question. I interpreted this to mean they were waiting for me to bring up 'the race issue', i.e., another curious American coming in to judge our ways.

Depending on the situation, I gave one of two answers. In one, I explained that I had worked at the International Education Office at CU-Boulder for four years and became interested in South Africa through reading South African literature that I was exposed to at my job. I said I was particularly keen on what was similar and different about South Africa's race issues as compared to those in the U.S. My other answer was more personal. I told people that I was from a large extended family of Dutch American farmers who were rooted in Calvinism. This Dutch Calvinist farming heritage is quite

similar to that of many Afrikaners in South Africa. One informant appeared visibly relieved when I told her that I understood her experience of being one of ten children, since my mom is one of twelve! This was one way for me to overcome some of my separation as an outsider, particularly among Afrikaners. As such, I generally found myself bringing up this personal history more with Afrikaners than with English-speakers.

I did, however, face the resistance to inquiry that others have encountered in South Africa in attempting to interview whites. In the Washington Post et al. (2004) study, a number of white South African residents would not accept white interviewers inside for an interview. I quickly discovered that in my interviews, I had to make it clear that I did not assume white informants were racists, that I understood and had read about both sides of the history of South Africa (black and white as well as English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking), and that I did not have a simplistic understanding of the political situation. The newly 'marked' white identity creates an intense level of resistance against any kind of public scrutiny and, implied, judgment and makes for tricky terrain for researchers who focus on white South Africans.

But once I established myself in the interview, most people were extremely willing to talk about their experiences in South Africa. In some cases, this seemed to be an attempt to 'set the record straight' with an American. In other cases, I had the feeling that I was privy to their bottled up feelings about South Africa. During the interview, they seemed relieved to be able to talk about South Africa with an American who knew something about their home country. Across the board, most people miss South Africa and the relatives and friends they left behind. Taking an hour or more to talk about this

with a stranger seemed to bring them in touch with everything they had left behind and it created space for laughter, remembrance, and sometimes sarcasm as well as a distanced perspective from which to make judgments and offer opinions that might be shunned by family and friends back home.

All of my informants dressed neatly in western attire, ranging from casual to more dressy. Any of them could be mistaken for people who had grown up in the U.S. by the way that they looked. Their distinctiveness only became evident when they spoke, since they all have accents. The homes I visited ranged from duplexes and apartments to large, brand-new suburban homes with three-car garages. As a young, white American, I did not feel out of place when entering any of their neighborhoods and at no point did I feel unsafe. I did, however, feel conspicuous as a graduate student in my weathered 1985 Honda Accord—most of my informants drove newer cars or SUVs.

Some individuals did not have anything in their homes that might easily indicate that they were African. The paintings or prints on their walls were nondescript, Euroamerican images of nature or still life art such as fruit or water pitchers. Some of them had large entertainment centers and grand pianos. Others had items that were clearly from home: Zebra skin rug, Zulu meat plate and bowls, Ndebele dolls, ostrich eggs, African baskets, and sculptures of African animals. In almost every home, though, I enjoyed a cup of Rooibos tea, which is a South African favorite. Some people also had memorabilia from Peru, the Netherlands, and China. Some homes contained James Dobson books, pictures of George W. Bush, and posters teaching kids Christian teachings alongside Swahili language books for kids and other books about Africa.

While going through my list of contacts to interview, I carefully tried to balance the number of older versus younger informants and those who were English-speaking and Afrikaners within these generations. I interviewed 20 informants from the younger generation (25-39) and 15 from the older (40-60). One informant was 80 years of age. This age division was recommended by the 'gatekeeper' on the basis that in the mid-80s the younger generation was entering college and the work force when some apartheid laws were changing. For example, some English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking universities accepted people of color, which meant students in public schools were mixing across the color line for the first time in an educational setting. During the mid-1980s, some apartheid laws were also abolished such as the ban on mixed race marriages and the pass laws (required people of color to carry pass books allowing them into white areas to work), and courts were desegregated. Such mixing contrasts with the more severe separation the older generation experienced when they were coming of age during the 1960s and 1970s.

During those decades, petty apartheid was in full swing, i.e., the segregation of social spaces such as post offices, movie theaters, and buses, and legislation for Grand Apartheid had been put in place in the 1950s and early 1960s. Even though there was much anti-apartheid resistance during this time, media coverage was heavily controlled and the anti-apartheid resistance was not as strong as it was to become during the 1980s. In the 1960s, the government jailed Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, and other anti-apartheid leaders and banned their organizations, forcing them underground. Whites often did not know the extent of the state violence against people of color in South Africa, though a number of people I spoke to remember the evening curfew siren that

only applied to blacks. And while many whites had servants in the home, they often did not discuss politics. In these ways, the older generation experienced stricter boundaries between whites and people of color compared with the younger generation.

### **Clarifications**

I found that my use of the term “black” was problematic in that black included Africans, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians during much of apartheid. The term Bantu was used to signify people with black skin. However, in much of the literature about South Africa, the term ‘black’ is used to specify people with black skin so I was using it in that way in interviews. This usage emerged out of Africanist efforts in South Africa to align the meaning of the term with international definitions of ‘black’ based on a notion of shared oppression of blacks internationally. What came up in my interviews, though, was that most of my informants felt they had to correct my narrow American assumption that blacks were blacks (a group) in South Africa. They noted that blacks in South Africa were very different, depending on tribal affiliation: Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Venda, etc. They pointed this out because they thought I assumed that South African blacks were westernized, like African Americans, as opposed to tribal.

I continued using the term ‘black’, though, to signify people with black skin, but I clarified in my interviews that I meant Bantu and confirmed that I understood the differences between African Americans and the variety of ethnic groups of black South Africans. In my interviews, I specified Colored and Indian/Asian according to those identity labels. I did this to preserve the importance of the racial continuum that polarized blackness and whiteness in the rise of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid. I did

not want to slip into ethnic labels that could potentially hide the importance of these racial identities.

A couple of questions and protocols changed in the course of my research. Initially, one of my questions was: “Do you remember when you first encountered a black (or white) person growing up? What was that like? Do you remember if you were afraid or had other reactions?” I asked this question in light of accounts in the U.S. of whites who grew up in very white areas and who remember encountering people of color and feeling fear, despite the fact that they had never had negative experiences with people of color.

From the first handful of interviews, it was clear that my assumptions were incorrect. Everyone reminded me that South Africa was extremely divided. For whites, their contact with blacks was from an early age and those they met were servants or gardeners or other ‘help’, so anyone they would see in their neighborhood was not a threat. It was assumed that they were servants or nannies or gardeners. For my black informants, they would see whites when they went to a white-owned store or to a doctor. Otherwise, they would not speak with or make informal contact with whites. As a result, I changed my question to: “When did you first become aware of differences between blacks (or Coloreds) and whites in South Africa? How were those differences explained to you?”

I changed one protocol halfway through my research, where I was giving people money for their willingness to be interviewed. Initially I gave people \$10 in order to attract informants. However, once I found the *SA Colorado* pool of interviewees, I found I did not need to do so. For the first 20 informants, I gave them the money after the

interview. This ended up being an awkward moment and a number of people refused to take the money. Only a handful of people joked and said they would use it to buy lunch. Overall, though, I found this an awkward offering on my part, which seemed to formalize our informal relationship. Therefore, I stopped giving the \$10. This change would not influence the data collection, since I had been giving this at the end of interviews and people had not expected it.

I also had been e-mailing my survey ahead of time to give informants a chance to fill it out before the interview. In doing so, I knew key demographic information at the beginning of the interview without having to ask for it. A little over halfway through the 36 interviews, however, I had one couple write back after they had filled out the survey explaining that they were no longer interested in being interviewed. Therefore, I stopped emailing the survey ahead of time to prevent this from happening again. Informants filled it out at the beginning or end of the interview and I asked a few demographic questions at the beginning of the interview.

### ***SA Colorado Club***

At the *braais* the custom is that each family brings their own meat to grill, drinks, and other food. Most people also brought something to pass around and share and those with barbeques shared them with others for them to cook their food on. As an outsider, I was invited to share *biltong*, *mieliepap*, and homemade *boerewors* with different families (all of these are Afrikaans words for different types of foods). The *braai* also included more familiar food and drinks such as brownies, chips and salsa, chicken and brats, and beer. Similar to the U.S., the men gathered around the meat on the barbeques and the women organized the other food. Both events took place on sunny, warm days that are

not unusual in Colorado. A number of people remarked that the sunshine reminded them of home.

Conversation topics seemed to vary depending on how well people knew each other. Topics included sports, social events, recipes, cars, and people's houses. I regretted that I did not know more about rugby and soccer, as those were especially popular topics. One group of women discussed how proper and strict the schools were back home in contrast to how they are now and the way they are in the U.S. They explained that most schools were modeled on the British system and ran thick with discipline and order. Girls' skirts had to touch the ground when they kneeled and boys had to have a proper haircut.

Discussions also revolved around friends and family back home. People longed to be home in South Africa with their loved ones, but they felt they were safer and had more opportunities here in America. Most people also had friends and family in Britain or Australia that they keep in touch with through e-mail and phone calls.

Among those who were friends, discussions and arguments revolved around the government and the way things are currently going in the country and what should be done. These were heated discussions, since not all members agreed. I noted that more of this kind of discussion happened amongst the Afrikaner segment of this group than in circles that were more mixed Afrikaner and English. In more mixed circles, however, people did openly criticize the decreasing quality of life and level of service in South Africa, comparing it to the better standard of both of these in the U.S. A number of people also were quick to point out that the Patriot Act in the U.S. and the propaganda around Bush's pre-emptive war on Iraq were similar to laws and propaganda in South

Africa under apartheid. A few informants said this in conversation with me at the *braais*, while others broached this issue later in the actual interview. Whenever this did come up, people seemed to watch my reaction carefully. At these moments, I would encourage them to continue and I inquired about the similarities they saw in the media and the propaganda here versus in South Africa. They offered surprisingly incisive comments about the media spin and the government here and exposed their cynicism towards all governments.

At the Denver gathering, we met in a park with approximately a dozen South Africans and a number of their American friends and/or spouses. The host introduced me to all the people in attendance and invited me to mingle and collect names and numbers. Some people greeted each other in Afrikaans while others used English. This was my first introduction to how important language is as a demarcation of difference. I also found, though, that English-speakers sometimes speak Afrikaans, so as an outsider I could never assume someone's ethnicity by their language choice.

It was at this first *braai* that I had the conversation with the 'gatekeeper' who set me straight about my research question. I was quite nervous about what she brought up, since it had taken me over a year to meet these *SA Colorado* members. I did not want my initial encounter to be off-putting, thereby threatening this research project. I kept most of my fliers to myself and continued to mingle and talk to people about my interest in generational differences. As I mentioned earlier, some people were quite skeptical of my interest in South Africa. They seemed to be waiting for the shoe to drop, i.e., for me to mention race or racism and blame them for their part in apartheid. Others seemed flattered that an American graduate student was taking an interest in them.

At this gathering, I met a few younger South Africans who are quite progressive and very critical of the older generation of South Africans who supported apartheid. They were not hesitant to use the word 'racist', which shocked me for how it contradicts the language used by other informants. For example, an older gentleman who had fought in Angola and Namibia referred to the past "political situation." I made a mental note and realized that I would have to adapt to the wide spectrum of views within this group while doing my interviews.

A number of young couples had babies and toddlers with them. I was surprised to notice that young ones were watched as closely by their dads, if not more closely, as by their moms. In reflecting on this, it seems that this could be due to a couple of things. Some of the dads were American and therefore might be less interested in mingling with South Africans. Another reason could be that white women from South Africa are used to having maids and nannies watch their children, so they are not as hawkish as white, middle-class American women. Perhaps living in the U.S. without nannies, this leaves room for the fathers to take more of an active role. Finally, I wondered if some of the young dads were avoiding conversation by giving their attention to their children. Perhaps they came because their wives wanted to and not strictly out of their own desire to be there.

The people who showed up were of equal numbers of English-speakers and Afrikaners. At this event, I was surprised to meet a number of couples that were 'mixed,' i.e., one was English-speaking and one was Afrikaner. One of them said this has been a struggle their entire married life. Another couple explained that if they had been living in South Africa as a mixed couple, they would have gotten a lot of judgment from friends

and family for marrying ‘the other.’ In my interviews, this kind of mixing was noted as a sign that barriers between these two groups were getting worn down through the generations.

The Longmont *braai*, which was held a week later, was at a reservoir outside of Longmont, Colorado. At this event, approximately 30 people attended. Again, there was balance between English-speakers and Afrikaners. Initially, there were only whites in attendance, but a number of Coloreds arrived later and sat at their own table as a family. There also was one black African, originally from Tanzania, who mingled with whites at their tables. Another Colored person attended and sat with her American friend and white South African friends. I noticed the Colored family sitting at their own table and noted that a handful of whites walked over to mingle with them. Since friendliness seems to be a valued trait among South Africans, it would have been very evident if they were given the cold shoulder. However, in one interview, I had one informant exclaim her exasperation at how the Coloreds did not come over to the whites. “*We* had to go to *them!*” For her, this was an example of how gracious and inviting whites are, while ‘other’ groups hold onto stereotypes and ‘the past’ and are cold to whites.

When I went over to talk to the people at this table, one Colored woman pointedly explained, “We are different from the rest of the group.” She pursed her lips and glanced at the tables where the whites were sitting. I nodded and acknowledged that I was seeking a variety of perspectives and that I understood how they were different. An older white gentleman heard my answer and replied, “Yes, diversity, this is a very diverse group here. We have people from all over South Africa.” True in terms of people’s geographical origin, but not true in terms of racial representation!

Most people had discovered this group through the Internet. These individuals are very well networked through the Internet to friends and family back home, other South Africans in the U.S. and South Africans who have immigrated to Australia, England, New Zealand, and Canada. They read major newspapers in South Africa online and a number of people mentioned that they travel back to South Africa at least once a year or their families fly here to visit them. They seem to be able to pick and choose what they want to remain connected to in South Africa. A number of people mentioned that this also includes consumer goods such as personal care products, medicines, and food that they buy in South Africa and take back to the States with them.

As a contrast to the ten individuals I interviewed who were not from *SA Colorado*, I thought I would have the opportunity to see how political, racial, religious and cultural differences were mediated within this group. I discovered that people in *SA Colorado* do not strongly identify with the group. Of the 26 people who I interviewed from this group, only seven identified *SA Colorado* as a South African group that they are affiliated with now. Also, the group only meets approximately 2-3 times per year for social gatherings. Part of this ambivalence may arise from the tension between Afrikaans- and English-speakers.

Generally, English-speakers are more liberal than Afrikaans-speakers. They also are more connected to Britain and the international English-speaking community than Afrikaners, whose language and culture was largely begotten in South Africa. In general, Afrikaners have larger families and have a history of farming, in contrast to business-oriented English-speakers who generally have smaller families. I discuss this history further in Chapter 3.

The members of *SA Colorado* that I got to know were of equal numbers of English-speakers and Afrikaners, though I had a couple of English-speakers tell me in interviews that they were the only English there! In contrast to the Australian South African population that is dominated by Anglo South African culture (Louw and Mersham 2001), *SA Colorado* seems to be dominated by Afrikaners in the sense that nearly everyone moved in and out of speaking Afrikaans and the English-speakers felt they were a minority. Also, some Afrikaners explained that they mainly come to keep up their language skills, not to socialize with English-speakers.

Not only were these Afrikaner/English fault lines evident, but also some informants criticized others in the group for their narrow perspective on South Africa. People who were more progressive felt that ex-pats who complained about the crime in South Africa were ignorant about the conditions that most South Africans had to deal with. “The majority of black Africans don’t even have anything worth stealing!” They also pointed out that the majority of South Africa was not represented by *SA Colorado*, which was mostly white. These are examples of divisions that exist within the South African community abroad, creating conditions that do not foster deeper group cohesion. A younger Afrikaner woman explains:

I don't mix with South Africans...I wanted to keep my Afrikaans going, so I have no use for the English people in the group...

People that are part of a group like that are there for a reason, that they are needy and I'm not--- needy. They need to go and be needy. And I'll help out but I'm certainly not going to go around seeking out people. I don't think that they've got much to offer me. I'm tired of it, I'm tired of this whole South Africa issue and all the politics and all those issues. I feel like people need to get over it. South Africans are spoiled, Chris. They don't know how good they have it and they come here and they complain and I want to say, shut up! Make it work. So I'm really impatient about it, which doesn't make me a very tolerant person.

These kinds of tensions within the group stand in stark contrast to other instances where different groups from the same home country join together after they immigrate, such as the Turks and Greeks who are bitter enemies but come together in Germany (Brettell 2000:115). I do need to clarify, however, that though these tensions exist, a number of people acknowledged that in the U.S. they have been able to make friends across these ethnic divisions, which would not have happened in South Africa, they explained:

In effect, I learned that those associated with *SA Colorado* do not see it as strengthening or shoring up their identity as South Africans in a way that has strong political, economic, or social ends. This contrasts with other immigrant groups that form ‘ethnic enclaves’ in urban areas or in certain sectors of the economy. Such enclaves serve to boost these populations, culturally and economically, and provide the cohesiveness that helps maintain their cultural distinction. In contrast, these individuals do not appear to need to leverage their South Africanness to succeed in American society. As a result, their associations with one another are more cultural and social and less cohesive than other immigrant groups.

### **Organizing the Data**

Most of my interviews occurred over a seven-month period. During each interview, I took extensive notes of the conversation. I also used two tape recorders, just in case one failed or did not pick up the conversation well. After each interview and following the two *braais*, I wrote field notes and reflections. As much as possible I tried to transcribe the interview soon after it was completed. This allowed me to employ grounded theory to compare my new data with previously collected data and look for

emerging themes and for relationships between these themes (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001). In particular, I was looking for sites of conflict, contradictions in what people said, information on what they valued, and other related qualitative information (Barnard 2002).

After transcribing all my interviews, I entered them into Atlas.ti, which is a software program for analyzing qualitative data. This program allowed me to organize my interviews, code sections of them according to themes, and sort and organize the data according to these themes. I also sorted these themes by age, ethnicity, gender, and race. During this period of coding, using grounded theory, I pinpointed significant themes and categories that I wanted to focus on in my analysis. (See Appendix I for interview questions).

I then printed out the themes that I wanted to highlight, separating quotes according to race, ethnicity, and age. On large sheets of blank paper, I compiled lists comparing and contrasting people's responses based on these three variables within each theme. From these comparisons, I wrote up theme summaries of what I discovered. Finally, in writing up the analysis, I used these theme summaries, the lists of comparisons, and the coded quotes within Atlas.ti to guide me through my data and to extract relevant quotations.

The surveys I gave to informants soliciting demographic information were entered into an Access database, which allowed me to perform a number of queries to analyze the survey results. (See Appendix II for the Survey).

## **Ethnographic Reflections**

In my field journal I kept interview notes and observations and voiced my perceptions as well as frustrations. I also used this journal to jot notes from my various readings of South African literature, history, news, and politics. In reflecting on these journal entries, what emerges is my struggle to engage the ‘apartheid wall’ as embodied by my informants. In one of my early interviews, an informant said, “Now that racism is outlawed, the big question is, how do we outlaw it in our minds?” When I first heard this, I took ‘mind’ to mean the realm of ideology and perception—the root of prejudice. As time went on, though, I found that the apartheid wall runs quite thoroughly through people’s minds, heart, actions, and beings. It was this ‘wall’ that I found to be surprisingly present.

Most of my informants were white, which meant they had been protected from the severest treatment meted out by apartheid leaders. All of them, in varying degrees, sat on one side of the apartheid wall. Their world felt familiar to me in the same way the world of a white, middle-class individual might in the U.S. The goals of getting an education, obtaining work, buying and maintaining a house, having a family, and living in safety were prominent. And these pursuits were sometimes punctuated by human tragedy: a death in the family, bouts of poverty, divorce, or illness. They were not protected from suffering, in that sense.

On the other side of the apartheid wall were those I spoke with who grew up Colored or black. Though they too wanted safety, a family, work and a house, the daily tasks of survival dominated their lives. Crowded homes housed extended family and friends inside hastily built homes and outdoor water spigots were shared with 20-30

people. The Group Areas Act of 1950 had displaced ancestors and sent the family into a spiral of poverty. Subsistence farming brought food for the family as well as hours of chores for children growing up. And dependence on local white farmers for work or Afrikaner businessmen for certain groceries necessitated tense encounters with whites. And later, in the thick of the 1980s resistance movement, chaos exploded in their neighborhoods. A sense of uncertainty and fear rose from the heat of these protests and riots and the police and military crackdowns that ensued. Desperation brought urgency to life that only increased under the weight of the numbers of murders and torture experienced amongst people in these communities. Whereas they too had to wade through the suffering brought about by deaths, poverty, divorce, and illness, their larger world was one of unjust suffering on a much broader and more systematically entrenched level than that of whites. Their skin color was a liability; their history was one of suffering and oppression within a large-scale system of labor exploitation and a segregation that left them 'separate but not equal.'

I have listened to people from both sides of this wall but as a white American, I felt divided. On the one hand, the sensibilities of white South Africans felt very *familiar*. On the other hand, as an English-speaking outsider I was much more aware of how the laws and militarism of apartheid oppressed people of color than with how whites in South Africa experienced their country during apartheid. What I confronted was the reality that there were two worlds in South Africa: a whole white world and a whole black world. I realized that my understanding of the history involved events that impacted people of color, not whites.

I found it difficult to describe the white world without referencing the black world, but for my informants, these were quite separate. I began to wonder, what would a white history look like from 1948-1994? A few significant moments came up in my interviews: Verwoerd's death, South Africa becoming a Republic that was independent from Britain, and the tricameral parliament (see History). I struggled to reconcile my sense of South Africa with theirs. Running deeper than the gap in understanding significant events, however, was the ignorance and denial about what had gone on in South Africa during apartheid.

From my journal:

*The power of silence and what is left unsaid, unnamed, unspoken. My informants speak about their world, their perspectives— and what was lacking for most people was any awareness of the horror of life for blacks. Some had a window into it, but it is creepy how few really had insight into what we in the West were reading. This was a big eye opener for me. I figured everyone would be up on what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see History) found out and would feel they had to reconcile themselves to that new reality somehow. But for many, the old reality won out. "Apartheid was okay; blacks weren't hungry; they had education; we gave them everything: hospitals, no taxes, free education, food." For others, they simply had an upbeat and positive attitude that seemed oriented to climbing the economic ladder and trying to be successful here in the US. They didn't want to criticize South Africa. They skirt the place where the confusion lies, where there was mass violence and chaos and murder at the hands of the state to protect their white privileges. They skirt the place where their questions lie; where things don't make sense, where the 'why apartheid?' echoes—coming to the edge of it to articulate that question but not going deeper (see Analysis). Some of them knew less about why apartheid existed in their country than I did.*

*This gap between what we were reading in the west versus what they were reading in their media and experiencing in white South Africa seems insurmountable to me. I struggle to stay true to the voices of those I interviewed, i.e., their perspective of South Africa and their experiences growing up. I struggle to contextualize this with what I read and know from my outsiders/western perspective and from the experiences of the people of color I interviewed.*

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*Distinct lines drawn in the sand:  
racist/oppressed  
white/black  
perpetrator/innocent-victim  
have been stepped on by my informants.*

*The real imprint of their sundry feet blurs the lines and brings to life the nature of apartheid—one of confusion and silence, of not talking about what was going on, not seeing. Of schizophrenia and self-doubt, of social control. Peaceful streets and ice cream and walks on the beach while townships were being swept by insurgents and people's maids had to walk or take the bus for hours in order to get to work, hoping they would live to make it home. Whites lived where life 'made sense', which isn't that different from white, middle-class suburban American life in Colorado where they could ignore the structural conditions that made such a life possible.*

I had to find the places where these two worlds connected—riots, terrorism, the border wars and conscription, growing up with servants/nannies/gardeners, etc. This gave me a chance to see the connections between these two worlds and find a place to begin understanding the relationship between them.

Another challenge I faced within myself was the struggle to not look away from this 'apartheid wall.' The apartheid culture secured silence through mandating taboos and places people did not 'go' in conversation as well as on foot. I had to see these taboos and know their shape, but not sink into them so well that they would remain invisible.

October 16, 2003 journal:

*How to walk along these brick walls, these barriers, these taboos until I am familiar with every line of brick, every crack, every displacement, until I can see clearly the despair, the end, the mask, the violence and fear? Until I can just see these things out there and in here—and let my writing come from that place?*

In some of my interviews, I found it hard to listen to the difficulties people faced within themselves and from without. Not only is this a human response to hearing about other people's trauma, but also the physical context was sharply juxtaposed to what some people were sharing. For example, at one point an informant and I were sitting in a lush green park where children were playing. The breeze was soothing and it was a sunny blue-sky day. This person was telling me about the border wars, propaganda, and the cynicism and disappointment he felt in realizing the government had no higher purpose except to gain access to minerals and other valuable resources in Angola and Namibia. In other cases, the contrast was between our safe interviewing setting and people's stories about being carjacked or shot at, mugged, or nearly raped. In another case, I listened to a person's experiences of incest and alcoholism in the family while having a cup of tea at their kitchen table.

Over time, I did find myself absorbing white people's confusion about their role in South Africa and their conundrum of guilt. I also could feel where the fear lay for white minorities who lived in a country where Africans were the majority: where their languages and customs were still foreign and the poverty and 'ignorance' within that population contrasted with Euro-American education and sensibility. I wondered what my country might be like if three-quarters of the population were Native American. What kind of unjust defense of white privilege might have evolved and would it really be much different than that undergirding apartheid? While this kind of imagining and connection was important for this research, I also struggled to ground myself. Along the way, I picked up a very powerful book.

*In reading Helen Suzman's<sup>2</sup> "In No Uncertain Terms: A South African Memoir" I'm finding that it is helping me get my head screwed on*

*straight. Her perspective of South African history is that the Nationalists were racist and they did many illegal acts both legislatively and through supporting the third force and other types of inhumane activities. Her view is with an eye on labor, so to her it was clear how legislation not only defended the “purity of the European race” but also, significantly, to exploit the black labor force.*

And from a later journal entry:

*I’m in slippery terrain: What IS racism? Who gets to say? What does it mean? How does it mean? What do we DO about it? Here I have interviews from 36 people, all of who are from a country known for its racism and only ONE person said he, at one time, could be called a racist.*

*It really is that slippery center, as much as I want to avoid it. I have no answers, no solutions, no clearer understanding of how race maintains meaning. I have a huge gap between where some of the white people are at and where the real situation would WANT them to be: aware and consciously white without getting stuck in guilt and ready to learn and contribute to an African nation.*

*What is it that I do see?*

- 1. People are very interested in protecting their STATUS. At all costs. Maybe because ones status secures future financial well-being and safety?*
- 2. People who know what their community requires of them in order to stay within it. They don’t want to be cast out because they did something wrong—like picking up the black farmhand that had 20 more miles to walk. They can’t risk losing that community with other whites because they don’t have anything else. The blacks (Zulus, Xhosas, etc.) won’t take them in. Some of the whites know Zulu but they only use it to tell people what to do. They can’t speak to them (Zulus) about betrayal and justice and leaving.*

*It seems white privilege and the culture of apartheid for whites is about self-protection. Specifically, to attain and retain status and to ensure that you do not get excommunicated from your white, English or Afrikaans enclave. You need to fit in in order to survive. At root, it seems driven by a fear of annihilation. Annihilation of ones culture, language, identity, and racial distinction—so the ‘rules’ for staying in the group (and out of the other groups) are quite strict.*

Through these interviews, I began to see that there were rituals that people had that signified their allegiance to the ‘white’ tribe, as opposed to the black ones. Even

though this system was initially solidified by the Nationalist Party, most whites grew to adopt these rituals, so this signification in many ways went beyond ethnicity or political affiliation. Part of this was due to the fact that many of these rituals were legally enforced. Keeping separate cutlery for whites and blacks, making ‘the help’ use the outdoor toilet not the indoor one, washing the maid’s clothes separately from the clothes of one’s family so as not to contaminate them—these became daily rituals that marked ones distinction as part of the dominant group. This was how you oriented yourself in the world, how you knew who you were, even if you and your society had lost connection to why things are the way they were (i.e., black and white).

From this observation, I began to wonder what kind of damage had been done to the dominant group who enacted such rituals so often that they were second nature. And I wondered, what will bring people to the point of addressing the ‘racism of the mind’ or the place where they have systematically cut themselves off from certain aspects of “being human,” as some informants said. This leads to larger questions: what is it that *westerners* have lost by not seeing ourselves in Africa? And, what does it say about *us* that they come here to Denver, Longmont, Aurora, Boulder, and Fort Collins? Do we have our own version of apartheid, both local and global?

*Driving away I had such an eerie feeling that South Aurora must seem very similar to white suburban South Africa. In some ways, I already know what apartheid feels like. Here I am, driving away at 9:00 at night, feeling safe. Middle- and upper-class white folks drive alongside me in their nice cars. Strip malls with middle-class shops and restaurants line the street.*

*It does feel to me that a move for people like this might be seamless, a way to recapture what they had and felt in South Africa. A way to stave off the uncertainty, the violence, the questions, the fear of having to pay for something they don't*

*feel responsible for. And they frame it so it sounds like (and they believe) that they had no alternative.*

*But we want our houses, cars, strip malls, cheap CDs, safety. And who pays the price? For us, we don't see the cheap labor pool and the landscapes that are ripped apart to provide the resources—and the postcolonial racism that helps make it go. What would those of us here in the middle and upper classes do if that suddenly became very evident and clear on a daily basis?*

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 14 Afrikaners, nine were in the younger generation and of these, six were women and three were men. Five Afrikaners were in the older generation; one of them was female and the rest were male. The 18 who were English-speaking: eight were younger and six were female while two were male. Ten of the English-speakers were older—seven women and three men. The Colored informants were both female, but one was older and one was younger. The two black informants were both younger males.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Suzman was the sole parliamentary opposition voice against the Nationalist Party and the United Party from 1961-1974 when she was a representative of the Progressive Party. She was not only anti-apartheid against the Nationalist Party, but she split off from the 'oppositional' United Party for their support of the repression of 'communists' and 'terrorists'.

### Chapter 3 History

They don't appreciate the history of the Afrikaner. The history of the Afrikaner is probably the main contributing factor to the way South Africa is today. Afrikaners struggled for liberation from British rule. Blacks wanted to govern themselves. So they [Afrikaners] went through some very tough times as a nation; people don't always remember that. People just think that all Afrikaners are racist, but there is a history to it. [Older Afrikaner man]

Racial categories served as the basis of social engineering in South Africa since the inception in 1948 of the apartheid system, which remained in place until the early 1990s. The goal of apartheid was to segregate the races of South Africa in distinct geographical areas. This meant the imposition of different settlements or townships for Africans, Indians/Asians, and Coloreds and larger, less barren areas for whites. At the same time, 'petty apartheid' was evident in daily life with segregated bathrooms, drinking fountains, beaches, post offices, and the like.

The architects of apartheid were Afrikaners, descendants of Dutch and German Calvinists who first settled in the Cape region in 1652. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, South Africa cannot simply be understood in terms of the oppression of people of color by Afrikaners. Ethnic conflict between two groups of whites, the Afrikaners and those of British descent, was very influential in the rise to power of Afrikaners in 1948. Soon after the British occupied the Cape of South Africa in 1795, resentment brewed among the Afrikaners, then known as Boers<sup>1</sup>, who had their own claim to the land. Boers saw the British as outsiders and invaders who were not African but European; in contrast, Boers saw themselves as the 'white tribe of Africa,' i.e., no longer connected to Europe.

The British ultimately imposed their will, however, through their international resources and power, defeating the Boers in the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). This war became emblazoned in the memories of the Boers and strengthened their resolve to reclaim control of South Africa, which they saw as their homeland. The Union of South Africa was a British colony from 1910 until 1961, when the Nationalist Party, largely representing Afrikaners, finally realized their vision and made South Africa a republic.

To provide a context for colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, I begin with a brief discussion of the different populations that were living in the region before European settlement. Then I discuss Boer settlement and the eventual arrival of the British and the era of segregation they implemented during colonialism. Following this, I examine the rise of Afrikaners and the Nationalist Party and their implementation of Grand Apartheid from 1948-1994. I then highlight the resistance movements against apartheid and the resulting end of apartheid in 1994. I conclude by examining the last ten years of democracy in South Africa under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC).

### **First Inhabitants: Hunter-Gatherers, Pastoralists, and Semi-agriculturalists**

Modern humans do not appear to have reached Southern Africa until the Upper Paleolithic, between 40,000 and 10,000 years ago (Scupin 1998). These Modern *Homo sapiens* were hunter-gatherers who used stone tools to process meat, berries, nuts and other food items. Similar to other hunter-gatherer bands, they moved in small numbers as part of kinship groups. These bands generally retained these patterns until recently and are today known as San. (In the past, they were called the derogatory term “Bushmen”.)

Approximately 2,000 years ago, pastoralists or herders, called Khoikhoi or “Hottentots” by whites, settled into the Cape region after moving down from northern Botswana (Viljoen 1999). In some areas of the western Cape, the San changed their routes to avoid these pastoralists, but in the southwestern Cape, the San appear to have been employed for certain jobs such as cattle tending (Klatzow 1994:9-10).

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, Bantu-speaking mixed farmers, with an economy of agriculture and herding, moved into the region from the north. They had iron tools to work the land and process food (Klatzow 1994). In South Africa, these semi-agriculturalists traded with San hunter-gatherers and sometimes even hired them to be official rainmakers (Klatzow 1994). Called “Kaffirs” by European settlers, today these individuals are called “blacks,” “Africans,” or are identified by their ethnicity. Ethnic groups descended from Bantu-speaking mixed farmers include the Nguni (Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, Ndebele), the East Sotho (Pedi), the South Sotho (Basotho) and the West Sotho (Tswana), the Venda and the Tsonga (Thompson 1990). (See Figure 1)

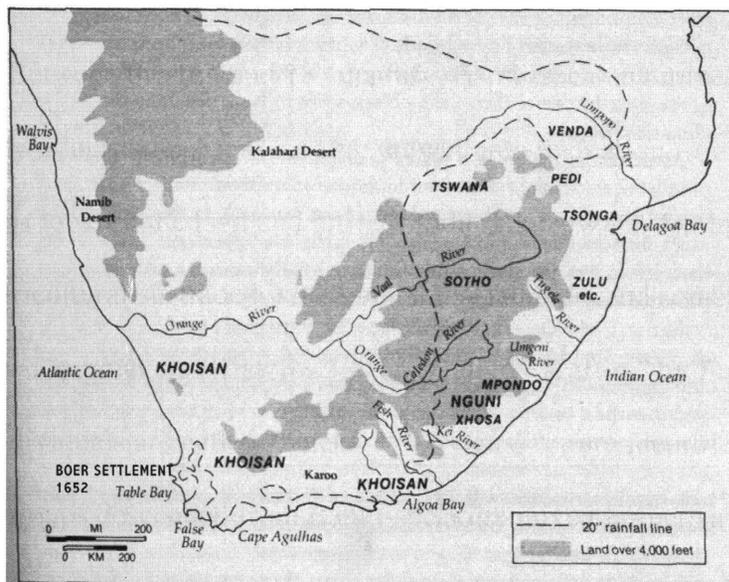


Figure 1. Map of the settlement regions of Khoikoi, or Khoisan, and various groups of Bantu-speaking semi-agriculturalists.

## **European Settlement, Expansion, and Wars**

*Boer Settlement.* It was into this complex sociocultural milieu that Europeans first arrived. Economic arrangements, including both exploitation and equal exchange, that existed between hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, and mixed farmers expanded to include trade with the Dutch, Portuguese, and French who moved along the coast as early as 1488. In 1652, though, employees of the Dutch East India Company (EIC) set up a refueling stop on their way to Southeast Asia at the Cape at Table Bay (see Figure 1). Employees of the company who eventually broke off from the company became independent farmers, selling their goods to the company and settling into the region more permanently. These independent settlers were called Boers.

In *White Tribe Dreaming: Apartheid's Bitter Roots as Witnessed by Eight Generations of an Afrikaner Family*, Marq de Villiers (1988) examines the history of these early Boers to provide an understanding of the origins of apartheid. He argues that two key elements contributed to the rise of apartheid by Afrikaners: 1) a staunchly independent Calvinism and 2) animosity towards the British settling into the Cape region in 1795.

Boer religion relied on the Bible and key 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century texts of Calvinism, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt. These texts argue that certain individuals are preordained by God to be the 'elect'. Those who are elect gain everlasting life, but individuals can never be sure of their own election. Through hard work and adhering to God's law, however, they can do their best to ensure that they are of the elect. Beliefs such as these fostered the separation of Calvinists from those of other Christian faiths. In South Africa, it resulted in the Boers developing what de

Villiers (1988) calls a “primitive Calvinism” that was not influenced by the emerging Enlightenment thought in Europe. Therefore, when the British arrived with their notions of rationality and humanism, conflict arose between the British and the Boers as to their relationship to Africans and others who had been imported as slaves.

Like their European colonials counterparts, the Boers exploited indigenous peoples and imported slaves for work, retaining and reproducing their status through physical, cultural, legal, and economic means (Thompson 1990). They also defended themselves through citizen militia groups, “commandos,” which hunted and killed San and shielded Boers against other sometime enemies such as the Khoikhoi. (There also were cases of intermarriage and intermixing between the Boers and Khoikhoi, which contributed to the mixed race population of Coloreds).

Eventually, two kinds of Boers emerged: those who stayed in towns and ran settled farming industries or more urban businesses and those who moved more frequently and were mixed farmers. After the arrival of the British, individuals in this latter group trekked away from the Cape region, cultivating an animosity towards the new settlers that eventually bred a powerful Christian Nationalism.

*British Settlement.* In 1795 the British arrived to attempt to secure the Cape’s value to trade for themselves. Through their greater military and naval power, and strong connections to Europe, they gained dominance in bloody wars with both Boers and Africans and declared the Cape under their control in 1814. British colonialists viewed Boers as lesser whites who were backwards and ignorant of new European thought and politics. The British blamed environmental conditions for this ignorance and viewed the culture and religious fervor of the Boers as viewed problems to be fixed. Since Boers

were largely farmers, their status as rural semi-agriculturalists kept them largely on the margins of the new colonial society.

A key site of conflict between Boers and British concerned the treatment of ‘the natives’. When the British set up courts to hear the complaints of Colored and Africans against their white owners, Boer resentment flared. In 1834, the British made it illegal to own slaves, leading approximately 15 thousand Afrikaners to migrate north to escape onerous British regulations. These *voortrekkers*, those who led the trek, were part of what became known as the Great Trek (1836-54). Seeking *Beulah*, their God-given land, they moved northeast into the interior of South Africa (de Villiers 1988). (See Figure 2)

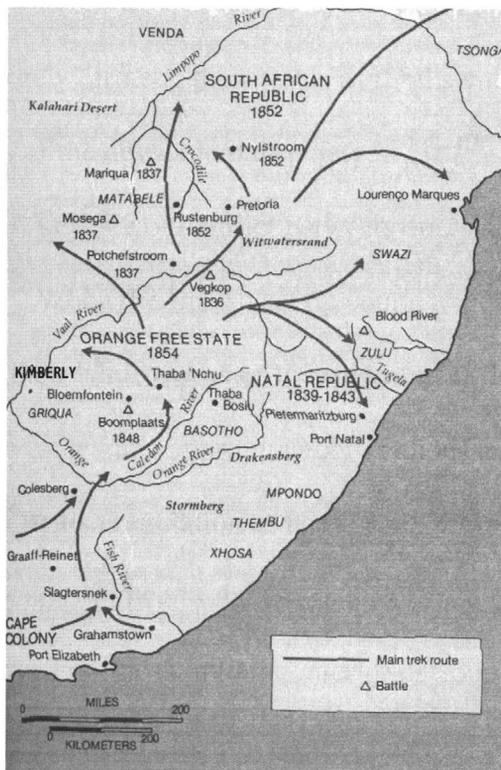


Figure 2. Map of the Great Trek made by Boers, 1836-1854.

As the Boers moved north they encountered hostile nations such as the Xhosa and the Zulu that proved much more resilient to military pressure and diseases such as smallpox and measles than the Khoikhoi and San had been (Thompson 1990:72). Faced

with large and militarily competent enemies, the Boers boosted their commando system and began to hunker down in their *laager*, a defensive circle of wagons that offered protection. The *laager* formation eventually became an important symbol of Afrikanerdom in the rise of the Nationalist Party. One battle that has become mythologized in Afrikaner society is the Blood River battle (1838), in which 500 Voortrekkers defeated 10,000 Zulus. Afrikaners celebrate this as the “Day of the Covenant,” the day Boers received God’s blessing on their presence in this region (de Villiers 1988).

In 1838, the voortrekkers formed the Republic of Natalia (see Natal Republic, Figure 2). Through the imposition of pass laws, Africans were not allowed in white areas. In 1843 the British annexed this region, pushing these Boers even further into the interior, where they split into two separate groups: one that formed the Orange Free State (OFS) and the other that eventually formed the South African Republic (SAR) or what became the Transvaal (see Figure 2). Despite the animosity between the Boers and the British, a shared effort to secure their distinction as whites emerged: the British disclaimed their ties to “coloured nations” north of the Vaal River and they agreed not to sell arms to these “coloured nations,” committing to selling arms only to the Boers (de Villiers 1988:148). So began a pattern that would shape the future of South Africa: British and Boers would unite as whites in a common cause against blacks when it was convenient and at other times, employ ethnic tensions to advance one’s own group.

*Anglo-Boer Wars.* In 1867, when diamonds were discovered in Kimberly (see Figure 2), a new twist was added to tensions between the Boers and the British. After this discovery, the Orange Free State sold Kimberly to the Cape, washing its hands of this

complicated find. When the British annexed this region, Boers attacked. The Boers won in this First War of Independence or the First Boer War (1880), securing their land and their culture with an emphasis on religion, opposition to alien authority, and their language, Afrikaans.

The British fought back in the second Anglo-Boer War, from 1899-1902, which solidified Boer nationalism. Seeking to destroy the power of the commandos by capturing their wives and children, the British placed them into concentration camps, and burned Boer farms to starve the men out. In the concentration camps, 27,000 women and children died of disease and starvation.

In the end, the British won and this war became etched in the memories of Afrikaners, defining the moment when they lost the country. The brutal tactics of the British set a precedent and was used to justify the use of extreme measures by Afrikaners to defend their culture against “Anglicization” (adopting the British culture, English language, and Anglican religion) and to reclaim South Africa. I want to add, however, that nearly 116,000 Africans were also placed into concentration camps, with 14,000 of them dying there (Thompson 1990:143).

### **British Colonization and Segregation**

By 1910 the British had secured the region as the Union of South Africa, which included the two Boer regions, Transvaal and the Orange Free State (see Figure 3). Gold mining dominated the economy and whites began to consolidate their power over African laborers who worked in the mines. Ownership of land was restricted to whites, pass laws controlled the movement of Africans and Indians/Asians (who were brought as indentured servants), and residential segregation was legalized. Only white males could

vote and British South Africans were outnumbered, so the British were forced to negotiate power with the Boers. As a result, the Union of South Africa was under the control of the South African Party, which was led by Louis Botha and comprised of Afrikaners. The Unionist Party, made up of skilled British mineworkers and other non-Afrikaners, were the opposition.

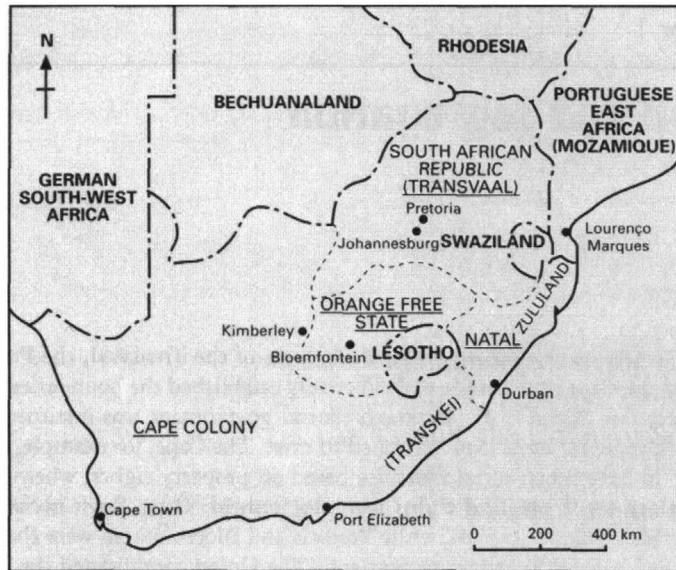


Figure 3. Union of South Africa, 1910. Province names are underlined.

Botha and other Afrikaner leaders in the government defended the concerns of poor whites, who were largely Afrikaner farmers. These farmers had been destabilized by industrialization, so legislation was put in place to artificially boost their economic status and protect them from competition by African laborers and farmers. This led to a two-tiered system based on race, in which whites were dominant in all sectors of the capitalist economy and Africans provided cheap labor (Deegan 2001). Examples of legislation that structured this system were the 1911 Mine and Works Act, which sanctioned an industrial color bar, and the 1913 Native Land Act, which formalized territorial segregation between Africans and whites (Fredrickson 1981:285). The land act

provisioned seven percent of the land for African residents, who were 69 percent of the population, leaving the rest of the country for whites (Thompson 1990). At this time, approximately 20 percent of the population was white (Deegan 2001). Though leaders did not have the military power to enforce this law completely, many Africans were moved to reservations and a powerful precedent was set in place. Not only were land rights stripped away, but measures were also put in place to deny Africans subsidies and soft loans and exclude them from markets, credit facilities, and cooperatives (Marcus, Eales, and Wildschut 1996:97). As a result of land shortage, removal to poor quality land, and taxation, many Africans struggled to survive.

Eventually, the relationship between white voters and their leaders grew tenuous along both class and ethnic lines. A growing concern among Afrikaners was the need to retain a separate ethnic identity from the British. When Barry Hertzog, the leader from the Orange Free State, founded the new National Party in 1914, he emphasized a separate Afrikaner identity that refused Anglicization. Supported by both lower-class Afrikaners and Afrikaner intellectuals, Hertzog spoke to both fears of Anglicization and urbanization (Thompson 1990). After WWI, tensions heightened between Afrikaner leaders such as Jan Smuts, the South African party leader who sought to negotiate with British South Africans, and Hertzog, who wanted to establish a separate Afrikaner identity.

Since the economy was largely based on mining, this sector served as the main site of conflict between the white populace and the government. When mineowners wanted to save money by increasing the ratio of black to white workers, since whites earned fifteen times what blacks did, white workers protested widely. The South African party, largely Afrikaner, retaliated aggressively and lost its labor voter bloc (Thompson

1990). As a result, Hertzog's National Party, also Afrikaner but more radical and nationalistic, garnered the support of the Labour party and won the general election in 1924 (Deegan 2001). This ability of more radical Afrikaner nationalists to garner white labor votes became the key to Afrikaner domination in the future. By promoting a platform that defended white workers against competition from black laborers, Afrikaner nationalists were able to promote their dual cause: secure Afrikanerdom against Anglicization and structurally support the welfare of whites by constraining African efforts to farm and to compete for better-paid white positions in the mines.

With Hertzog at the helm of the government, Afrikaans became an official language, the white vote was doubled with the enfranchisement of women and, as de Villiers (1988) argues, the defense of the Afrikaner tribe began to more structurally depend on the suppression of blacks. To secure the Afrikaner *volk* meant to secure Afrikaner privilege.

In 1933, the Great Depression had the effect of uniting Hertzog's National Party and the South Africa party to eventually form the United Party in 1934 (Thompson 1990:161). Individuals from each of the two former parties who were dissatisfied with this new arrangement broke off to form the (British) Dominion Party and the (Afrikaner) Purified National Party. D. F. Malan, minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and leader of this latter party, sought to unify Afrikaners through an even more radical Afrikaner nationalism than what Hertzog had promoted. Malan fervently believed that Afrikaners were divinely appointed leaders of the state. He encouraged Afrikaners to become the model Afrikaner nation they were meant to be (de Villiers 1988). In contrast to Enlightenment notions of universalism, individualism and equality, Christian Afrikaner

nationalists emphasized their past experiences of oppression under the British, their survival instincts, and their cultural and religious traditions (Dubow 1995:282). During the 1930s, the Afrikaner secret society, Broederbond, was created to give organization to these ideas, offering economic and cultural cohesion to this white ethnic group.

The advent of WWII increased the division between English-speakers and Afrikaners and further divided the Afrikaner community. When Jan Smuts, the leader of the Union as of 1939, supported the British in the war, Hertzog resigned in disagreement over this decision. After his resignation, Hertzog united with Malan to try to form a more muscular Afrikaner nationalism. At the same time, the increasing urbanization of blacks was viewed as a threat by white urbanites, so an Afrikaner platform proposing greater control of this influx appealed to urban whites, many of whom were dependent on jobs in labor.

### **The National Party and Grand Apartheid**

In 1948, through leveraging white labor votes, rural votes, and Afrikaner votes, the National Party won the majority of seats in Parliament by a slim margin—seventy seats, compared to the 65 United Party seats (Thompson 1990:186). Afrikaner nationalists could finally launch their plan to secure white privilege more directly, uplift the Afrikaner nation, and reverse the flow of African urbanization. Grand Apartheid was installed to geographically secure ethnic and racial *apartheid*, the Afrikaans word for ‘apartness’ or segregation, between groups, based on language, culture, religion, and racial typologies. While these measures were defended on the basis that different ethnic groups required their own schools, languages, geographical regions, and the like, the greater emphasis of apartheid was on legalizing racial separation between whites and

people of color. The 1950s and 1960s is generally viewed as the ‘golden age’ of apartheid, when the resistance against apartheid was largely suppressed and whites enjoyed a higher standard of living than before the war. The 1970s and 1980s saw the growing strength of the resistance movement, national states of emergency, and the eventual demise of the apartheid system. The older generation of informants I interviewed came of age during the first phase of apartheid and the younger informants during the second phase of apartheid.

In 1948, D.F. Malan became Prime Minister, ushering in an era of “Afrikaner ethnic exclusivity” with the words “today South Africa belongs to us once more” in response to having claimed dominance over the largely English United Party (Deegan 2001:26, 20). By leveraging ethnic exclusivity to defend racial privilege, Malan defended bossism (*baaskap*), i.e., the right of white men to control the labor of nonwhites, who were not as developed or evolved as whites (de Villiers 1988). This ideology reflected the belief that whites were more mentally superior, so they had the right to make decisions for nonwhites (Dubow 1995).

English-speakers (i.e., British South Africans) were shocked when the Nationalist Party won and began to implement apartheid. Many of them opposed Grand Apartheid but they became part of the ‘silent minority’. They had lost their political foothold by losing the labor votes, though they retained their control over business and industry. These liberal whites were part of the United Party, which stood in opposition to the National Party, albeit a weak opposition in the eyes of critics. Other English-speakers left the country (Louw and Mersham 2001) and still others eventually supported the Nationalist Party.

To ensure complete segregation of racial groups, a wide spectrum of legislation was enacted and enforced. After 1948, mixed marriages were banned, the Group Areas Act enforced strict residential segregation, new pass laws were put in place, public amenities were segregated, the Suppression of Communism Act gave the government the ability to ban anti-apartheid groups, and in 1954 the Natives Resettlement Act gave the state the legal ability to remove Africans and place them in townships and homelands. A key piece of legislation that was the basis of all of the others was the Population Registration Act, which required every individual to claim one of four racial identities. The Dutch Reformed Church, which was Calvinist and whose members were Afrikaner, supported Grand Apartheid, arguing that God willed different racial and cultural varieties and that humans should not undo His work.

Under the direction of Dr. Henrik Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs from 1950 to 1958, the Tomlinson Commission report was published in 1954. The report defended segregation on the basis of cultural and ethnic factors, stating that 'Bantu areas' or homelands for Africans were justified because different cultural groupings should be preserved and should eventually be under their own jurisdiction (Deegan 2001). This led to the whole-scale relocation of 'blacks'<sup>2</sup>, i.e., Africans, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians. Between 1960 and 1980 between 3.5 million (Deegan 2001:25) and 7 million Africans were transported to homelands (Bantustans) and Coloreds and Indians/Asians were removed to townships. Africans who worked in industries, mines, and white farms were not allowed to live where they worked; rather, they were forced to go back to the 'homelands', which were quite barren and overpopulated due to the relocations. While this ensured an exploitable labor pool for whites, it was devastating to the overall welfare

of Africans.

In 1958, Henrik Verwoerd became Prime Minister, serving until his assassination in 1966. In 1961, he made South Africa a Republic, removing it from the British Commonwealth. Verwoerd also continued to oversee Grand Apartheid measures to ensure racial segregation. The solidification of apartheid at a time when other countries in Africa were de-colonizing seems paradoxical. Scholars have focused much of their research on understanding how Verwoerd succeeded in implementing Grand Apartheid in a post-WWII, post-colonial context. Part of the success of Afrikaner Nationalists is attributed to the fact that ethnicity was used to defend apartheid. The idea of an Afrikaner nation or *volk* held sway in arguments defending the right of groups to have their own areas. Racial discourse was employed to undergird apartheid, but it was embedded in justifications for apartheid based on a defense of Afrikaner ethnicity.

However, defense of Afrikaner ethnicity was not merely rhetoric covering over racial agendas. The country remained segregated along white ethnic lines as well. Afrikaners were, in general, living in rural areas and in the north and northeast interior of the country, working in civil service or as farmers. English-speakers could be found in cities and in the Cape region and were largely in business and industry, primarily mining. Within cities and towns, there were English-speaking and Afrikaner neighborhoods that remained distinct. These divisions reinforced the historical tensions that existed between these two white ethnic groups, but the solidification of apartheid's racial policies served to also unite these two groups under the racial rubric of whiteness.

Verwoerd justified removals of non-whites on the basis that they were voluntary (though they were forced), and he argued that he was de-colonizing South Africa itself by

dividing the country into distinct regions based on ethnic groupings (Thompson 1990; Dubow 1995). According to his plan, homelands were to become independent under the guidance of appointed chiefs. In many ways, his thinking reflects an evolutionary perspective on the hierarchy of racial groups: that is, his homeland policy is based on the idea that whites should look over Africans as they develop to the point where they can handle their own affairs (Dubow 1995:246). However, this paternalistic plan never came into fruition for the majority of homelands and even those that were 'independent' were run by leaders who were handpicked by the apartheid government. These homelands were geographically separated from one another, thereby fragmenting black opposition (see Figure 4), and the land was often dry and barren, which meant people could not survive without migrant labor. Finally, despite the fact that the population exploded after the forced relocations, the land size was not increased.

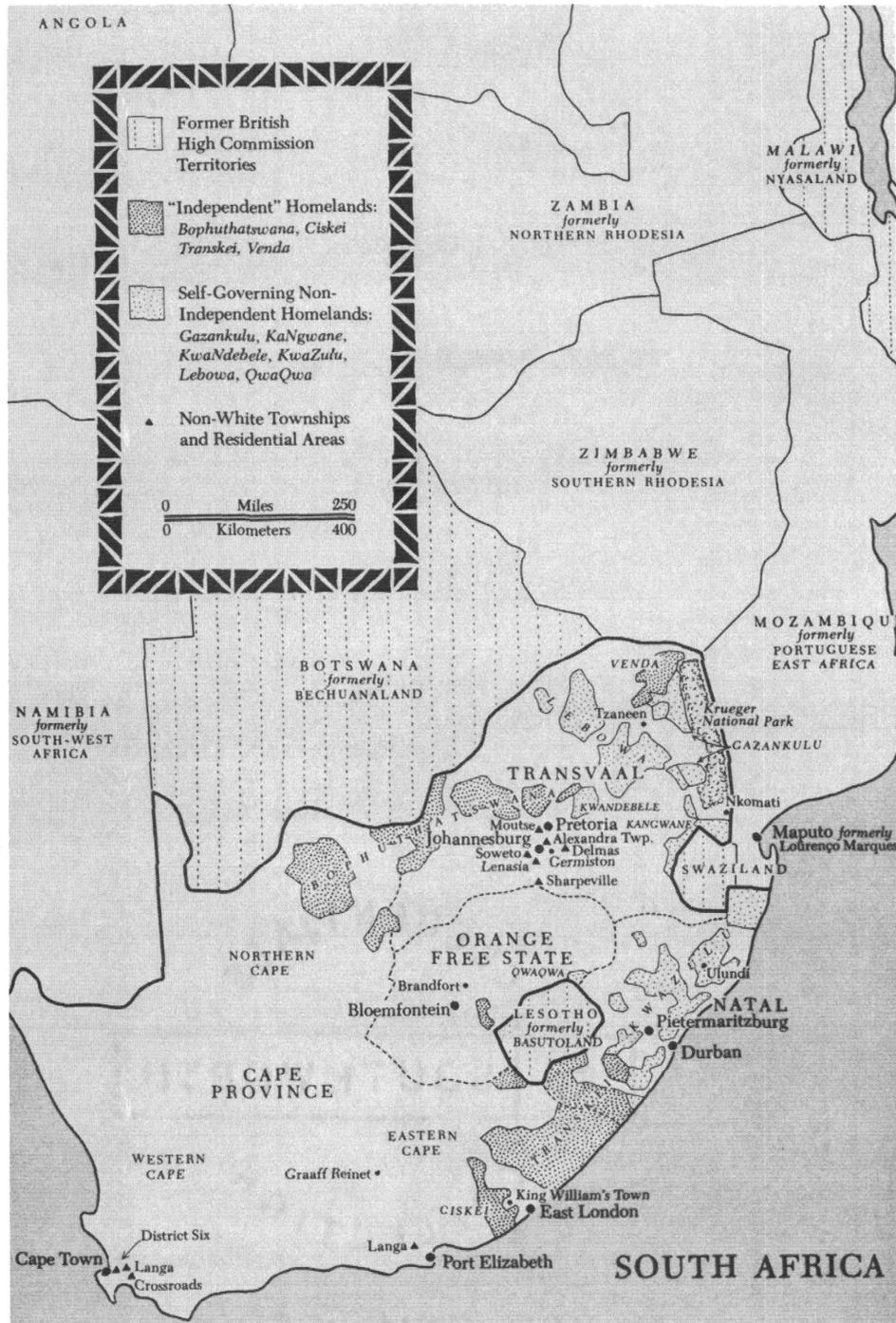


Figure 4. Map of South Africa during apartheid.

Since homelands were not economically self-sustaining, people were forced to serve as migrant laborers in white-owned mines, farms, and homes. Yet, they had no political representation or even citizenship in South Africa as a whole, since neither

Coloreds nor Africans could vote. Verwoerd also disallowed capitalist investment in the homelands (Thompson 1990). By 1970, whites in manufacturing and construction were earning six times that of Africans, while white mineworkers were earning 21 times what Africans were earning (Thompson 1990:195). As Fredrickson (1995) argues, Grand Apartheid resulted in a numerical majority becoming a functional minority. For whites as a whole, but particularly Afrikaners, apartheid led to economic improvement. In 1946, the average Afrikaner had an income that was 47 percent of English-speakers; in 1976 it was 76 percent (Thompson 1990).

### **Resistance to Segregation and Apartheid**

Many leaders in Colored, Indian, and African communities resisted both segregation and apartheid. In 1902, the Colored organization, the African Political Organization, was formed; the South African Native National Congress (which became the African National Congress (ANC)) was formulated in 1912; and the South African Indian Congress was created in 1923 (Thompson 1990:174). Delegations to both England and Versailles attempted to raise awareness of the situation in the Union, but to little avail. Another important beginning was the formation of the cultural organization among Zulus called Inkatha. In the 1920s King Solomon formed this organization to retain the cohesiveness of the Zulu nation (Deegan 2001:17). Later, this group became the liberation movement called the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

Resistance movements in South Africa during the 20<sup>th</sup> century were shaped by, among others, two different ideologies, liberalism and Africanism. Liberalism was promoted by liberals who argued that all individuals in South Africa should have equal rights upheld by the law, i.e., one person, one vote. The African National Congress

(ANC) represents such a liberal group. In general, the ANC encouraged interracial resistance against segregation, pass laws, and apartheid. A second ideology, Africanism or Pan-Africanism, promoted the spiritual, intuitive, and communal aspects of African traditional culture as a better alternative to European materialism, individualism, and domination (Fredrickson 1995). In the spirit of Marcus Garvey's black nationalism from the early part of the century, Africanists wanted "Africa for the Africans" (Fredrickson 1995:280); whites were not welcome in these Africanist groups. The Pan African Congress (PAC) is an example of an Africanist group. While Africanists linked black oppression to capitalism, liberals emphasized that race was a social construct that the human race as a whole needed to move beyond (Dubow 1995).

The ANC largely sought to work within the system to resist government laws, but beginning in 1944 younger members officially started the ANC Youth League out of dissatisfaction with their elders' lack of success. The Youth League included such leaders as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo. They sought to implement a stronger resistance to segregation and apartheid through boycotts, strikes, and other forms of noncooperation and by aligning themselves with others who were against segregation and apartheid: whites, Indians/Asians, Coloreds, Communists, Gandhians, and Christians (Fredrickson 1995:245). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, mass civil disobedience became a key method of resistance.

The first significant example of this, the Defiance Campaign in 1952, was a mass movement made up of a coalition of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC). Individuals defied apartheid laws in a massive protest, during which 8,000 people were arrested (Thompson 1990:208). This campaign was not successful in halting

apartheid legislation, but it did increase the membership of the ANC. The hope for liberation was sparked. The government did not hold back in undermining this resistance movement. It banned leaders from public activity and accused them of serious crimes (Fredrickson 1995).

Such interracial efforts led to the creation of an important historical document called the Freedom Charter. In 1955, a multiracial alliance wrote this document that envisioned a social democratic society and declared, “South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white” (Fredrickson 1995:251). Groups that made up this “Congress Alliance” were the ANC, SAIC, the Congress of Democrats (white leftists), and the South African Coloured People’s Organization (Fredrickson 1995:282). In opposition to this interracial resistance, in 1959 a number of individuals broke off from the ANC to form the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). These activists wanted a more Africanist movement, as opposed to a multiracial one.

When, in 1960, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) led a protest against passes at the police station in Sharpeville, 69 protestors were killed by police, signaling that nonviolent protests would only be met with force from the government (Fredrickson 1995). The Sharpeville Massacre sparked riots and unrest throughout the country and brought widespread criticism from around the world. As a result of the massacre, blacks who could do so fled the country. This began a migration that would continue throughout the 1980s. Both ANC and PAC leaders were arrested and these organizations were banned. As a result, anti-apartheid leaders felt that the only way to proceed was through violent struggle; the *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) (MK) was formed in 1961 as the militant arm of the ANC and *Pogo* became the militant arm of the PAC. Only a

few years later, the government raided the secret headquarters of the ANC, arresting its leaders. At the Livonia Trials, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, and a number of others were sentenced to life imprisonment. Much of the resistance movement was broken, for now.

White allies, including Afrikaners, English-speakers, and Jews, also played a key role in the resistance movement. In 1962, the white leftist group, Congress of Democrats, was also banned. White liberals also formed an armed resistance group called the *African Resistance Movement* (Fredrickson 1995). The National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) pushed for academic freedom and opposed racial segregation, and the Black Sash was a group of white women who ran a number of very visible protests of their own. One key political ally was Helen Suzman, the sole parliamentary opposition voice against the Nationalist Party and the United Party from 1961-1974. As a representative of the Progressive Party, she was not only anti-apartheid but also against the more neutral United Party for their support of the repression of ‘communists’ and ‘terrorists’, i.e., anyone who was anti-apartheid.

In the 1970s Black Consciousness emerged as a popular ideology, promoting the idea that blacks should be proud and should believe in their own abilities and value (Fredrickson 1995). Stephen Biko served as the main leader of Black Consciousness, a movement that inspired thousands of school children to protest the government’s demand that half of their subjects be taught in Afrikaans (Thompson 1990). From their perspective, Afrikaans was the language of the oppressor. On June 16, 1976, students protested widely and police opened fire on a group of students in Soweto. In response, riots and strikes erupted throughout the country. By the end of 1976, 575 people were

dead and 2389 were wounded (Deegan 2001). The image of 13-year old Hector Peterson, mortally wounded by police, brought worldwide notoriety to the actions of the South African government (Figure 5).



Figure 5. A classmate carries the body of Hector Peterson, who was shot and killed by police in the Soweto uprising of 1976.

After Soweto, the apartheid government increased its heavy-handed militarism against anyone attempting to organize protests. In response, large numbers of young black activists, known as the class of '76, fled the country to join the anti-apartheid movement active in neighboring countries. In 1977, Stephen Biko was arrested and tortured so badly that he died while in detention. Publicity surrounding this event further shamed apartheid leaders in the eyes of the international community, which caused the government to make some minor concessions, such as improving education for blacks and allowing Africans to eat in white restaurants (Deegan 2001).

Another group of emigrants were urban, anti-apartheid English-speakers who opposed the government's suppression of all opposition and who wanted to avoid conscription (Louw and Mersham 2001). Between 1977 and 1984 seventeen thousand English-speaking South Africans had relocated to Australia alone. Seen as having taken the easy way out by those who remained in the country, these English-speakers were said to have made the 'chicken run' (Louw and Mersham 2001:311).

### **1980s: the End of Apartheid**

During the 1980s, the anti-apartheid movement solidified, international sanctions were imposed on South Africa, and a civil war ensued. This decade was to be apartheid's last, despite efforts by the Nationalist Party government to maintain geographical, economic, social, and political segregation. In the early 1980s, the government attempted to appease (and divide) the opposition by creating a tricameral parliament, adding Colored and Indian (but not black) representation to white representation. Many individuals within Colored and Indian communities recognized the government's 'divide and conquer' technique, but others hoped that these changes would eventually lead towards black inclusion as well. Overall, support from these communities was not as great as the government had hoped.

In 1983, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was formed to oppose this new constitution and eventually became the key to organized resistance and the downfall of apartheid. The UDF stood by the Freedom Charter and supported the ANC. A multiracial organization of approximately 2 million members, the UDF brought countrywide unification to over 700 anti-apartheid groups (Deegan 2001). From civic groups to schoolchildren, this was a more grassroots, widespread resistance than what

had occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. From mining strikes to bus boycotts to school stayaways (essentially strikes), activists used every means possible to raise awareness of their situation and crumble the apartheid state. Fredrickson (1995) argues that it was the grassroots nature of this resistance that made it more successful, in contrast to the previous, more centralized anti-apartheid struggle, which was effectively suppressed through the removal of its central leadership.

This widespread community resistance also included violence within townships and homelands. For example, attempts to make the country ungovernable led to attacks on black councilors and other political representatives who were thought to be collaborating with the government. Vigilante groups attacked and killed these accused collaborators, who were often convicted in kangaroo courts (courts set up by local individuals who had no legal authority). One notoriously widespread method of killing those who were thought to be collaborators was to light a gasoline-filled tire placed around a person's neck, or "necklacing." In many cases, just going to work on a day that a national strike was declared was seen as collaboration and was met with violence.

However, the larger context for this community-level violence was what many have deemed an 'undeclared war' by the government towards those who were part of the anti-apartheid struggle (Deegan 2001). The government responded to large-scale boycotts, demonstrations, protests, and strikes with renewed efforts to gain back control. Through a program of 'total onslaught' the government used propaganda, education, and state-controlled media to defend the extreme measures they were taking against any resistance to the state. The state propaganda argued that any opposition to the state was a communist threat and had to be met with a strong hand. Total onslaught also involved

military control over townships within the country as well as military attacks on anti-apartheid activities in neighboring countries.

In declaring states of emergencies throughout the 1980s, the government granted a dangerous level of control to the South African Police (SAP) and the South African Defense Force (SADF). Individuals could be held in prison without trial, police were given the power to control black areas, judicial oversight of police was scaled back, and those who were in the security forces had indemnity against being punished for their actions (Deegan 2001:63). At the same time, journalists were banned from reporting anything the government did not approve of, so the state's violence remained largely unrecognized by those, mostly whites, who were not near it or targeted by it.

Another important element of propaganda was an emphasis on black-on-black violence, specifically conflict between the ANC (largely Xhosa) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which is mostly Zulu. By arguing that violence within black communities was largely self-inflicted ethnic violence, the government tried to absolve itself of responsibility for the real causes of the anti-apartheid struggle. It also used this excuse to defend an increase in militarization of these areas and justify the lack of judicial oversight on this militarization. The government played on stereotypes that blacks were not able to rule themselves, were prone to irrational action, and could not get along with each other, to defend white areas against the rising violence through the use of checkpoints, increased policing, and widespread arrests.

What many in the country did not know at the time was that low-intensity warfare tactics were used by the government to maintain this so-called 'black-on-black' violence. Between 1986 and 1989, these tactics included detaining community leaders, using

vigilante groups to break up anti-apartheid organizations, ‘surgically removing’ (assassinating) anti-apartheid leaders and participants, and increasing the number of black municipal guards and auxiliary police (Deegan 2001:64). Questions remain as to the level of infiltration of this ‘third force’ into local groups such as the IFP, but suffice it to say, government funds and weaponry were supplied, to some extent, to the IFP to destabilize the ANC and promote the perspective that the violence in the country was mostly black-on-black.

To help enforce these military measures, the government conscripted young white men into military service, which again induced many English-speaking males to avoid their required service by emigrating (Louw and Mersham 2001). Yet, not all of them left. According to my informants, most conscripts were English-speakers, in contrast to the more permanent military personnel who were generally Afrikaner. In my research, I found that this experience was the first time many young white males understood the extent of the military power that was used to repress the anti-apartheid and communist movements. During the 1980s, the requirement for service was two years followed by up to ten years of service as a reservist. Many individuals were sent to townships or to the ‘border wars’ (see Figure 4). These border wars involved armed conflict with the liberation movement in what was then called South West Africa and is today Namibia. The South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO) worked within Namibia and also Angola to fight against South African forces.<sup>3</sup> The South African government defended its involvement as securing the border against this ‘communist threat’ and *swart gevaar* (black threat), but its goal was to dismantle the independence movement and anti-apartheid cells in Namibia and retain control over this mineral-rich country.

The conflict in Angola heightened in the 1980s with Cuba and the Soviet Union supporting the Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and South Africa siding with (and the U.S. financially and militarily assisting) the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Since this was a situation where local politics had become embedded in the Cold War, when the Soviet Union collapsed, funding and support for MPLA dwindled and the increasing international pressure on South Africa forced the government to retreat from the battle against SWAPO. In 1989, Namibia held its first elections and in 1990 became independent. In sum, a report from the British Commonwealth committee estimated that these destabilizing tactics in neighboring countries “led to the death of one million people, made a further three million homeless, and caused \$35 billion worth of damage” to their economies (Thompson 1990:236).

The failure of the border wars, international sanctions,<sup>4</sup> and worsening conditions within the country eroded the social acceptance of apartheid by whites. Some apartheid laws were lifted, so the social mixing of racial groups increased. For some of my white informants, this resulted in a greater awareness of apartheid’s impact on people of color. In other cases, white conscripts had become more aware of the military action against anti-apartheid activists in the townships and bordering countries. Some who were conscripted left the country to avoid service while others refused to show up for reserve service. Other whites joined forces against the increased repression of the state by participating in such groups as the End Conscription Campaign.

In response, the government made a few significant changes. In 1986 it ended the pass laws. An estimated 20 million Africans had been prosecuted for pass law offenses

between 1916 and 1986 (Deegan 2001:52). At the same time, some white universities opened their doors to people of color. Initially these were mostly English-speaking universities, with Afrikaner universities desegregating later on. The ban on multiracial political parties and on interracial sex and marriage were both lifted (Thompson 1990). The government also desegregated some hotels, restaurants, trains, and public facilities.

In 1989, when F.W. de Klerk stepped in to take over the presidency after his predecessor became ill, he sought a political solution to the government's opponents rather than a military one (Deegan 2001:69). Yet, fears of resistance from right-wing individuals who were members of the Conservative Party and the Nersstigste Nasionale Party threatened proposals to negotiate with 'the enemy' (anti-apartheid leaders). In the 1989 elections, 40 percent of Afrikaners supported the Conservative Party (Deegan 2001:68), so these fears were not unwarranted. Despite this fact, de Klerk unbanned the ANC, PAC, and the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1990. Individuals who had been imprisoned, some for more than a quarter century, because they were members or leaders of these banned groups were also released, most notably Nelson Mandela, who became the president of the ANC. Key apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act, the Lands Act, the Population and Registration Act, and the Separate Amenities Act were also abolished.

Between 1990 and 1994, negotiations between the Nationalist Party and former resistance leaders took place under sometimes extremely tenuous circumstances. The country still suffered from widespread violence. Fears of a right-wing coup hung in the background with questions as to the loyalty of the heavily armed, Afrikaner army and military (i.e., the permanent force, as opposed to the, mostly, English-speaking

conscripts). When elections did finally take place in 1994 and the country did not erupt into a bloody civil war, leaders around the world declared this event a miracle. For the first time in history, whites, blacks, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians stood in line together to place their vote. 'One person, one vote' had finally been won for each individual in South Africa.

The ANC won this first election with 62.6 percent of the vote. The National Party gained 20.4 percent of the vote (Deegan 2001). With Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected black president in the country's history, the "New South Africa" was ushered in. Following the ANC's long tradition of nonracialism, the focus of this government was on ensuring a safe transition for all people of all races and creating a Rainbow Nation. As such, the Government of National Unity was formed in 1994. This ensured representation of percentage minority groups, i.e., white parties, and put in place the 'sunset clause', which kept a large percentage of the civil service and police force in place.

### **Post-Apartheid South Africa**

When the ANC took over in 1994, Mandela maintained a focus on the social democratic platform of the Freedom Charter. Yet, due to his commitment to make this a smooth transition, he first focused on political transformation and not as much on economic change. (See Figure 6 for new province names). A key element of this attempt to ease into a new era was the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which provided "public acknowledgement of and reparation to the victims of gross abuses" under apartheid (Deegan 2001:139). This commission was formulated to

ensure that past harms would be accounted for and would allow the country to heal its wounds as it moved forward.

Alongside the emotional and psychological inheritance from apartheid the ANC faced other challenges. In 1990, 68 percent of black households were below the poverty line in rural areas, while 83 percent were below the poverty line in the former rural homelands (Christiansen 1996:385). In 1994, whites owned 87 percent of the land, though they made up only 15 percent of the population (Walker 1998:2). Lastly, the economy was not diversified. Until the early 1990s, 80 percent of the value of shares quoted on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange came from only four mining groups, half of which came from Anglo-American Corporation and De Beers (Deegan 2001:115).

Coupled with these were constraints brought about by changes that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s that greatly affected the ability of the ANC to redistribute land and wealth. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Nationalist government adjusted the laws to allow for more privatization. As a result, much of the wealth of the state was transferred to private ownership and, still today, approximately 70-80 percent of the economy is under the control of whites. Second, with the fall of socialism and communism, the ANC was strongly encouraged to leave behind its socialist-leaning rhetoric about economic redistribution. International interests in the form of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and US and European corporations combined with powerful business interests within South Africa to persuade the ANC to adopt a more neoliberal approach to the economy. This has hampered the ANC's ability to solve the sundry problems the government inherited from apartheid. Third, the current era of globalization has both empowered South Africa and left its poorest very vulnerable. New

markets have opened up for trade, but at the same time, many services such as electric and water have been privatized and are run by non-South African corporations. This has resulted in a worsening of poverty among those who were most oppressed by apartheid (Desai 2002). Poor people who live in townships and homelands now are being forced to pay for rent, water, and electricity. Under apartheid, these were provided for, to some extent, by the government. In some townships and former homelands, unemployment is greater than 40 percent. This new exposure to the global economy has left many millions even more vulnerable to poverty and disease than during apartheid.

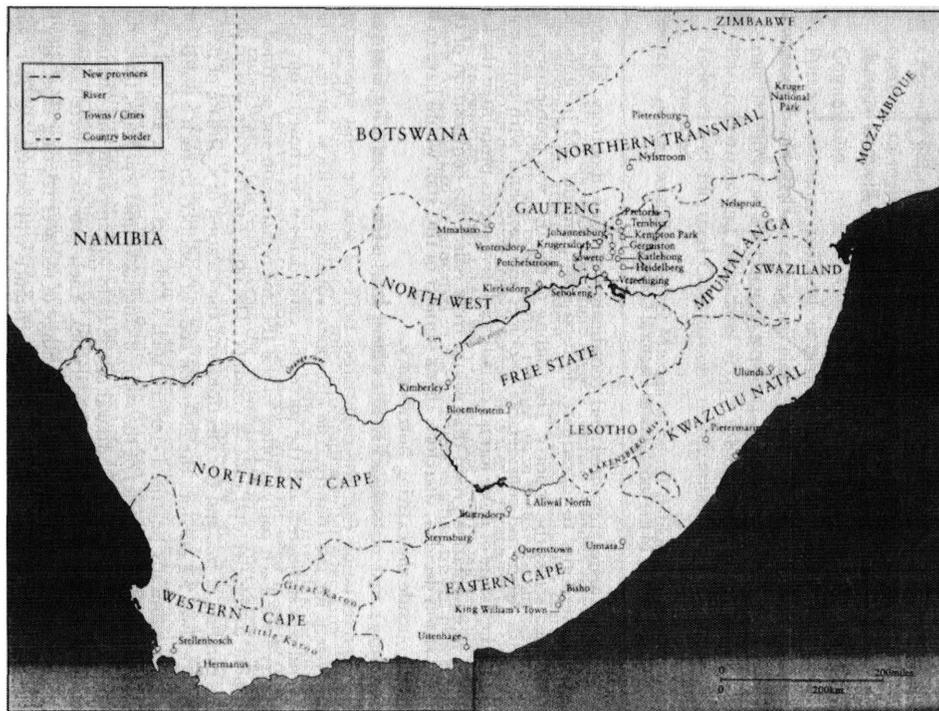


Figure 6. Province names of the New South Africa, 1994.

As of 2004, in general, South Africa appears to have successfully survived the transition to democracy. The economy is stable with low inflation, 1.6 million houses have been built for the poor, and 9 million more people have access to water (Pearce 2004). Yet, crime, 35-40 percent unemployment, 5.3 million people with AIDS/HIV, and lack of public services are daily concerns that threaten the survival of democracy.

Inequalities of the past also remain; South Africa competes with Brazil for being the country with the highest income inequality in the world (James and Lever 2001:47). Black economic empowerment (BEE) programs were supposed to address this inequality, yet they have only created a small black elite and not brought relief to the millions of poor blacks (Jones 2004; Mda 2004).

Yet, given these challenges, it was a surprise to many that the majority of South Africans polled said that life was better under apartheid—though the majority of people do not want to return to apartheid (Morin 2004b). One woman from Soweto, though, explained why she would go back: “White people were oppressing us. But there was no poverty. There were jobs. Kids were going to school. This was a better community” (Morin 2004b). Another person stated, “I feel totally betrayed...The old apartheid was against blacks, the new apartheid is against the poor” (Anjaiah 2004).

Disappointment with democracy is also reflected in the decrease in voter turnout. In 1994, 90 percent of adults voted. Elections in 1999 brought out 70 percent of voters (Morin 2004b) and in 2004, 60 percent of the eligible population voted (Schlemmer 2004). For blacks, unemployment and crime/security are the most important problems facing the country while for whites, crime/security and corruption are the most important. For blacks, corruption was ninth on the list of important problems (Washington Post et al. 2004). Whites criticize the murder of white farmers by blacks, which has placed South Africa on the UN Genocide Watch from 1996 until the present (Stanton 2004). Blacks are more concerned about housing and AIDS (Washington Post et al. 2004).

In a BBC News UK edition series on race, blacks responded that they are willing to reconcile but they felt whites are not so interested ([www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)). As one

black person said, whites still segregate themselves in schools and churches.

Indians/Asians and Coloreds still feel they are stuck in the middle, i.e., they were not white enough before and now they are not black enough. Some whites say they are now the oppressed and that the police do not respond to their needs, while other whites say they feel relief from guilt now that apartheid is over (Morin 2004b). However, 71 percent of blacks interviewed say race relations are better than under apartheid; 67 percent of Coloreds, 55 percent of Indians, and 54 percent of whites (Washington Post et al. 2004).

Right-wing extremists have proved to be less of a threat than many people feared. Hoping to gain independence in a homeland of their own making, these conservatives have congregated in Orania, a small town in an arid region of the Northern Cape province. Though some bomb attacks have been instigated by right-wing groups such as the *Boeremag*, they do not pose a significant threat to the current government.

Overall, South Africa has adjusted to democracy and globalization fairly well, given the challenges the nation inherited from apartheid. Key issues that will shape the future of the country include the following. Whites still control between 70-80 percent of the economy, which is largely based on mining. Diversification of the economy and redistribution of wealth remain important to South Africa's future, both of which are still dependent on the role of whites. Second, critics fear that the ANC's continued popularity and dominance in the last three elections signals the onset of an 'illiberal democracy' in which the constitution is overshadowed by the dominance of one-party rule and opposition remains weak (Steyn 2003). In the 2004 elections the ANC won the majority vote, even in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, where the Democratic Alliance,

Inkatha Freedom Party, and the New National Party have had more power than in other provinces (News24.com election results; Pressly 2004). Those who oppose these criticisms argue that the Constitutional Court, Human Rights Commission, and the Auditor General secure democratic rights (Schlemmer 29004) and that a consistent leadership is necessary for fully ushering in democracy. Matters of race continue to be one key component of this struggle for long-term democracy in South Africa. Increasing the strength of such oppositional parties as the Democratic Alliance and the Inkatha Freedom Party while expanding their support base beyond a particular racial and ethnic group are essential to providing a check and balance to the ANC. Finally, 'brain drain' continues to impact the country. The outflow of skilled workers, most of whom are white, impacts the economic and skills base of the country. White emigrants play a key role in the future of South Africa, both economically and in their potential to responsibly account for the past. Some ex-pats acknowledge this and either return to South Africa or contribute their skills from abroad. The contribution or resistance of skilled white workers will continue to shape South Africa in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> As early as 1822, the term *Afrikander* was a Dutch word used to signify a "South African native of Dutch descent," though this term was not in common usage yet (www.etymonline.com). *Afrikaans* is the name of the language and literature of Afrikaners that came into its own more fully in the 1930s. *Boer* historically was used to differentiate Dutch and German settlers from their European ancestry. *Afrikaner* was used to distinguish these Boers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In post-apartheid South Africa, *Boer* is used by conservatives to identify their ancestral link to the Great Trek and their history of resistance to the English. The term *Afrikaan* is used by those who want to claim that they are African and not aligned with Afrikaners and their historical support of the National Party. Individuals who supported the Nationalist Party claim the term *Afrikaner*, as do some conservatives.

<sup>2</sup> Under Grand Apartheid, the term black was used to signify all persons of color—Africans, Indians/Asians, Coloreds. With the influence of Africanist thought, black came to signify Africans and was used to link the struggle of black Africans with that of African Americans. After the rise of the Black Consciousness movement in the 1970s in South Africa, black was used to signify all those who previously were designated as nonwhite and who fought against oppression by whites and became a more overtly political term (Fredrickson 1995). In the history chapter, I have used the term African until the point where I discuss the anti-apartheid movement. From that point on, I use black to signify Africans. Throughout the thesis I have used black to mean Africans to avoid confusion with the definition of the term in the U.S.

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<sup>3</sup> Counter-insurgency attacks into Angola were made in order to destroy SWAPO units in Angola as well as eliminate anti-apartheid cells. Communists were supporting the Marxist-oriented liberation groups and the émigré anti-apartheid struggle that was based in these neighboring countries, so there was some justification for the government's anti-communist propaganda. However, the government covered up their own paramilitary attacks against anti-apartheid Freedom Fighters and those who wanted independence for Namibia and who were not simply communists. Called Koevoet, these South African counter-insurgency forces have been accused of extreme human rights violations. A number of the men who served in the Koevoet have suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or what one of my informants said was called 'bush mad'.

<sup>4</sup> After the failure of the Reagan administration's "constructive engagement" with the white Nationalist Party government, movements within the U.S., including significant African American groups, called for a strongly anti-apartheid stance. Finally, in 1986, the U.S. imposed economic sanctions on South Africa.

## **Chapter 4 Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks**

To lay the theoretical groundwork for my analysis, I discuss the history of race as a concept. I follow this with a summary of differences between what some scholars call ‘new racism’ and ‘old-fashioned racism,’ to provide a framework for understanding how racism operates. From there, I examine whiteness studies and a significant debate within this field and discuss Melissa Steyn’s work on post-apartheid whiteness in South Africa. Focusing on the question of whiteness, I look to practice theory, particularly Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, kinds of capital, and social fields for their relevance to studies of race relations and whiteness. I conclude by placing my informants within current anthropological concepts and categories of immigrants, migrants, exiles, diasporas, and transnationalism.

### **Origins of the ‘Race’ Concept**

Due to the space limitations of this thesis, the trends I discuss are generalized and do not allow for local variations. Racial categories were initially created during European expansion as early as the 1400s to explain biological differences between groups of people. Key biological characteristics that were used to distinguish between groups were skin color, hair type, nose structures, and skull and/or brain sizes. Whereas racial categories initially explained human differences based on geographical location, by 1795 Johann Friedrich Blumenbach’s classification system, among others, made the critical move of placing these races in a “hierarchy of worth, oddly based on perceived beauty” (Gould 1994:66). This value-oriented racial classification eventually became a

fundamental ingredient in the justification of such oppressive systems as slavery, colonialism, the Holocaust, and Apartheid.

The five race groups Blumenbach classified were Caucasian (white), Mongolian (Asian), Ethiopian (African/Black), American (indigenous peoples in the Americas), and Malayan (Pacific Islanders/Australian aboriginals) (Sanjek 1994:5). Blumenbach arranged these groups according to how far they were from the ideal, Caucasian, based on the belief that all humanity originated in the Caucasus mountain region that lies between the Black and Caspian Seas on the border of Europe and Asia. These people had superior beauty that ‘degenerated’, i.e., changed as a result of climate and habitat, as the human species spread (Gould 1994:68). According to Blumenbach, such degeneration left Mongolians and Ethiopians as the two race groups that were least attractive, compared with Caucasians. In his hierarchy, Americans and Malayans were intermediary racial groups between Caucasians, at the top, and Mongolians and Ethiopians at the bottom, respectively. Blumenbach’s notions of degeneration were later expanded to support social Darwinism and eugenics, which I discuss below.

Blumenbach’s is just one example of racial hierarchies that were used to naturalize inequalities between racial groups. Hierarchies based on linkages between people’s physical and mental traits influenced the social, economic, political, and religious structures of European colonialism. These characteristics were thought to be essential and unchanging. The following is an example of how assumptions of psychological characteristics were linked to biology and ancestry during the slave trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: “the African was by nature coarse, lascivious, not prone to civilization” (Oostindie 1998:353).

Scholars have argued that race classification became particularly useful as a rationalization for the oppression of ‘racialized’ groups of people, primarily slaves (Montagu 1997:60). In the New World, slavery became distinct from Old World slavery in that the humanity of slaves was not acknowledged through basic protections of the right to marry, own property, and receive education (Browne 2004). Definitions and arguments about racial hierarchies shifted over time in different locales, but in some fashion race classification was often used to justify the brutality of the New World system of slavery on the basis that Africans were lesser humans.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, when the slave trade came under attack and was eventually outlawed, attacks on the “mental and physical qualities of Blacks” (Montagu 1997:70) and other people of color did not disappear. Over time, racial hierarchies were used to defend structural and social inequalities between white settlers and indigenous peoples, slaves, and former slaves.

Between 1853 and 1855, Joseph Arthur comte de Gobineau, a French diplomat, composed the influential *Essay on the Inequality of Races* that would shape racist ideologies until the 1960s (Omi and Winant 1994). Two prominent themes of his would be woven into future race-based structures: “beliefs that superior races produced superior cultures and that racial intermixtures resulted in the degradation of the superior racial stock” (Omi and Winant 1994:64). As these beliefs shaped economic and political structures, whites could justify their dominance on a number of levels—class, culture, religion. Montagu (1997:72) argues, “The idea of race was, in fact, the deliberate creation of an exploiting class seeking to maintain and defend its privileges against what was profitably regarded as an inferior social caste.” As a result, the social meaning and

significance of white skin grew to become a symbol of a superior ancestry. As Steyn (2001b:5) explains, this invention of whiteness provided people from Europe with a “supranationalism” with which they could defend their ‘white’ interests. As such, white skin became shorthand for the following superior cultural traits: “European language, technological advantage, and Christianity” (Steyn 2001b:6).

On the flip side, for indigenous peoples and other people of color, ‘whiteness’ meant domination. The notion that Europeans were chosen people, culturally distinct, and more pure than other races was a deeply held idea that remained salient and useful for defending privileges for whites and denigrating people of color—despite the fact that Enlightenment thinking promoted the idea of a common humanity and equality among all peoples, albeit all rational people. In some form or another, various “sincere fictions” (Faegin et al. 2001) about the inferiority of nonwhite racial groups were used to rationalize genocide and the denigration of indigenous peoples and slaves.

Social Darwinism and eugenics exemplify popularized examples of such ‘sincere fictions’ based on fears of degeneration of the white race. Herbert Spencer, writing in the 1860s, argued for social Darwinism and the notion of ‘survival of the fittest’ in terms of racial groups (McGee and Warms 2000:12). Social Darwinism promoted the idea that indigenous peoples and Africans were savages that needed to be eradicated or else encouraged to evolve (but not by mixing with whites).

Eugenics was born when Darwin’s cousin, Sir Frances Galton, in 1883 argued that people could and should be bred for selected traits such as intelligence (McGee and Warms 2000:454). Under colonialism, eugenics was used to justify anti-miscegenation laws, forced sterilization, segregation, and other oppressions in order to prevent the white

race from deteriorating by being mixed with other race groups. The categories of European and African characteristics are listed below, showing the binary components of a “psychological map” that informed colonialism and apartheid (Steyn 1998:108).

**Europeans**

White  
Christian  
honest  
civilized  
intelligent, rational  
cultured  
scientific  
progressing, modern  
ordered, restrained  
knowledgeable, conscious  
predictable, certain  
loyal to duty

**Africans**

Black  
heathen  
untrustworthy  
savag  
emotional, instinctual  
natural  
superstitious  
stagnating, primeval  
anarchical, spontaneous  
ignorant, unconscious  
mysterious, undependable  
self-gratifying

As Steyn (2001b:16) points out, this kind of polarization and ranking of groups of people based on their race also meant that there was a “psychological dependence of the oppressor on the oppressed for a sense of identity.” White Europeans could leverage a sense of superiority and dominance over people of color, but in doing so, they also were locked into essentialized definitions of what it meant to be white. Since the poles were white and black, generally what it meant to be white was NOT to be black (Said 1978; Fanon 1967). Depending on the country and the time period, this was regulated either legally or socially, or both.

Though definitions of whiteness and blackness were bound to one another, ideas of what it meant to be human were universalized in such a way that ‘being human’ by default came to mean being Western and bourgeois. Steyn (2001b:21) explores how this universalization of Western ‘essential’ qualities of human nature contributed to the formation of a “master narrative of whiteness.”<sup>1</sup> This narrative left unmarked the

specifically Europeanness of these definitions of being human and served to mark those who were oppressed as deviant from this norm, i.e., whites were civilized, blacks were savage. She argues that no account was made to understand how people were affected by economic, political, or social relationships; rather, inequalities between whites and people of color were seen as natural. Though this master narrative was not coherent or the same everywhere, it operated wherever European expansion and colonialism existed to justify the domination of people of color by whites (Steyn 2001b). Bonilla-Silva (2003:9) confirms that this type of “racialized social system(s), or white supremacy for short, became global and affected all societies” that were colonized by Europeans. An interweaving of ‘whiteness’ with other identities reinforced an international hierarchy of races, colors, religions, and cultures that still surrounds us all (Sanjek 1994:10). For more on the historical formation of whiteness, see Allen (1994) or Roediger (1991, 1994).

In the early 1900s, some scholars and scientists began to question the arguments supporting the biological basis of racial classification. During this time period, Franz Boas, an American anthropologist, changed the terms of the debate. He proved that human skull sizes could change within generations of European immigrants who moved from the Old World to the New (Sanjek 1994:6). His findings proved that human skull sizes were not unchanging, essential traits, even within extended families. Since racial classification had been based on arguments about the smaller brains of blacks compared to whites, his findings caused quite a stir among scholars and scientists who argued for racial hierarchies on the basis of skull sizes.

Boas also disconnected culture from biology, arguing that culture was socially

informed while biology was shaped by environment and could change (Sanjek 1994). Boas' work and that of his students, for example, Margaret Mead and Zora Neale Hurston, was highly contested by those who argued for the existence of essential and biological bases for race, but they provided a basis for understanding that social categories are dynamic and not essential and static. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anticolonial and civil rights movements further undermined biological assumptions of racial differences (Omi and Winant 1994). Out of this came a general agreement among scientists and scholars that there was no biological basis for the concept of race and that the idea of race was a social construct. As a result of these ground-breaking changes, important research into the historical construction of the concept of race in local and global situations has transformed our understanding of how racial concepts work to define people's interpretation of their lives and experiences (Hartigan 1999).

A significant distinction points to the fact that racism is more than just prejudice or discrimination towards people of color; rather, racism and discrimination are structural and "the product of centuries of systematic exclusion, exploitation, and disregard of racially defined minorities" (Omi and Winant 1994:69). Omi and Winant's (1994:55) concept of racial formation focuses on the sociopolitical processes that surround the way the meaning of race changes and is transformed to have localized meanings in particular situations and discourses in various social climates. Racial formation recognizes the "social nature of race, the absence of any essential racial characteristics, the historical flexibility of racial meanings and categories, the conflictual character of race at both the 'micro-' and 'macro-social' levels, and the irreducible political aspect of racial dynamics" (Omi and Winant 1994:4).

When accounting for racism, it is necessary to understand the impact of race on identity, ideologies, *and* institutions/structures (Chennault 1997; Omi and Winant 1994). Racially informed structures continue to influence where people live, what jobs they have, how they dress, their ability to move up the opportunity structure, whether or not they immigrate and how, what they eat and how they acquire that food. Far from having moved beyond race, racial formation continues to inform both global and local structures.

**“New Racism?”**

Discussions of “old-fashioned” racism versus “new” racism in the U.S. shed light on issues of racism in post-apartheid South Africa. In both countries, racism is often associated with old-fashioned racism, which is more overt and blatant; for example, a white person refusing to stand next to a black person. Defining racism solely in these terms glosses over the ways racism also can exist in a defense of the status quo. As I will show, such defenses of the status quo often result in the maintenance of structures that continue to sustain racial inequalities.

The abundant hope that ran through the United States after the political transformations that came out of the Civil Rights Movement slowly eroded as it became clear that significant social transformation would not ensue. A similar shadow followed the honeymoon period in South Africa after the first democratic elections when significant political changes occurred but changes in the economy and opportunity structure were not as significant. In the U.S., Kenneth Clark stated in 1967: “The masses of Negroes are now starkly aware that recent civil rights victories benefited a very small number of middle-class Negroes while their predicament remained the same or worsened” (Omi and Winant 1994:101). In 1985, Rev. Joseph Lowery, president of the

Southern Christian Leadership Conference, argued, “We have kept the faith but the nation has not kept its promise” (Omi and Winant 1994:113). Similar sentiments have been articulated by people of color in South Africa who are disappointed that affirmative action and Black Empowerment programs have merely created a small black elite. Poverty and unemployment still surround and limit the majority of blacks.

Where has the resistance by whites to the progress of minority groups come from and why does it persist? Political leadership in the U.S. under the Reagan administration in the 1980s gave rise to a conservatism that divided the collective drive of earlier resistance movements. Rather than outright racist attacks, these efforts undermined policies that were aimed at ameliorating social inequalities based on race. Some of the major policies were affirmative action, busing to desegregate schools, and welfare. In trying to understand these examples of post-Civil Rights era resistance, scholars have debated whether or not this characterizes a ‘new racism’ that shapes political policy and reinscribes racial inequalities.

Are attacks on affirmative action, busing, and welfare motivated by racially-biased attitudes and ideologies or are they merely elements of a politically conservative framework (Sears et al 1997)? Many other issues are contested within this debate, but for the sake of brevity, I will focus on the main tenets of the arguments of those who believe these conservative attacks reflect a ‘new racism’.

Those who argue that there is a distinctly racial underpinning to conservative attacks on such policies as affirmative action, welfare, or school busing make the point that ‘new racism’ is a defense of ‘traditional values’ that themselves have historically arisen out of a racially-defined past. They distinguish old-fashioned/Jim Crow racism, as

situated in the period when white supremacy defended “physical segregation of and legalized discrimination against African Americans” (Sears et al. 1997). Old-Fashioned racism relied on a ‘master narrative of whiteness’ and involved overt name calling, i.e., nigger, spic, chinks; the banning of interracial marriage; segregated public spaces and schools; and laws and social customs that kept people of color in servile positions (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Others have called this “redneck racism” (McConahay 1986; McConahay and Hough 1976); “blatant racism” (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995); or “classical racism” (Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996). Apartheid in South Africa reflected this type of racism.

Differentiated from this kind of racism, ‘new racism’ or ‘colorblind racism’ centers on explanations of “contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics” (Bonilla-Silva 2003:2). Rather than being overtly racist, ‘new racism’ defends ‘nonracial’ traditional values such as “hard work, individualism, sexual repression, and delay of gratification, ... [and] patriotism and reverence for the past” (Sniderman et al 1991:424). In the U.S., policies defending these traditional values were promoted under an agenda of colorblindness, i.e., the promotion of a society that offers “opportunities for all and guarantees success for none” (Omi and Winant 1994:1). Colorblind policies were popularized as one way to defend whites against what the Reagan administration deemed “reverse discrimination.” Omi and Winant (1994:140-141) argue that this was an attack on what racial inequality *meant*. Promoters of colorblind policies did not argue that people of color should not have opportunities, rather, that they should use opportunities within a traditional value system.

Bonilla-Silva (2003:3) explains that these types of rationalizations have resulted

in covert behavior to defend contemporary racial inequality. He discusses covert behaviors such as those that impact residential segregation, including, “not showing all the available units, steering minorities and whites into certain neighborhoods, quoting higher rents or prices to minority applicants, or not advertising units at all” (Bonilla-Silva 2003:3). These kinds of covert behaviors are justified on a variety of levels. For example, busing to desegregate schools is attacked as an assault on “the community” and “the family,” and affirmative action is seen as unfair, on the basis of a defense of merit and individual effort in contrast to group rights (Omi and Winant 1994). The latter reflects a prominent argument of conservatives—i.e., that group rights for minorities are excessive and unfair and that jobs or scholarships should be awarded based only on merit, not on whether someone is part of a disenfranchised group. A number of my informants presented a similar argument in their criticisms of the aggressive affirmative action programs of the ANC. Such resistance makes a distinctive move to defend individualism, not group rights.

Ansell (1998) argues that the individualistic discourse defends equal opportunity for individuals, but not equal results for groups. It is within this framing of ‘equal opportunity’ that affirmative action is called “reverse racism” and is seen as morally wrong, harmful to the groups it attempts to help, and blamed for increasing racial conflict (Ansell 1998). In the U.S., the timing of this defense of individualism, self-reliance, and individual merit began in the 1980s and is still relevant today, since blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans are still disenfranchised on a large scale. For example, isolated and impoverished reservations still exist and blacks and Latinos do not have equal access to the housing market (Bonilla-Silva 2003:2). The turn away from race-based

measurements of group success or failure, which is the goal of colorblind policies, means that these trends would no longer be accounted for.

In my research, I found that two ways of interpreting racial politics remained salient. The two poles reflected either a conservative perspective that defended individual merit and attacked affirmative action or a laissez-faire perspective, i.e., a belief in the invisible hand of society. The sociologist Bonilla-Silva (2003:34) summarizes this attitude as “Social change should be the outcome of a rational and democratic process and not of the government’s coercive capacity.” Neither one of these addresses the underlying structural basis for continued social inequality based on race.

The comparative historian George Fredrickson (2001a) has discussed ideological colorblindness within the U.S., South Africa, and Brazil. All three of these countries adhere to some form of colorblindness, which makes it difficult to continue using race-based measurements. The ‘ideological colorblindness’ of South Africa, however, has historically been distinct from that of the U.S. Between 1910 and 1993, democracy was only offered to the white (and sometimes Colored and Indian) populations. The constitution was not viewed as colorblind; rather, it was explicitly based on racial categories. This contrasts with the U.S. where the constitution was seen as colorblind because it was based on individual human rights (Fredrickson 2001a). In South Africa, the concept of nonracialism was popularized by the anti-apartheid movement as an alternative to the race-based policies of the Nationalist Party. Nonracialism offered a platform for including people of all racial and ethnic groups. From 1994 until today, this has been the stance of the ruling ANC.

Nonracialism has resulted in a desperate conundrum in South Africa. How does

South Africa become nonracialist yet account for the past by addressing structural inequalities in the system? On the one hand, a “fundamentalist version of nonracialism” ignores real ethnic diversity and stifles efforts to adapt to that diversity (Fredrickson 2001b:23). At the same time, South Africa’s newly achieved unity is threatened by projects that emphasize group differences because divisions of the past are too vulnerable to exploitation. Yet, amelioration of the poverty and disenfranchisement that people of color suffered in South Africa cannot occur without continuing to monitor progress with race-based measurements. Even though the nonracialist policies of the ANC could be viewed as a kind of new racism, the government continues to make efforts to systematically address past inequalities, which critics cite as hypocritical and overly focused on blacks at the expense of other race groups.

However, the situation in South Africa requires structural changes to transform the economic dominance that whites still have in the country (Fredrickson 2001a). Therefore, the Employment Equities Act, affirmative action, and other programs have been put in place to account for the past. Though the intent and history of nonracialism in South Africa stands in stark contrast to the colorblind policies popular in the U.S., the end result of both of these policies gives power and legal backing to whites who want to maintain their privileged position in society and not redistribute their wealth.

### **Terminology**

I want to define a couple of key terms that I use. I have used definitions from Omi and Winant’s (1994) book *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* because I find their definitions both broad and precise. For the purposes of this project, an adequate definition of race would both: a) recognize the social construction of

race and b) give weight to the social fact of race in daily life, i.e., in ideology, institutions, and identity. The definition proposed by Omi and Winant (1994:55) for **race** accomplishes this: “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.” To differentiate between race and racism, they define **racism** as “a fundamental characteristic of social projects which create or reproduce structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race” (Omi and Winant 1994:162). Therefore, they argue, a program to provide economic resources on the basis of historically understood racial categories is not racist but promoting Asian businesses on the basis that “Asian Americans are naturally entrepreneurial” (Omi and Winant 1994:72) is racist. The latter relies on an essentialized trait that is presumed to exist for all Asian Americans. Using these definitions, then, it is not racist to discuss or point out how race works or trace its historical formation. As well, programs such as affirmative action and other empowerment programs are not racist because they provide mechanisms for addressing historical inequality between racial groups. They do not reproduce particular ideas about the essential characteristics of various race groups. Racial awareness, therefore, is not the same thing as being racist.

**Hegemony** is a term coined by Antonio Gramsci to mean the conditions that lead to consolidation of rule through a combination of coercion and consent (Omi and Winant 1994:66-67). Consent is understood to mean the way the ruling group incorporates the subordinated groups through education, media, religion, and folk wisdom, i.e., through ‘common sense’. ‘Hegemonic rule’ produces this common sense through its structures and symbols (Omi and Winant 1994:68). In turn, subordinated groups give their consent to the hegemonic rule by adhering to this ‘common sense’. The hegemony of whiteness

as symbolic capital is an example of how this type of common sense can become ingrained into the values of society. For example, the effort of blacks within South Africa to appear westernized by dressing in business suits is accepted as a common sense practice, yet this style of dress is oriented to western styles and symbols, not African.

A final distinction I want to make is between ethnicity and race. Much has been written about both of these and what qualifies as adequate distinctions between the two and how definitions of both have been shaped by political goals. In the U.S., studies of race are often submerged under studies of ethnicity (Sanjek 1994:8). In order to avoid this slippage, I define an **ethnic community** as “a group of people whose members share a common name and elements of culture, possess a myth of common origin and common historical memory, who associate themselves with a particular territory and possess a feeling of solidarity” (Sokolovskii and Tishkov 1996:192). This differs from race in terms of the focus on shared cultural meaning rather than reference to ‘human bodies.’

### **Whiteness Studies**

One area of newly emerging research is the study of whiteness. As I discussed earlier, whites leveraged the ‘master narrative of whiteness’ at certain times in history to justify slavery, colonialism, and domination. Since the 1980s, whiteness studies has attempted to understand how whiteness as a racial category has been historically constructed and how it operates in society in specific locales and social domains, particularly in relationship to other social categories such as class and gender. What differentiates this research from scholarship that has previously analyzed these is that whites, not only people of color, are looking at these issues. This scholarship has come from those in the ‘dominant’ group who attempt to own up to and understand a past that

has largely been ignored, denied, or minimized by whites. In contrast, people of color in the U.S. and Britain and elsewhere have a long history of knowledge and writing about whiteness. As hooks (1997:165) argues, this knowledge of whites was necessary for surviving and coping in a white supremacist society. It is important to place Whiteness Studies within this larger context.

One of the key sites of debate within whiteness studies parallels a similar debate in studies of the black diaspora. For example, is there something essential about being black—a unity that has arisen out of a shared history of oppression? Can this identity be called pan-African (Gilroy 1993)? Or, do we need a more pluralistic understanding of what it is to be black, recognizing that race is a social construction (Gilroy 1993)? Should the emphasis be on how hybrid or mixed our identities are, being a blend of different ethnicities, cultures, religions, and places that does not fit a neat, modernist definition (Bhabha 1995)? While the essentialist approach misses the important differences that exist in black people's experiences and adheres to dominant understandings of race, culture and nationalism (Gordon 1999:284), a pluralistic or hybrid approach does not fully acknowledge the influence of racial forms of power and subordination (Gilroy 1993:122). This tension has not been fully resolved, though scholars such as Gilroy have tried to negotiate a middle way (Gilroy 1993).

Within whiteness studies, these questions are similar in form but different in content. Is there a similar identity of whiteness based on white people's historical position of domination (Roediger 1991)? Has this created some kind of essential identity that is shaped and bounded by white privilege that whites try to defend (Lipsitz 1998)? Or, have people with white skin adopted local identities based on a variety of identifiers

that are not merely oriented to secure positions of privilege and domination but are shaped by local idioms (Hartigan 1997, 1999)? Are there other ways of being white that do not reflect white people's historical domination over people of color? As it is within discussions of the black diaspora, so it is within whiteness studies—these academic questions have a distinctly personal edge because they are about defining and understanding personal identity.

When whiteness studies first emerged in the U.S. and Britain, the focus was on articulating hidden power structures and the history of white domination over nonwhites within these countries and abroad. This type of research must be differentiated from the rhetoric of whiteness that underscores white supremacist demands for power and supports the oppression and/or elimination of minorities. To signify this, some scholars call their work critical white studies (Delgado 1997) while others name the field as whiteness studies (Steyn 2001b; Chennault 1998). Whiteness studies has become a focus within a variety of academic subjects such as film studies, literature, history, critical theory, law, and sociology. While most of this work focuses on the U.S. and Britain, scholars are beginning to apply this analysis to white settler societies other than the U.S., such as Australia (Sundeen 2002) and South Africa (Steyn 1998, 1999, 2001a, 2001b).

Borrowing the idea of marked and unmarked discourse from linguistic studies, scholars argue that most whites do not grow up with an awareness that they are white, i.e., the racial category 'white' is unmarked (Frankenberg 1993; Hill 1999; Montag 1997). Whites do not feel 'marked' by their actions, the clothes they wear, or places they live or visit. This contrasts with how people of color have historically been marked and differentiated from 'white' social norms. Early research in whiteness studies emphasizes

how this unmarked and normative status has been an essential part of the reproduction of domination over people of color, as I discussed in the history of the race concept.

For white scholars, exposing the history and nature of whiteness is a revolutionary move that is part of an overall effort to decolonize academic research in the U.S. and Britain. This work lays bare the historical racial interests of whites and links them to their position of racial dominance (Hartigan 1997a). In this vein, Frankenberg (1993:1) argues that whiteness is a location that carries structural advantage, it is a “standpoint,” and it references a pattern of cultural practices that are generally unmarked and unnamed<sup>2</sup>. In her view, the position of privilege that whites are born into translates into types of social organizations that influence the daily lives of people within society. In turn, these social organizations shape people’s perceptions of race (Frankenberg 1993). Her work is an example of initial whiteness studies scholarship that sought to trace how white people’s privileged positions are created and reproduced in the racial order of society.

This type of research that focuses on the history of white domination and uncovers how whites defend and reproduce white privilege has been critical for starting a dialogue about whites as ‘racialized’ people. Yet, recent scholarship in whiteness studies questions the implicit essentialism behind this kind of research. Critics argue that this approach is too general, too focused on the unifying ideology of whiteness and not how it works in specific locales, and it disregards places where whiteness is marked and not normative.

A leading voice in this criticism has been the cultural anthropologist John Hartigan (1997, 1999). Differentiating between whiteness as ideology and whites as

particular people, he argues that while whiteness can be a unifying phenomenon, the experience of race by particular white people is not (1997b). He argues that seeing whiteness only as a historically determined category means ethnographic work is interpreted in a way that shows the continuing impact of this history. When whiteness is problematized, scholars are able to examine the changes this construction may be undergoing (Hartigan 1997a). For Hartigan, whiteness is continually revised and reorganized in local settings, drawing as much from the place itself as from an ideological unity of whiteness (Hartigan 1997a:498). Associating whiteness with domination obscures how whiteness is contested or rearticulated within local racial idioms. He believes that all racial phenomena cannot be explained by seeing race as linked to either domination or subordination. With a focus on discourse, Hartigan examines how the ideology of whiteness translates into local discourse to give racial categories meaning, or not, in ways that both counter and reproduce the hegemony of whiteness.

Hartigan's argument is based on his ethnographic work with whites in three different locales in Detroit, Michigan, which is largely an African American city. In general, he found that intraracial distinctions were important in how whites "articulated their sense of the meaning of race in general and of the significance of being white" (1997a:499). This was signified by marking economic and social distinctions, such as "hillbilly" and "gentrifier," which set whites against each other. He argues that whiteness in these locales in Detroit was not a unifying ideology and does not seem to give whites a sense of shared identity. In Detroit, "white hegemony has been shattered, and in its wake whites assess, accentuate, or efface the significance of race through discourses

complicated by class difference and relentlessly local in focus” (Hartigan 1997:500).

Rather than whiteness as inherently unmarked, Hartigan (1997a) argues that whites and blacks configure themselves in relation to marked and unmarked identities depending on the local situation.

Hartigan (1997) articulates this tension between essentialism and the contested discourse of whiteness as an ethnographic dilemma: should scholars attempt to find some kind of ‘culture core’ of white peoples’ identity or work to outline the “discursive predicaments in which whites are entangled as they operate, and are operated by, racial idioms of identity and difference” (Hartigan 1997a:500). Hartigan (1997b) himself chooses to analyze discursive situations.

My research avoids looking for any type of ‘culture core’ and instead attempts to account for the complex composition of white identity by teasing apart informants’ own understanding of themselves as whites within an extremely racialized society. I examine how whites were shaped by white society in South Africa in terms of their worldviews, rituals, practices, and perspectives. How did they orient themselves in the world while growing up in South Africa? How does this inform their resistance or accommodation to changes in post-apartheid South Africa? And how has this background influenced their decision to immigrate? In looking at how structures shape practices, I move away from an analysis focused on discourse to one that centers around how people operate in relationships with one another in social arenas. This attempts to understand both how people interpret their world and how they practices are shaped by and, in turn, shape structures.

Other authors who share Hartigan’s critiques have pointed out the discursive

production of good (white) girls (Moon 1999); the 'marked' nature of whiteness in white settler texts in an example from Australia (Ingram 2001); and the differences between 'whiteness' and being white-skinned (Frye 1992). This latter differentiation is analogous to the difference between *masculinity(ies)*, i.e., local perceptions and conceptions of maleness and *maleness*, the biological phenomenon of being male (Frye 1992:151). Frye argues that whiteness or acting whitely are deeply ingrained ways of being in the world that reify institutional racism (Frye 1992:151). But just as being male does not automatically mean one has to inhabit a masculinity that is misogynist, white-skinned people do not have to subscribe to race hatred or support institutional racism. She argues for a refusal on the part of white-skinned people to act whitely, i.e., in ways that reinforce racism, white privilege, and domination (Frye 1992).

*Whiteness in South Africa.* In South Africa, recent research has focused on white South African consciousness around the time of the 1994 elections (Schutte 1995) and on how whites have responded to the change in government (Steyn 2001a, 2001b). Whereas under apartheid being white meant having manifold privileges and being part of the dominant group, after South Africa had its first democratic elections this was no longer true. Being white has changed from being an unmarked identity to one that is marked. Steyn's (2001b) research analyzed discourse about race gleaned from 59 questionnaires that had been given to white South Africans: 29 were English-speaking and 18 were Afrikaners, four others were German-speaking, Polish, and Czechoslovakian. Steyn (2001b:50) summarizes her work by stating that whites in South Africa are clear about the following: 1) the meaning of whiteness has recently changed, though people interpret this differently; 2) whites were privileged in the old order, though insight into this varies;

and 3) privilege was taken for granted. In her book *Whiteness Just isn't What it Used to Be: White Identity in a Changing South Africa*, Steyn (2001), academic and author from Capetown, examines five narratives representing different ways that people have responded to post-apartheid South Africa. I provide this detailed account of Steyn's (2001) analysis to offer a framework for understanding the continuum of perspectives that exists within white society in South Africa and as background to my analysis. I also highlight the last narrative as an example of an alternative whiteness that does not rely on domination and privilege to gain leverage in society.

*Narrative One: Still colonial after all these years.*

This group believes that intervention must take place on white terms for the good of blacks, i.e., power must remain in the hands of whites. Within this group, there are the *Hardliner colonialists* and the *Altruistic colonialists*. The first group feels that whites should be able to enforce social control (Steyn 2001b:61). One informant's response exemplifies how white superiority is firmly entrenched: "Generally white was more superior intellectually. Today I am more convinced than ever of this" (Steyn 2001b:60). The discourse from this group reflects paternalism, a vision of the white rescuer, and judgments about good and bad blacks. The Altruistic colonialists feel that power is and should be in the hands of whites in order to help the country change along European/white lines for the good of all people (Steyn 2001b:67).

*Narrative Two: This shouldn't happen to a white.*

This narrative argues that whites are being targeted. This group implicitly believes that race was a construction that was not supposed to be used against whites (Steyn 2001b:70). They are very concerned with the material and economic

consequences of whiteness. These individuals also discount past suffering on the part of blacks and deny any systematic structural economic advantage to whites. “They [Blacks] think that everything gets served on a silver platter and that white people didn’t work hard in order to achieve what they have achieved” (Steyn 2001b:72). The emphasis is on how hard whites worked to get to their level. They view themselves as liberals who have an open mind, but they believe change should happen naturally and slowly.

*Narrative Three: Don’t think white, it’s all right.*

This group is more tentative and ambivalent. They see whiteness as integral to their identity in seeking a multicultural society. Within this category there are two groups: *whites are doing it for themselves* and *we can work it out* (Steyn 2001b:90). The first group believes that groups need to work together to make change happen. These individuals argue, though, that they want to do it for themselves in a way that feels comfortable to them. The second group believes in equality between the races. This groups does not equate loss of power with reverse discrimination like the first narrative group. They realize that change may require cultural and racial blending but they struggle with the question of individual versus collective responsibility. Therefore, people in this group tend to dismiss white guilt. “To be white in South Africa now means much less than it did in the past. South Africa is now shared by all its people.” (Steyn 2001b:94)

*Narrative Four: A whiter shade of white.*

This group disassociates themselves from whites that they see as responsible for the country’s racial problems. They ignore their personal involvement in the structures of racism and stress being South African (as opposed to English-speakers, Jews, or

Afrikaners). They offer four different kinds of appeals: *to nonapplicability* (i.e., English-speakers or Jewish people are not implicated in racism; racism is equated with Afrikaners and apartheid), *politically correct ethnicity* (similar to above: English differentiating from Afrikaners), *transcendent self* (establish innocence as an individual outside historical and social context), and *external forces* (hope is placed outside personal agency and placed in fate, time or divinity). “I am who I am; I just happen to be white” (Steyn 2001b:109).

*Narrative Five: Under African skies (or white but not quite).*

This group does not deny their own implication in the sins of apartheid. They believe they need to let go of their old self and become responsible for who they are going to become. This group can be divided in three subgroups: *I just don't know what to do, being white; I don't wanna be white no more; and hybridization, that's the name of the game* (Steyn 2001b:123). The first is not sure how to negotiate their support of the political changes that might negatively affect them on a personal level. They understand the political and economic structures that have influenced their lives and life opportunities as whites. The second group overidentifies with white guilt to such an extent that they identify with everything that is black. They escape into blackness in order to not face their own whiteness. Many of them see white culture as claustrophobic and boring.

The third group welcomes the opportunity to do things differently in the future, in terms of race relations. They understand that whiteness has served as a mechanism of social advantage for them and that the effects of racism have to be recognized before moving past them. This group clearly recognizes the affects of apartheid on blacks and

themselves. These individuals now attempt to create themselves, along with people of color, but not in such a way that they deny their whiteness and try to be black. People in this group recognize that they might have resources to share that they gained because of their privilege, so they try to share these in such a way that blacks can benefit. This group recognizes that they may become more African over time.

These five narratives reflect a continuum of responses to the collapse of apartheid and the ensuing demise of a, historically, more seamless 'master narrative of whiteness'. Steyn (2001b:xxvii) argues that these whitenesses in the New South Africa reflect both postcolonialism and postmodernism in contrast to the modernist construction of the master narrative. While this fragmentation may appear to translate into a lack of power, compared to the previously strong master narrative, Steyn (2001b) argues that strategic coalition-building can occur in a meaningful way. Such coalitions can dismantle the old master narrative if whites can recognize the past, understand how they and others were racialized, and work to dismantle the inequalities that have resulted (Steyn 1999).

Steyn (2001b) concludes that understanding whitenesses as matters of power and privilege does not define them as a matter of internal or unchanging essences. She argues that it is through concrete social relations and historical socioeconomic contexts that whitenesses are constituted (Steyn 2001b:xxx). Therefore, through careful comparative work we can gain a better understanding of how these concrete, localized factors interweave with whiteness-as-domination to shape the meaning of what it means to be white. Though an ideology of whiteness-as-domination structured practices under apartheid, those practices are both more embodied and more nuanced and complex than whiteness studies often allows for. Practice theory, as exemplified in the work of Pierre

Bourdieu, provides a framework for beginning this kind of comparative work without reducing the tension between an essentialist and historical framework and one that is more complex, situational, and locally nuanced.

### **Practice Theory**

Reflecting on the continuation of social inequality between groups, social scientists have debated extensively as to the first cause of these kinds of unequal structures—i.e., ideological or material. I assert that an interweaving of the two contributes to the maintenance and reproduction of social inequality. Placing myself amongst others whom Sherry Ortner (1984:146-147) classifies as “newer practice theorists,” I analyze culture/structure in light of such social asymmetries as class and race. She notes that this approach is a blend of Marxist and Weberian frameworks. Influenced by such intellectuals as Foucault and Bourdieu, newer practice theorists attempt to account for “where ‘the system’ comes from—how it is produced and reproduced, and how it may have changed in the past or be changed in the future” (Ortner 1984:146). Practice theorists focus on how domination functions, so they are interested in practices that have intentional or unintentional political implications (Ortner 1984:149). This kind of theorizing focuses on individual actors making short- or long-term ‘moves’ or ‘projects’ out of pragmatic choice and/or active calculations (Ortner 1984:150). Due to the breadth of practice theory, I will focus on a few key concepts and themes that inform the context of my later analysis.

*Actors.* How are actors motivated to act? Ortner (1984) points out two different explanations—interest theory and strain theory. To understand motivation, most practice anthropologists use interest theory, which states that individuals act out of self-interest,

rationality, and pragmatism (and more recently, emotions) (Ortner 1984:151). The focus is psychological and on the level of the individual as they seek particular gains. In contrast, strain theory sees actors as individuals who experience complex situations and who try to solve problems posed by these situations (Geertz 1973). This latter perspective moves away from an individualistic, psychological approach to one that includes an analysis of the system itself and how it shapes actors and their actions. This perspective is the one I have used to understand my informants.

Pierre Bourdieu's use of the term *habitus* reflects strain theory in his attempt to understand the relationship between historical forces that shape structures and actors who act within and out of those structures and who are informed by them but not entirely determined by them. *Habitus* are the dispositions of the body that "orient behavior to ends without that behavior being consciously directed to those ends" (Lash 1993:196). Examples from South Africa include white kids growing up only listening to white radio, not moving the dial up or down to listen to any black radio stations. Also, whites not washing the maid's cup and plate in the same water as the family's dishes. Though at the beginning of apartheid, these actions may have been consciously regulated, during apartheid they became naturalized and unconscious. Bourdieu also explains *habitus* as a practical sense for what should be done in particular situations, like having a "feel" for the game, which includes "anticipating the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play" (Bourdieu 1998:25). This embodied awareness of what kind of actions are necessary for success in certain situations comes from one's knowledge of the *field* within which one is acting; for example, an awareness of that particular game's rules. *Field* represents a field of forces that is dynamic in which "various potentialities

exist” (Mahar et al. 1990:8) and where individuals act out of different capacities to succeed within this field, which are determined by the distribution of capital. An example would be the social space of a white farmer and his black farm hands. Many different ways of relating to one another exist, but the white farmer during apartheid understood how to maintain control over his workers. He possessed the symbolic capital of whiteness, he held economic control over the farm, and his *habitus* was oriented to keeping a tight reign over these various capitals. In doing so, structures are conserved or transformed (Bourdieu 1998). For Bourdieu, the concept of field bridges everyday practices and the structures that inform the global social space within which these practices (made by actors) vie for power, or capital.

*Capital.* Practice theorists also attempt to account for how people’s long-term ‘projects’ are shaped by images and ideals of what goodness is (Ortner 1984:152). In doing so, researchers attempt to understand how people’s perceptions of morality and values inform their actions. An example of this is Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital, which is a way to understand what people value beyond just material things or economic capital (Bourdieu 1998:47). Symbolic capital is “that which is material but is not recognized as being such (dress sense, a good accent, ‘style’)” (Mahar et al. 1990:5). It is most powerful when it “conceals the fact that it originates in ‘material’ forms of capital” (Bourdieu 1977:183). Whereas other theorists have seen such things as style or dress as affectations, Bourdieu’s definition recognizes the important, but hidden, material and economic bases of symbols. He also acknowledges that values can change over time in order to maintain status, authority or prestige. In my research, I argue that whiteness in South African society held symbolic capital, i.e., the underlying economic capital behind

the reproduction of white superiority was not recognized as such by the majority of whites. Arguments for the superiority of whites were based on the moral and intellectual superiority of whites, not their economic capital or their exploitation of cheap black labor. Bourdieu (1994:174) argues that symbolic capital “is perhaps the most valuable form of accumulation in a society” where the climate and technical resources necessitate collective labor. In the case of South Africa, the mines had to be worked by a high volume of laborers. Whites, with symbolic capital, could convert this capital into economic capital by controlling the labor of masses of the black population, which in turn reinforced their symbolic capital—of high value within such an economic system.

Bourdieu also differentiates between economic and cultural capital—the knowledge and skills that affect, for example, one’s abilities in the labor market or one’s appreciation for particular works of art (Lash 1993). Cultural capital includes education, rhetorical ability, and/or art. Though the *habitus* is oriented towards the accumulation of symbolic and economic capital, *habitus* is comprised of cultural capital, i.e., skills and knowledge. Finally, social networks are deemed social capital and operate to reproduce power and domination through the personal contacts that individuals nurture and maintain. Strong social capital among the elite in Afrikaner circles before 1948 contributed to the success of the National Party and the rise of Afrikaners in society.

*Culture and Practice.* For practice theorists, culture shapes the material world, both physically and in terms of language and bodies. It “controls the definitions of the world for actors, limits their conceptual tools, and restricts their emotional repertoires. Culture becomes part of the self” (Ortner 1984:153). Culture carries material meaning, in contrast to being something only in the mind of individuals. Therefore, people’s

aspirations can reach as far as the “objective conditions of which they are the product” (Ortner 1984:153). While this may sound as if the power of culture is only a repressive and limiting force, in a negative way, Foucault strenuously argues otherwise (2003:307):

“If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body.”

Culture is not simply expressed as rational choices made by individuals, but it provides the material and intellectual basis of people’s worlds. As such, meaning comes out of culture. Geertz (1973:5) defines culture in the following way: “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”

The paradox that practice theorists attempt to express is that while culture shapes people’s world in a material way, there is room for practice to change the ‘system’ or the culture. In the past much of anthropology was focused on how rituals reproduced consciousness. In contrast, practice theorists focus on how practices of day-to-day life do so (Ortner 1984). Though these daily actions reproduce consciousness by reflecting the underlying structures of the system, they also, in turn, can form countercultures or change the meaning of existing relations to cause structural transformation (Sahlins 1981:50). Bourdieu’s (1998) idea of a *field* provides a framework for how this occurs. In this perspective, actors can transform the structure through practice/action in social fields of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital.

Lash (1993) argues that Bourdieu's concepts of judgment in the book *Distinctions* suggest that modernization may result in the ability to create new collectivities, overcoming individuation. These created and collective identities are reflexive in the sense that members are aware of the symbols that are central to the new identity (Lash 1993:205). Membership is a choice and requires risk-taking. In this way, Lash (1993) sees Bourdieu's theories of practice useful for building movements for social change. An example of this are those individuals in Steyn's (2001b) last group: *hybridization, that's the name of the game* who understand how whiteness has advantaged them and who share their skills and resources in ways that benefits blacks, despite their own loss of privileges in South Africa now.

In sum, practice theorists acknowledge the structures and systems of society that are immensely constraining, yet can be "made and unmade through human action and interaction" (Ortner 1984:159). This sheds light on the powerful ways domination is reproduced, yet it gives space to how individual actors can 'practice' daily life in ways that do not wholly reproduce such domination and social inequalities. Using Frye's (1992) language, it is the difference between having white skin and acting whitely, the latter meaning the socially conditioned ways of being in the world that reinforced 'whiteness as domination'. Applied to South Africans living abroad, practice theory offers a way to understand how these immigrants were shaped by a culture of racism in apartheid South Africa and how their practices reflect this conditioning, but with the recognition that this orientation is no longer as viable as it once was in the New South Africa. New practices are necessary for whites to successfully reorient themselves to changes in the *fields* of economic, political, and symbolic capital where their old *habitus*

is no longer useful for moving the country into a nonracial future.

### **Anthropology of Immigration**

As I discussed in the introduction, my research largely focuses on a population that is rarely studied: white, middle and upper class, skilled immigrants. Through my research with *SA Colorado*, I found that my informants have not used their social networks with other South Africans to form any type of ethnic enclave or economic niche market. Brettell (2000:112) argues that such structures are not inevitable if immigrants do not confront hurdles to participating in mainstream social and economic structures. Since most anthropologists study immigrants who are not easily welcomed into the dominant social and economic structures of the U.S., their research involves understanding how people navigate such conditions. As such, many anthropologists focus on how migration results from or leads to culture change and changes in ethnic, racial, or national identity (Brettell and Hollifield 2000:3). Much of this work goes beyond focusing on economic ‘push and pull factors’ that motivate migration to examine the way social networks contribute to sustaining cultural difference and affect immigrants’ incorporation into the host society (Brettell and Hollifield 2000:3). The unit of analysis is the individual or household to examine levels of integration into the host society.

Within discussions of migration, the word *diaspora* is sometimes used to describe white South Africans abroad (Louw and Mersham 2001; Steyn 2001b). A number of researchers now use this word to describe any population that is living in a country other than their home country. I have chosen not to apply this term to this immigrant population. Clifford (1994:306) defines diaspora as a group that has a “shared, ongoing

history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance.” He argues that diasporic groups do not merge into the host country, especially if they encounter prejudice (Clifford 1994). Using diaspora in this sense retains the historical reference to such populations as the Black Diaspora or the Jewish Diaspora that did not leave their home country out of their own choice or volition. It is critical to distinguish Diasporas as well as refugee populations and minority immigrants from those whom I interviewed who were white and middle/upper class. For example, the contrast between two types of ‘boat people’ has been pointed out in Australia where South African immigrants are called Australia’s new ‘boat people’ because many of them buy boats soon after they immigrate to Australia (Louw and Mersham 2001:329). The economic capital that these ‘boat people’ control contrasts to that of more typical ‘boat people’ who arrive in Australia destitute. In choosing to not use the word diaspora, I maintain this distinction so as not to conflate individuals who have vastly different economic, social and symbolic resources.

However, my informants do argue that they have not left South Africa solely out of their own choice or decision. Many of them felt compelled to leave for the sake of safety, economic security, and opportunities for their children. Their experience does not fit a strict definition of exile, i.e., someone who has been forced to leave their home country by authorities. Yet, they do feel that they are exiles in the sense that they had to separate themselves from their own country. To the extent that now affirmative action programs prevent them from obtaining certain jobs or crime prevents them from living their normal lives in South Africa, these informants do feel like exiles.

In my research, I did come across two cases of white South Africans who have

tried to obtain asylum status in the U.S. One couple applied for asylum on the basis that post-apartheid South Africa “left them jobless and fearful of crime” (Carroll 2004). They argued that their race made them vulnerable to crime, but the fact is that crime is common throughout South Africa. The judge rejected their application on the basis that they had not been able to prove that crime in South Africa was racially motivated. In a second case, another white South African family successfully obtained refugee status in Los Angeles in March 2004. In the case of this family, a racist father-in-law had infuriated his black employees, who then were targeting and trying to kill his family members (Van Vuuren 2004). The judge agreed that their lives would be at stake if they went back to South Africa. These are just a few examples of the confusion that remains about the status of this immigrant group. While they cannot wholly be viewed as exiles, they can be seen in the same vein as Cuban exiles between 1959-1962 who have been referred to as “reluctant migrants.” These Cubans define themselves as exiles “who await the opportunity to return and recover the island from the political order that compelled them to leave” (Grenier and Pérez 2003:16). Most of my informants do not carry the hope that South Africa will change back (and many of them would not want apartheid back), but they do hope that their former lifestyle will once again be available sometime in the future in South Africa.

One distinction of these “reluctant migrants” who are somewhat exiled from South Africa is their relationship to their home country. Many of my informants make frequent trips back to South Africa. They also use email to keep in touch with relatives and friends in South Africa or elsewhere. Some of them purchase South African consumer goods over the Internet and many of them connect with other South Africans

abroad through the web. These types of connections exemplify what social scientists call transnationalism. Whereas earlier research on migration centered on distinct boundaries between sending and host societies and between migration and immigration, more recent work attempts to encompass these present-day experiences of migrants. Glick Schiller et al. (1992a:ix) define immigrants as “transnational” when they create and maintain many different kinds of relationships that span borders, particularly the borders of the home and host societies. Studies of transnationalism attempt to understand the movement of migrants between two or more countries, how this movement depends on and shapes social networks, and how such migration impacts people’s negotiation of identity in terms of nationalism, ethnicity, race, and gender. This type of research often involves multi-sited fieldwork and efforts to understand how technologies such as email and Internet shape people’s movement and communication across borders. Transnationalism recognizes how immigrant communities are both local and global entities that create ties that make “home and host society a single arena of social action” (Margolis 1995:29). My informants ought to be understood within this context, which accounts for how their continued connections to South Africa inform their lives and experiences as immigrants in the U.S. and how whiteness is negotiated both in the U.S. and South Africa.

Finally, I want to touch on the importance of the global economy and the place my informants occupy within it. Anthropologists emphasize the inequities between labor-exporting, low-wage countries and labor-importing, high-wage countries (Brettell 2000:103). Such research describes the “international proletariat” who migrate in response to shifting labor patterns of the global economy. In reference to this research, I argue that the vast majority of my informants should be seen as part of an international

bourgeoisie or petit bourgeoisie. They occupy positions of power within the global economic arena because of their education and skills, economic and social capital, and in some cases, social networks that have a history in colonialism. Their position within the global economy cannot be examined apart from their race. As Glick Schiller et al (1992b:18) argue, the historical construction of race is so “entrenched within the structure of global capitalism, and in the structures of inequality of particular societies, ... social organization on the basis of race is best described as a ‘racial order.’” The global racial and economic order shapes the immigrants who move within it. It is important to understand my informants within this larger context to acknowledge the positions of privilege my informants have in these global orders. They may have escaped the quagmire of South Africa’s changing racial and economic order, but they still live and move within a global one.

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<sup>1</sup> She clarifies that she is not attempting to articulate or solidify all the permutations of this topic. Nor does she want to homogenize whiteness; rather, she wants to “communicate the ideological grip the logic of whiteness gained globally” (Steyn 2001b:185). Her goal is to show how whiteness has had power as a “grand narratives”, i.e., the kind of “totalizing thinking that rests upon notions of universal history and absolute knowledge” (Steyn 2001b:186 endnote 1).

<sup>2</sup> Frankenberg uses “standpoint” in the sense that Nancy Hartsock has defined it. This includes two different meanings. First, it is the perspective that comes from a group's received and unanalyzed interaction with its material environment, as seen through the worldview of the dominant group. Second, it is the self-conscious perspective on oneself and society that comes from a class/gender/racial grouping's critical understanding of itself and its location in relation to the system it is within. Nancy Hartsock has made this distinction in terms of feminism. In her work, standpoint in the first case is seen as “women's standpoint” and in the second “feminist standpoint” (Hartsock 1983:283-310). Frankenberg argues that she intends standpoint in terms of whiteness to mean the first case. The only parallel to the second case would be a “white antiracist standpoint” but since whites are part of the dominant society, such an analogy is not exactly smooth.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

In this analysis I explore nine themes that reflect the culture that informants in these two generations grew up in during their coming of age under apartheid and their experiences of post-apartheid society and migration to the U.S. I have broken this analysis into two sections: 1) Growing up in South Africa and 2) Migration. In the first, I discuss six themes: “Britain was Everything,” “Schizophrenia,” “Propaganda and Brainwashing,” the Status of Being White, Afropessimism, and “Guilt and Responsibility.” I have placed quotes around the theme titles that refer to phrases or words that I extracted from interviews (in vivo coding). In the second section I examine the following three themes Life Changed: Crime and Affirmative Action, the Box of Being White, and Nationalism and Racism: US versus South Africa.

What surprised me most were the gaps between people’s experiences and their beliefs and perceptions. I will highlight three of these. First, all white informants grew up with blacks in their homes who worked as servants, maids, nannies, gardeners, and other hired help. Many informants felt quite close to these individuals; yet, most whites grew up fearing blacks as a group. This gap between sharing intimate spaces with individual blacks, yet fearing blacks as a group was reproduced through fears about *swart gevaar* or black threat/black peril, i.e., the fear that blacks would take over and would annihilate whites (through whole-scale assault and murder or through intermixing that would dilute the cultural and racial distinction of whites). Within understandings of a hierarchy of race, *swart gevaar* reflected fears of contamination that would result from

mixing race groups together, in particular, ‘diluting’ the white race. Living in a country where they were a numerical minority helped fuel this fear, despite the fact that whites ran the country during colonialism and apartheid. This fear contributed to the maintenance of boundaries between blacks and whites, which was embodied by whites in rituals and practices such as keeping separate cutlery for ‘the help’ or not allowing blacks to use the indoor bathroom.

Such rituals relate to the second gap I found. While most white informants recognized the impact of social conditioning on whites as a group, they emphasized individualism when defending themselves against accusations that they were racist, i.e., “I was always nice to the blacks that I knew”; “why are they angry with me?” Many of these informants could see how ingrained apartheid practices and perspectives were, yet they did not recognize or admit to the depth of how they as individuals have been impacted by the racializing structure of apartheid. In the New South Africa they are held responsible for the place they occupied as whites within the system, so such a lack of understanding about how they were shaped by apartheid limits their ability to adjust and adapt to this post-apartheid society.

Part of the social conditioning that informants spoke to included the ‘rules of the game’ that were necessary to survive and succeed in white society. These included but were not limited to getting a good education, being part of a religious community, living in a well-maintained house and in a good neighborhood, driving an updated car, not getting arrested, and dating the ‘right’ person. These sorts of social expectations demanded a kind of “cultural literacy and cultural competence” (in white society) that Stoler (2002:17) argues were the “de facto criteria by which racial membership was

assigned” in colonial settings and, I would argue, in apartheid South Africa. Apartheid, therefore, resulted in daily practices in white society that seemed quite benign, yet expressed and reproduced white supremacy. Bourdieu (1977:190 emphasis in the original) provides insight into this phenomenon:

Once a system of mechanisms has been constituted capable of objectively ensuring the reproduction of the established order by its own motion, the dominant class have only to *let the system they dominate take its own course* in order to exercise their domination; but until such a system exists, they have to work directly, daily, personally, to produce and reproduce conditions of domination which are even then never entirely trustworthy.

Examples of actions that maintain the dominant class, once the system is in place, are finding the best investment for one’s money or the best school for one’s child (Bourdieu 1977).

In South Africa, beliefs and practices related to the superior characteristics of whites, as orderly, rational, Christian, moral, and civilized, differentially shaped the “system of mechanisms” during colonialism and apartheid. When apartheid was initially put in place, great amounts of military and governmental muscle were organized around activities such as relocations. Over time, once the system was more firmly in place, the majority of whites did not need to concern themselves with maintaining their dominance. They did not compete for jobs with blacks; their neighborhoods were ‘safe’; and their access to a ‘good’ education was secured. Though government oversight and the strength of the military remained, ordinary citizens went on with their day-to-day lives. The “motion” of white society that took place within these systems served to reproduce the social hierarchy, i.e., blacks at the bottom and whites at the top. In this way, actions such as finding a good school for one’s child were expressions of a system of dominance that maintained this racial ordering. Even if individuals within the system did not intend for

their actions to imply a white supremacy, when taken as part of the whole context, these actions served to reproduce domination. While one black informant recognized this fact, most whites I spoke to did not. Perhaps in contrast to the notion of whiteness as domination and privilege, this more benign defense of privilege might be called ‘armchair’ whiteness—where force and violence were not required of most whites to maintain the system; rather, the system was already in place so focusing on clothing and hair styles or buying a new car was all that was necessary to maintain the system of dominance.

In the New South Africa, when others more overtly see these whites first as whites and not as individuals, these informants feel boxed in and frustrated. In this new context, concerning oneself with jewelry or the latest hi-fi set is now marked as a privilege of the dominant class. Not wanting to confront the economic basis of their symbolic capital of whiteness, many whites choose to leave. Acknowledging this gap between people’s recognition of the depth of apartheid’s impact on whites, yet denying how it impacted *them*, many white informants discount how the ‘apartheid of the mind’ has become embedded in their own actions, practices, perspectives, and frameworks.

To reiterate, the first gap was noticeable in that many informants were close to the blacks or Coloreds who worked in their home but they grew up fearing blacks as a group. The second exists in that most white informants understood the impact of social conditioning on whites as a group, yet stressed that they as individuals did not do anything wrong. A third gap was between white informants’ life and experiences in South Africa and the imagined community (Anderson 1983) outside of South Africa, i.e., Europe, Commonwealth countries, the U.S that they compared themselves to. Rather

than comparing their own progress or state of affairs to other African countries, whites in South Africa were largely oriented towards white, western, industrialized countries. As a result, they remained isolated from the worldviews, feelings, and perspectives that people of color had in South Africa—not only about their own communities, but also about white South Africans. ‘Feedback loops’ did not exist on a structural level, so many whites remained ignorant about the experiences of these Others. Practicing the ‘apartheid of the mind’, whites learned to interpret difference in particular ways that still inform their perceptions of current South African issues. The question of how to act, relate, negotiate, and do business across these lines of difference remain. For many white informants, their ignorance about the impact of apartheid and colonialism on blacks is a handicap that they have preferred not to confront and work with.

For those who acknowledge this ignorance, they recognize a chasm between the fact that they thought, according to European standards, that they were well-trained and well-educated; yet they now realize how ignorant they were about what was going on in South Africa, right under their noses, so to speak. By focusing on maintaining their place within white society, whites kept themselves from seeing it or they did not want to “rock the boat.” They felt they had to maintain their status as a white.

Other informants were overwhelmed by the changes in South Africa and they feel that they do not have a role in South Africa in light of affirmative action and other policies that attempt to address past inequalities. More conservative individuals rely on negative stereotypes of blacks to interpret current events, e.g. the economy is failing because blacks are not economic, and demean the state of affairs in South Africa. This defense is part of a reaction to feeling that they as whites no longer belong in South

Africa. While black informants said whites do have an important role in terms of the economy and as a link to the west, many white informants felt that their loss of privilege meant that they were no longer wanted in South Africa. A lack of awareness of their own symbolic power as whites and the depth of apartheid's impact on them as whites contribute to many white informants feeling rejected in the face of all the changes that have taken place in the country in the last ten years.

These three gaps were patterns I found across the sample, though there were significant exceptions. Most of my informants were close to blacks or Coloreds, yet were brought up fearing *swaart gevaar*. The majority of white informants could see how deeply conditioned whites were as a group, yet they defended themselves as individuals against any accusations of racism. Finally, my white informants spoke about their life in South Africa in terms of an 'imagined community' outside of South Africa that they related to, in contrast to the reality of the communities in South Africa that surrounded them. So in their experiences of post-apartheid South Africa and their migration to the U.S., some informants have come into an awareness of these gaps between their experiences and beliefs and perceptions. Others seem to have migrated out of an impulse to avoid seeing these gaps or being forced to become aware of them in South Africa.

## GROWING UP IN SOUTH AFRICA

### **“Britain was Everything”**

Britain was everything...I think it's still the biggest complaint my father would have...they are not African. They never thought to stay. They came to use it for what they could, for the gold and diamonds and the cheap labor and they are the ones that leave. [Younger Afrikaans-speaking woman]

As I discussed in the history chapter, ethnicity among whites has been of key importance since the British first inhabited the Cape in the late 1700s. From what my informants said, people's experiences across the ethnic line were quite varied depending on the region, their family connections, neighborhoods, schools, and the like. For some, they experienced greater or lesser animosity at certain ages than at others. For all, it was clear that their identity as English-speakers, Jewish, or Afrikaners had been an important ingredient shaping their sense of themselves and it still does. Since the majority of my white informants were either English-speakers or Afrikaner, I have focused on these two ethnic groups. To reiterate, Afrikaners feel rooted in South Africa, not the Europe of their ancestry. Moreover, their language, religion, and customs are unique to their South African community. This contrasts with those who are English-speaking and descendants of colonialists. These individuals definitively possess a European language and sensibilities.

According to some of my informants, these differences brought about greater animosity between whites than between whites and blacks. A few English-speakers said that they had more “racial issues” with Afrikaners than with blacks since, they said, there was more leeway to be friendly with blacks than with Afrikaners. An older Jewish/English woman even exclaimed, “That was Apartheid! It wasn't only black and

white, it was language. Absolutely. Language, religion, everything.” Most of my informants from both groups had grown up in completely Afrikaner or English-speaking schools, neighborhoods, and churches. The few who had mixed from an early age did not see as much cultural difference between ethnic groups. One older Afrikaner male remarked that though he and the neighborhood English-speaking boys would play fight the Anglo-Boer War, “my English friends down the road and myself, we were basically the same.”

When I went to the two *braais*, I was looking for evidence of the historical animosity between English-speakers and Afrikaans-speakers. I did not notice any obvious conflict or even stylistic differences in dress or mannerisms. At these gatherings, I could not easily determine who was English-speaking or Afrikaner based on language use, since nearly everyone seemed to easily slip in and out of Afrikaans. I later learned that most people were taught both Afrikaans and English in school. The use of Afrikaans may also be a way for some South African immigrants to retain their distinctiveness as immigrants and in the case of the *braais*, keep an inquiring anthropologist at bay. The exceptions were those informants who explained in the interview that they do not speak Afrikaans at all, since it is the language of the oppressor. These individuals knew Afrikaans but opted out of speaking it. This line of thinking was common among those in the anti-apartheid movement.

During interviews, I asked members of each ethnic group to indicate the stereotypes held by their group about the other group. The derogatory terms that people use speak to the conflict between Afrikaner and English-speaking sensibilities and

histories. I will begin by outlining the derogatory terms each group has for the other and then discuss what groups say about themselves.

When referring to English-speakers, Afrikaners will say *Donnerse* (*darned*) *rooinekke* (redneck) or simply *rooinekke* as an insult referring to the inability of the English to adapt. When the English first came to South Africa they wore small safari hats and were burned by the African sun. Rather than changing their gear, they just continued to get sunburned. They were seen as stupid, weak, and did not adjust to being in the African sun. One woman told me that *roineeke* is used to describe her sister-in-law who refuses to speak Afrikaans.

An English-speaker who sends their kids ‘home’ to Britain for schooling might be referred to as a *soutie* or *soutpiel*. Literally, this is translated as someone who stands with a leg in each country and their penis dangling in the sea. “When the going gets rough in South Africa, they leave.” They have no bonds to the *land* in South Africa (like the Afrikaners do).

*Limey* also signifies a lack of adaptation to Africa by the British. A number of my informants told me it was popular to have a G & T (gin and tonic) at sundown in English cities like Durban. Perhaps because of their lack of adaptation, English-speakers were also seen as snooty, elite, and too prim and proper. As one Afrikaner person explained, they were “anti-everybody else.” One Afrikaner woman pointed out the difference between Afrikaners as settlers and the British as colonizers:

The English started the first attitude towards landing there and saying, you guys are running around with your little loin cloths. We’ll rule this place; you don’t know nothing.

In general, English-speakers are perceived to be liberal or progressive, though informants pointed out that you could find conservatives and Nationalists among the English as well as the Afrikaners. But the stereotype persisted, as this comment by a young, English-speaking woman shows:

They would see the English as liberal. Pinkoes, communists. Can't wield a gun, ride a horse. Can't subdue a black man. Snobby, weak. The women just don't know their place in the home.

As she makes clear, this stereotype reflects more than a person's political perspective. Issues of gender and race were also at stake.

Finally, the English are seen as more undisciplined compared to Afrikaners. Afrikaners pointed out to me that younger English-speakers do not properly respect authority or their parents.

Derogatory terms that English-speakers use for Afrikaners are just as pointed. The term *Boer* literally refers to Afrikaners who trace their ancestry to early Dutch/German settlers and for some of my informants, this was a name they held on to with pride. But when an English-speaker says *Boerkies*, meaning little Boer, or *dirty Boer*, then one has a basis for throwing punches! In this context, it signifies that they are less educated, bound by the land, ignorant, and simple-minded. Some early English colonizers thought Afrikaners were halfway to being a 'primitive' and degraded version of a white European, so it may reflect this history.

Being tied to the land also is reflected in the term *rock spider*, which is used to refer to Afrikaners—though one informant thought that anyone from the Transvaal, a rural province, could be called a rock spider. The term refers to how culturally uneducated Afrikaners are, i.e., they just crawled out from under a rock. An older

English-speaking woman said, “I know it's terrible, but...if you said, ‘I met this rock on an airplane,’ then they would know you had met an Afrikaner.” One Afrikaner male tried to put a positive spin on this term, saying “I think they felt we were so hard, they couldn't break us.” A few informants pointed out that this term was ‘racialistic’ against Afrikaners.

A number of informants told me that to be called *Dutchman* was one of the greatest insults, pitting the second-classness of the Dutch against the more elite English. Just as derisive, however, is the term *hairyback*, which is used to imply that Afrikaner men are apelike.

Afrikaners are also seen as largely conservative, pro-apartheid, and supportive of the Nationalist Party. They are viewed as racists who wanted to “blow all the blacks to hell.” As one younger, English-speaking informant explained, “From an English point of view, Afrikaners are bloodthirsty, bigoted, narrow-minded, fundamentalist, right-wing Christian Nationalists—scary. Tall, big, gun-wielding, righteous. Scary.” Other informants agreed that the stereotype was that Afrikaners were animalistic and they fought their way into everything.

Another derogatory term signifying ignorance and simple-mindedness is *plank*, i.e., thick as a plank. As an insult, it might be used if an Afrikaner does not know English well or understand something in the business world. In reference to this stereotype, one English-speaking informant said Afrikaners are “all about physical energy, not mental energy.”

Finally, a number of informants told me that Afrikaners have a *laager mentality*, i.e., an insular attitude that keeps outsiders from entering their circles. Historically, this

referred to *laager*, the formation made by a defensive circle of wagons to protect Boer families in the interior of South Africa. The closed-mindedness of the Nationalist Party is often seen as representing a ‘laager mentality.’ One older English-speaking person summarized it this way, “We don’t want you here; you don’t fit in because you don’t agree with how we think. Take your liberal ideas and run away with them.”

Usually these derogatory terms are used behind people’s backs while people remain friendly face to face. In other cases, informants said they are freely used as a joke between friends. As with other derogatory terms, the meaning is shaped by the context and intention. For example, if an English person was trying to speak Afrikaans and doing a horrible job, they might jokingly be called a *rooinekke*. If this comment were made in a friendly manner, the English person generally would not take offense. However, as an example of a different scenario, an older Afrikaner male was refused money from his account because he needed some kind of unusual approval. When he argued that he did not need this approval, he was told by the English-speaking banker to “go back to the farm”, despite the fact that he was an urban entrepreneur.

*“We weren’t so good either”*

In describing themselves, younger English-speakers were more critical of the English-speaking population than the older generation of this ethnic group. The older generation of English-speakers used the following descriptors to describe the British: intellectual, business-oriented, more educated, more tolerant, and more socially progressive—i.e., they like rock and roll, men can have longer hair, and women have careers and obtain education. In contrast, younger English-speakers were quite openly critical of the English. They judged English-speakers as “a bunch of takers”, as “cold”

people who “keep you at arm’s length,” “weak and useless”, and not patriotic. As one younger English-speaking male explained, at his school the drama club put on plays from Britain. “Good God. **In the middle of Africa**—Yeah, you know? So we really didn’t embrace the richness of the culture [in South Africa].”

Other younger English-speaking informants criticized the English as colonialists who were in South Africa for the money. They felt they exploited the country and took what they wanted and left and they were weak in the battle against apartheid.

[The English say] It's not me that's repressing the blacks. It's the Afrikaner guy, we're just cruising in the little void, in the slipstream as it were. The government was beating up the black people and taking advantage of them and we English were just cruising along behind, having a good time...Enjoying the circumstance, the fact that we were white so we enjoyed a certain privilege.

What accounts for this difference between the generations of the English group? I hypothesize that the older generation of English have been more shaped by the era of British colonial rule, when those of British descent were “first class.” As an 80-year old Afrikaner informant explained, before the Nationalist Party took over Afrikaners were “effectively second-class citizens” and the English were first class. Secondly, younger people have experienced being targeted for being white, which means that younger English-speakers no longer have that old protection of being “first class.” In stark contrast, they are viewed as white and a problem (see Box of Being White). This might be heightened when immigrating to the US, where most Americans do not understand the differences between English-speakers and Afrikaners. Instead, they see all white South Africans as Afrikaners and therefore racists. Another reason could be that it is easier to admit to the wrongs of British colonialism in this post-colonial era. Perhaps a final

reason is that cosmopolitan English-speakers have more of an international identity than Afrikaners. Therefore, they do not feel they need to defend the English in South Africa.

*“We are not as bad as you think”*

In contrast, some of the younger Afrikaans-speakers were critical of their own group but their criticism was usually accompanied by an emphasis on what they admired about Afrikaners. Both older and younger Afrikaner informants said their ethnic group is bonded to the land, warm, that they like socializing, have more of a sense of humor, are disciplined and moral, strict, traditional, and hard working. Some younger Afrikaners did argue that some Afrikaners were racist and narrow-minded, that they were hard people and were “physical” with the laborers (“and me too”), and were bossy disciplinarians. However, they all pointed out the value of their culture and language and history. They argued that Afrikaners were more invested in South Africa than the English, that they were more focused on family and community—not just the individual, and that they were slow to change, unlike the more cosmopolitan English-speakers.

The following exchange with a young, Afrikaner woman exemplifies this attitude.

**Was Boer a put down?**

I guess it's just how you use it. But if someone calls me a Boer, I'm proud of it. I don't take it personally.

**So what does it mean to you?**

I have values, I have morals. I had a good upbringing. I'm proud that I am from South Africa even though there is that stigma from people on the outside. But I'm proud to say I'm South African, I'm not shy about it or embarrassed about it. I mean, even as strict as my parents were, I'm glad for the upbringing that they gave me.

Before my fieldwork, I assumed that the older generation of Afrikaners would defend themselves as “we are not as bad as you think”, but I did not expect this from the younger generation. It seems that all Afrikaners are trying to navigate a very small

passageway. Since 1948 outsiders have criticized Afrikanerdom and the Calvinist religion that imbued it with strength, but this criticism does not seem to have reached the majority of Afrikaners, or it was simply disregarded as wrong. With the crumbling of apartheid in 1994, Afrikaners who grew up believing in the value and strength of their culture and community have had to find ways to re-orient themselves to the new mapping of social identities and politics and find ways to defend their unique culture and language. Particularly in immigrating to the U.S., they have had to defend themselves against being seen as “these big racists.”

They always mentioned that Afrikaans is the language of the oppressor, but I only heard that when I got over here, that people really have hard feelings toward Afrikaans-speaking people, which I never actually knew. (laughter) It never occurred to me that [South African] blacks see English- and Afrikaans-speaking white people differently. I thought we were white and they're black. I didn't know that they actually see you as an Afrikaans-speaking white, you know, I didn't realize that there was that difference.

Therefore, younger Afrikaners seem more able to articulate what is valuable and important about their culture and language compared to the younger generation of English-speakers. This also reflects a long history of defending themselves against Anglicization. Younger English-speaking informants do not have such a stake in holding onto a specifically English identity. For Afrikaners, they want to hold onto their distinctiveness and now this only seems possible in terms of culture, language, and religion.

Another more subtle reason a cross-generational defense of Afrikaner culture among Afrikaners might be that English *culture* still seems hegemonic, i.e., the values of this culture reflect what is common sense. Younger Afrikaners still feel the impulse to defend themselves against it (or assimilate). Implicit cultural judgments about what

qualifies as universally good are still present, such as cosmopolitanism, small families, being educated and internationally astute, and assuming that everyone would want to follow suit. As evidence of this, two informants told how family members tried to hide their Afrikaner identity to escape stereotypes of being backwards, ignorant, and rural. English culture (and the English) were seen as higher on the status and class hierarchy and therefore appealing for those who wanted social mobility, e.g. through marrying into an English-speaking family. As one informant argued, “Money is a status symbol.”

I note, however, that there were also those who wanted to forsake their Afrikaner roots because they wanted to distance themselves from the downward spiral of racism and violence that began to represent their community. As one younger English-speaker explained, “You know a lot of the generation that I was from were ashamed to be Afrikaans-speaking.” Another contributing factor was language. Afrikaners wanted to become more proficient in an international language. A number of Afrikaners I spoke to took it as a compliment that they had been accepted as or thought to be English based on their English language skills. As one informant explained, “I spoke English as an Englishman. Hard for them to stereotype.”

More generally, my interviews revealed that Afrikaners defend themselves against the English by pointing out their family and home morals, their ties to the land and to South Africa, and that they are warm and open people. The context of their comments points to the fact that English culture seems to be standard, i.e., there is a *proper* way to do things (see quote below). This standard is something they feel they either need to engage and accommodate or fight against.

The English were just more, ah, how they drink the tea—(motions with pinky)

**With the pinky out?**

Thought they were upper class.

**And the Afrikaners?**

Just regular hard-working people, making the *boervors* and stuff, the women were the hard-working ones in the kitchen. We were the hard working people I would say. [Older Afrikaner man]

Perhaps this kind of defense harks back to a history in which Afrikaners felt threatened by the Anglicization of their culture and people. The group that made the Great Trek refused to lose themselves to this international, cosmopolitan, and uptight culture. The historical hierarchy does not seem to have entirely disappeared within white culture in South Africa and among its immigrants. Particularly among younger Afrikaners who immigrate to the U.S., the challenge of Anglicization takes on new proportions. They are not only disconnected from their Afrikaner communities back home, but they are forced to integrate into a culture that has been heavily influenced by English sensibilities. In more ways than one, "Britain was everything."

## “Schizophrenia”

1. psychotic disorder characterized by loss of contact with the environment, by deterioration in level of functioning in everyday life, and by disintegration of personality expressed as disorder of feeling, thought, and conduct 2. *presence of mutually contradictory or antagonistic parts or qualities*

--Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

As I mentioned in the introduction, the apartheid wall in South Africa was quite thoroughly present both physically and psychologically. Various informants explained:

- “Society was divided at all levels.”
- “You never came across black people in any social kind of way.”
- “They [blacks] wouldn't walk in front of you; they wouldn't get in your way.”

Many of my questions were geared towards a phenomenological approach, so I gained a sense of what life was like under apartheid for all of my informants. One key difference between white informants and those who were Colored and black was that whites expressed a sense of schizophrenia, in the latter sense of the Webster's definition, that was not present in the stories of black and Colored informants.

A younger, English woman phrased it this way in reference to all whites, English-speaking and Afrikaner:

There's a weird contradiction. You have people that have wonderful experiences with an employee relationship but will be fervent believers in the Nationalist Party, but *it's like there are two worlds living inside them that don't make any sense*. And if you said to them, “you are a racist” they would be horrified, but they would vote for the Nationalist Party. They would be kind and nice and decent to people of all colors because that's who they were but they would vote Nat... You could call that being hypocritical or whatever—there's a weird schizophrenia that went on down in South Africa. There still is. (my emphasis)

Due to the nature of the apartheid divide, most whites did not recognize this schizophrenic existence, since they were closed off from what blacks and other people of color thought about them. While whites might have supported the Nationalist Party and

have feared blacks as a group, on an individual basis they “got along well with them.” Many of them remained unaware of how the policies of the Nationalist Party were enacted on the ground to make a hostile, violent, and impoverished world for blacks, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians. Feedback loops were nonexistent for whites that occupied segregated social and religious spheres. Even in intimate settings, where whites grew up working or talking with ‘the help’, there were rules about what was talked about and what was not, what was done and what was not.

I'll tell you how it works in my dad's world. We were taught to respect black people. We were always taught to speak politely and offer them something to drink—these people were clients of my dad's right? But one day we drove home from town and there was a man walking next to the road who lived on the neighboring farm and we were like, “Stop, give him a ride.” My dad said, “We can't do that because then he'll always expect that from us if we give him a ride now.”

**So there were these boundaries between what you could and couldn't do?**

Yeah, because then he'll take on airs. And we're not talking around the block! This guy had 20 miles before he got home. That's how it was. The relationship was very formal—the boundaries were very strictly drawn about—it wasn't the sort of easy interaction like, “Hey, we are neighbors, I'll give you a ride.” They were a different tribe and you didn't mix with it. Not good. [Younger Afrikaner woman]

Yet, despite these rules, nearly all of my white informants spoke warmly about growing up with the individuals who helped around the house and gardens and farms. An older Afrikaner woman who grew up in the Transvaal explained, “And the people we had working in our homes, you called them servants, but we didn't really. They were like part of our family.” Another woman told me the gardener “was there from the time I was about six months old until recently, and he's a fantastic man.” Yet, a gap existed between these relationships and people's fear of blacks as a group.

A younger Afrikaner male expressed:

They were sort of part of the family. It's kind of weird. I've told it to many people—we were never taught to disrespect anybody. I know of some people [other whites] that it's not like that, but they were really treated with respect [in our family].

Even today, some people stay in touch with the individuals that worked in their homes.

**Did you become friends with any of them?**

Yes, they were all very good friends. Even today when I go back, the one lady that my mom had, very good friends. I always give her a hug when I see her. I write to her; she joins us for Christmas at the dinner table. So, she's really a part of the home.

For many, part of this relationship involved assisting the blacks or Coloreds who worked for them. In some cases, this meant paying for books or fees for their children to attend school.

My parents sent her child [the maid's] to private school when everything started to change so rapidly because they didn't want the child to be too far away.

In other cases, people used their skills and resources to help individuals, both those who worked for them as well as others, obtain material goods, food, and healthcare. Often these stories pointed out how friendly whites were to blacks, counteracting the assumption that all whites were racists. A number of people argued that whites who were cruel to 'the help' were the exception, not the rule. "There will always be exceptions, on some farms the people will just abuse the people...no system will be perfect." These individuals viewed violence against blacks as an individual matter, not connected to the state or to the politics of the Nationalist Party.

But I've noticed that some people really look down on these black people which was, I believe, not right. People did use them as slaves, I mean they worked for them and they didn't treat them as well. On the other hand, there's lots of farmers that use them [blacks] because they weren't schooled but they could do this and this. They [white farmers] could use them and they would see to it that they had homes. They even had some

farm schools and stuff and would provide meat to them. [Nationalist and Progressive Afrikaner]

The practice of daily life, where whites would treat the blacks they knew with respect, was offered as proof by my informants that they were not racists and that they should not be blamed for the racism that did exist in South Africa. See “Guilt and Responsibility” for more of a discussion of this point. Yet, rituals and practices in the home maintained a strict separation between the races.

My informants explained that servants quarters, if they lived on the property, were small and in the backyard or on the farm property. In most cases, ‘the help’ stayed with their employers and visited their own family in the homelands on weekends or during vacations. Boundaries were maintained through rules that were enacted with a sense of ritual, as I have been discussing, such as this progressive, younger Afrikaans-speaking woman explains.

My mom had a Colored lady work for us in our house and they were not allowed to come to the front door. They had to go to the back door and knock on the back door. She would have her separate cup and separate plate underneath the sink for her. She would not use the same cup and plate as we would.

A bathroom was attached to the house, but you had to go outside to get to it. They would use that bathroom. They were not allowed to use the inside bathroom and if they did use it inside, my mom would go immediately and disinfect it (laughing).

Oh gosh, it is all coming back to me (laughing)... Yeah, just little things like that, you know. Their dishes would be kept under the sink so they wouldn't accidentally get mixed up with the other dishes.

Most whites that I spoke to explained similar sorts of customs that differentiated their families from the servants, all of which implied a hierarchy in which whites were at the top and people of color were at the bottom. Most people dismissed these rituals as small and unimportant, acknowledging the silliness of their parent's fear of ‘contamination’

from blacks or coloreds. The social divide and hierarchy was clearly understood, for the most part. People inhabited roles prescribed to them by the apartheid society and government.

You had your white schools and you had your white beaches and then in the cities they had white busses and black busses. Even the park benches, blacks couldn't sit on the park benches because they were for whites. When you are young, you don't realize—you just don't see a black person on your street or near you unless it's the domestic looking after the kids. When you get older, you realize why. As a young kid, you just think that's how it is. You don't even realize that there are so many black people around because you don't see them.

There was a fine line that had to be maintained to keep these boundaries firm. For example, a young Afrikaner woman pointed out her familiarity with the Zulu language.

That's reflected in my Zulu vocabulary. I can tell people to do things and I can talk about the weather and cattle but I can't talk about what you are feeling and what do you think about politics, I don't... We never read a book in Zulu, forget that. We used it to *speak to* people, we didn't want to learn about their culture or learn about them as a people, those were tools. There was no respect there. (my emphasis)

This type of criticism was more prevalent among whites that were politically progressive than among conservatives or Nationalists. Most progressives looked back and could see contradictions in how they interacted with blacks on a personal level. At the time they believed that they were being kind and properly respectful; yet, in hindsight, they could see how unequal those relationships were and they commented on the schizophrenic nature of their upbringing. On reflection, they recognized that a chasm existed between their *individual* experiences of closeness and bonding with 'the help' and the belief that blacks as a *group* were uneducated, immoral terrorists who wanted to take over the country.

I had compassion for the black folk that I knew. It was weird. I was racist in the sense that I didn't want them to take over the country because I had

seen what had happened [elsewhere] in Africa, but yet I had compassion for our servants because they were great people. I got on well with them.

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As an individual, my dad would do great kindness to black people. He would treat their animals without pay...there was a black woman who gave birth on our dining room table because she couldn't make it to a hospital. Every year, he would give her money and food, but *that was an individual. As a group, he wanted nothing to do with them.* They weren't part of his clan and so, call that schizophrenia. Isn't that what that is? It's like other people who were discriminated against. You put the Star of David on them so they cease to be human beings and they are just a group and then we can treat them like a group and then we don't have to have the personal. That's how you do it. I don't think more exposure to blacks would have changed anything; it's like I see the parallel with this whole Spanish issue [in the U.S.]. Here, you choose not to see them, we don't want to learn Spanish because then we might have to respect them [Latinos] as individuals. It's the same thing. (my emphasis)

Conservatives and Nationalists did not view the gap between their closeness with individual blacks and their support of apartheid as a problem. Many of them believed they treated blacks with respect as individuals but they maintained a proper politic by supporting a structure that ensured separation of different race groups.

No, this is where we lived and that's where they lived. Everybody's got their own little place where they live.

**Do you remember your parents explaining that to you? Why that was?**

No, I can't remember that they explained it to us. I just remember before we moved into that house there...and we had a servant's quarters outside and that's where they lived and I guess you just grew up with it. They were different. They stay there and you stay here. I mean you can see that you are different, you know. I don't think it needs explaining. [Nationalist, older Afrikaner man]

This type of differentiation between individuals and groups has been discussed in *Heart of Whiteness* (Goodwin and Schiff 1995:82) only in light of Afrikaner perspectives.

From my research, however, it appears that the 'rules of the game' maintaining separation between the races were rules that all whites learned, not just Afrikaners.

Though the intellectual and political roots can be found in Afrikanerdom, an ‘apartheid lifestyle’ was practiced by whites of every white ethnic group, albeit differently within these two white ethnic groups.

**But you’ve also seen the move from British rule to the Nationalist Party and then South Africa becoming a Republic--**

Yes but that had very little impact on the everyday lifestyle in South Africa. Whether we were part of the British empire or not, things were much the same in the country. It really had no major impact.

**So even the transition in 1948, when the Nationalists took over?**

No, it was because the English-speaking people by and large were as pro-apartheid as the Afrikaners, only they didn't say so. Because the lifestyle was an *apartheid lifestyle* and I don't think the way you lived, behaved, traveled in busses, bought your things was any different after 1948 than before. (my emphasis) [Older Afrikaner man]

As I pointed out earlier, an important element of this apartheid lifestyle was the fear of blacks as a group. In *Heart of Whiteness* (Goodwin and Schiff 1995:82) an Afrikaner professor explains: “There is the fear of becoming like they are. In our thinking there were only two groups, black and white, and there’s no diversity in the black group. The fear is that the moment you speak to a black person you must become like they are. And they are heathen and uncivilized...There are very few Afrikaners that fear them in a physical sense.” For more about fear of blacks or *swart gevaar*, see the sections Propaganda and Brainwashing and Afropessimism.

Schizophrenia was also evidenced by some informants in terms of what one saw and did not see. One informant shared this joke of her father’s: “10 blacks and I will do it on my own.” As this comment points out, the labor and the experiences of blacks did not register. “The way you operated was you only saw whites.” When whites would encounter blacks or Coloreds on the street, it was assumed that they were someone’s employee. Both generations said they felt that their world revolved around whites—

“blacks were there for you.” These individuals grew up in a white society where you only “saw white;” it did not allow people to ‘see black’. Structurally this was ensured through the pass laws and the establishment of homelands and townships.

The schizophrenic apartheid lifestyle led some of my informants to feel that they grew up very isolated. They felt socially “poor” for not knowing more about their fellow South Africans—from what their lives were like to their music and stories. A young English-speaker stated it this way:

So we eliminated thirty- five million and left ourselves with five million whites, and then we eliminated half of them by saying “I’m not going to talk to the Afrikaans-speaking people.” Afrikaans people did the same by eliminating English people, so then we were down to two-and-a-half million, and then if we were misogynist, then we eliminated another half of that again, right? So what the hell we gonna learn? You’re just talking to yourself and that’s what makes us so poor. The sadness for me is that we really wasted an opportunity to learn from all these cool people: wonderful music and wonderful art and culture and folklore. Such a depth of wisdom and wit—let alone sporting talent and musical talent that could have been exported and just general cheer and charm. And we just declined to talk to them.

Individuals did attempt to see and experience blacks and black culture differently, modes of social control were employed to keep people in line. When this same informant was in the army and would listen to African music, people would chide him:

“Why are you listening to black music? That’s not your music.” They just couldn’t comprehend why I would find it interesting...It was happening right there. I mean if I had driven five miles, I could have found people who were making that kind of music in their back yards. They weren’t playing James Taylor songs--that crap that we were learning to play because that’s what we heard on the radio. So if you ask me to play a South African song, I can’t. But those rhythms were there. I wish that I had.

Other informants had similar experiences of crossing the color line. One Afrikaner informant grew up in a rural area on a farm with his grandparents, speaking Zulu and

playing, eating, and staying in the huts of Zulu children. I inquired about whether this life with Zulus was contradictory to his life in school and he responded:

Oh absolutely! That was the biggest shock because we would live for weeks and weeks with all my black friends in their huts and stuff like that...They were never different to you, you were just white and they were black and you were still friends, that's just the way you were. As soon as you went to school, you were told that you are not allowed to speak Zulu, you are not allowed to talk to them even. You would spend the whole week in school and you were indoctrinated by the whole process...You are sitting in this massive conflict.

This same informant also spoke to the isolation he felt:

By the way, that's the reason why they kicked me out of school and they kicked me out of church, see, because I had too many black friends...It was so bad at some stages that people would refuse to cut your hair because your politics were wrong. It's more the case of being more and more isolated.

One exception was the experience of an informant who played with the color line, since her father was Colored and her mother was Jewish.

When they got divorced, I'd spend Christmases in a Colored township in Capetown, and then fly to the richest part of Durban to hang out with my grandparents, so...

**That sounds really schizophrenic--**

I think that's why I am the way I am, you know (laughing). I didn't actually notice until I was older, it didn't take a lot to adapt. I used to look, I tan really dark, so I used to come back from Capetown really dark with a Colored accent, and within a day I was dressed in white attire, speaking with an English accent again.

A final example of how some whites consciously navigated a schizophrenic society is the humorous story of how one woman's family protected their nannies from the police. A progressive young English-speaker, this informant's mother made it a point to hire lots of maids to try to give an income to as many women as possible. In particular, she would employ those without proper passes, to protect them from the police. A neighborhood

network would alert her mother when the police were coming to arrest blacks that did not have a pass. When the police would come, the maids would dive under the beds:

We would distract them. If they would go anywhere near where they were, the kids would just create a commotion on purpose and distract the police. V., she used to have sixteen spoons of sugar in her tea. She just got fatter and fatter...[When the police would come by], she would fall to the floor and others would mash her under the bed (laughter). It's almost funny, you know, looking back it's not funny but at the time it was funny.

In contrast to how whites experienced the daily schizophrenia and contradictions of apartheid, the experiences of the two black informants exemplifies how their interactions across the color line were tinged with fear and trepidation. Rather than embodying a role and its ensuing rituals of control and a split psyche, these informants spoke to a feeling of intimidation and separation and a heightened awareness of their own actions.

The only way I ever interacted with white people was when I go to a doctor or when I go to town with my mom to buy groceries. I don't mean talking to them; it just meant seeing them...I never interacted with white people; I only saw them...  
I think there was fear that I have to make sure that whatever I do, it has to be within that particular person's rules, like I can go there and take bread and put it on the counter and all of a sudden maybe he's saying, "why did you drop the bread on the counter like that?" Then I had to make sure of those subtle things, that everything is perfect because in a way a white man, he was like God kind of, you have to fear because you never know when you are going to go wrong.

Perhaps this can be read as an encounter with the schizophrenia some whites embodied—i.e., not knowing if whites will respond to them as an individual or as a member of a group that they fear. For blacks, it was imperative that one be able to read the signs and gestures of whites, since they may be either gracious or violent. As an oppressed group, blacks had an acute sense of the "other" when in contact with them. Though they were behind segregated lines, the violence could break the seal and not be deemed illegal. For

example, if the above informant had dropped the bread aggressively, the grocer may have verbally abused him or become physically aggressive in response.

They, of course, did not grow up knowing whites in their homes; they would only interact with whites in stores or if they went to the doctor. Though these informants did not work for whites, others in their communities did and did not speak highly of the whites they worked for.

Actually, there was nothing good that they can tell about it because most of the Afrikaners were exploitative—they would exploit their workers. You wouldn't go there unless you had to, so that is the view that you get as a young person.

In examining the focus on groups versus individuals, the two black informants I spoke to made it clear that they learned from an early age to distinguish between whites in general and individual, racist Afrikaners. They both told me that they grew up knowing that not all whites were racist. They acknowledged that this helped them treat people as individuals and not judge them based on their skin color.

I try by all means not to look at color because color is an artificial class. If you don't want to be open-minded...you can deny yourself good opportunities in life by just looking at people and saying "oh, they are white, obviously they are racist." They can be wonderful people. That's what matters to me. I don't like classes, I want to deal with a person, on a one-to-one basis because then they are not representing anyone, they are representing themselves.

Yet, this informant recognized how deeply rooted racism was in South African society.

"Now that racism is outlawed, the big question is, *how do we outlaw it in our minds?*

That is the problem. We still have racism in South Africa." (emphasis mine)

Furthermore, how do the rituals enacted by whites to maintain the schizophrenic split become visible and problematized? For my white informants, the apartheid lifestyle

had consequences far beyond what many of them have been trained to see—most pointedly in their own hearts and minds.

## **“Propaganda and Brainwashing”**

I think it's true wherever you are in the world, when you're living in a country, you don't actually know the half of what's going on. It's like a big propaganda machine; they feed you what they want you to know,...I mean, hey, what rules the world at the end of the day? He who has the most money has the most power. Economics and greed. [Progressive, older English-speaker]

In discussing how people's parents explained riots, strikes and stayaways or how informants explained these to their children, I discovered that a number of people had strong feelings about the government's propaganda. These individuals answered my inquiries distinguishing what they experienced and believed from what the government and media told them was going on. In particular, talking about people's experiences participating in the army or military (or the participation of their brothers/father/cousins) brought about heated comments, mostly from men, about the government's hypocrisy and political agenda. As a result of being conscripted into the two-year service requirement or serving in the permanent force, the majority of my white male informants who had served experienced a huge shock when, in the army or military, they saw what was really going on.

I was doing national service in 1986-87 and I was posted to the border between Namibia and Angola, so I spent a year up there defending the border of Angola against terrorists and that was really funny. That was an eye-opener because there weren't any. They were just people wanting self-government for Namibia. [Younger English-speaking man]

My informants explained how thorough the methods of brainwashing and the use of propaganda were, even on both sides of the apartheid wall. The government controlled the media, national educational curriculum, and the theology and ministry of the Reformed Churches. “People could be locked up and nobody was allowed to report about it...[A journalist] could be charged by reporting a strike.” As a result, most people

within South Africa knew far less about what was going on than those of us who were on the outside.

Of course, a continuum existed among those I spoke with. Those who were more on the left, politically, were taught from an early age what propaganda was and some had connections to or were members of the ANC. For those who are conservative and Nationalist, they still today believed that apartheid was a good system and that only a few people were to blame for the atrocities of the era. Those in the middle proved to be the most intriguing group, since they grew up believing the propaganda, and only later recognized it as “all a bunch of lies.”

In the post-apartheid era, the matter of truth is a quagmire: what is true? How do you know? How does one get to the heart of the matter? Who is to be trusted? Terrorism and black-on-black violence existed, but who was ultimately responsible? While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) answered many questions, a number of informants were skeptical about the results.

According to my informants, both black and white, the truth was difficult to parse out for the average South African. Depending on the issue, there was enough truth to what was said that one could not dismiss the ‘brainwashing’ completely. The propaganda served as a very powerful interpretive lens through which to see current and historical events. The changes that occurred during the 1980s increased people’s awareness as the government became less able to contain the civil unrest, but even then, people had been so conditioned to interpret current events in a certain framework that they put up resistance to acknowledging truths that would shake their worldview. The storylines became more real than the story.

A number of my informants appear to carry a weighted cynicism, which makes it difficult to trust or believe what any government anywhere says they are doing. Among the white informants, particularly women, many explained to me that this has led many whites in South Africa to bury their heads and “just go shopping.” A number of people told me that politics is seen as boring and depressing among many whites in South Africa, so they focus on their homes, cars, clothing and looks, etc.

Since this topic proved to be quite expansive, I want to focus it by examining a few social issues that highlight the quagmire of propaganda and brainwashing. I then discuss the experiences of informants who ‘woke up’ to the reality of South Africa and saw propaganda for what it was, concluding by briefly touching on some of the feelings that came up in discussing this subject.

*Riots.* In speaking about riots, the most famous riots that people remembered were the Soweto riot in 1976. These were student protests by blacks against the requirement that their education be in Afrikaans. Two older Afrikaner informants, the first Nationalist and the second Nationalist and Progressive, described it:

Soweto riots—they started going crazy! They didn't want to go to school; they didn't want to learn Afrikaans. They burned everything and just destroyed and...they complain, they want everything, they want everything and then they destroy everything and I think that's what upset people most—the destruction in the streets and the riot and no studying and achieving nothing, or I don't think they achieved anything, just destroying the place.

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We would build schools for black kids out in townships and they would burn them down. And then, and then later on, you would always hear them complaining of, “Well, we don't have schools and we need to write,” and I was thinking, “Well, I remember that you guys burned them down.”

The power of how the apartheid government framed riots is evident in both of these quotes. Ignoring the deeper reasons behind unrest and protest in the country, the

government spin leveraged stereotypes of blacks as ignorant, ungrateful, lazy, selfish, and destructive. (See Afropessimism for more of a discussion of stereotypes and racism).

The underlying feeling is one of patronage from whites to blacks, i.e., “*We* are providing for you [an education].”

Such interpretations were criticized by progressives that I interviewed who felt that these individuals missed the point of the riots. They explained that “Bantu education” for blacks was horrible and it only trained blacks for manual labor and not much else. These white informants could understand why blacks had protested and they agreed that students should be taught in their own language as well as English, since it is an international language.

Yet the complexities of the issue were highlighted by black and Colored informants who provided a clearer lens on the social movements of youth. Throughout various periods of protest, a mob mentality did seem to overwhelm some groups of school children and chaos resulted, which brought fear to the black and Colored informants who lived in the midst of it. Most protesting youth claimed the slogan “justice before education,” so many of them did not attend school for long periods of time. Some of these kids were able to study at home; others underwent militia and activist training to be part of ‘the struggle.’ Schools were burned, adults were harassed, people were “necklaced,” and gang violence ensued. A Colored woman described a period of riots in her community:

If anybody pointed to you as a traitor, you would either get necklaced or you would get stabbed to death. So we lived through the necklace era... Our Sunday papers were full of color pictures of people executed or blown up, body parts all over. It wasn't anything new for us, it was something we grew up with; it was just there. South African society is saturated with violence at every level.

As a child you go through it as an observer but also as a victim because you have the oppression from the government and it gets pushed on the adults and the adults don't have an outlet except to get on the kids. And then the older kids will abuse the younger ones, so there's that vicious cycle going on and on and on.

Of course, media attention focused on this type of internalized violence within Colored and black communities and did not address state violence. This focus only perpetuated the idea that these youth were inherently violent, that the fighting was black on black and did not involve the government, and that blacks and Coloreds were ignorant and could be swayed into fighting for anything. In contrast, the state's response to this violence was seen as necessary and rational.

*Terrorists.* Another issue that was heavily colored by propaganda was the matter of terrorism and Communism. The Communist threat was real, as Cuban and Russian forces descended on Angola to support the Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA) against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the South African Defense Force (SADF). At the same time, anti-apartheid networks were working in neighboring countries to continue the struggle against the South African government. They were called 'terrorists' in the media and Freedom Fighters by those who were against apartheid. The actions of these anti-apartheid activists include planting bombs in urban areas and acts of sabotage.

There were bombs being planted, car bombs. There were bombs in trashcans on the sidewalk in the cities. There were car bombs outside bars and restaurants. So my entire high school and afterwards, once I was grown up and had kids and stuff like that, I remember that going on. Bombs in shopping malls, so we had to be very aware of terrorist activity wherever we went.

\* \* \* \*

The terrorist attacks were bad. I mean we had bombs going off all over the place. And you just sort of got used to it...Everybody was frightened to go to shopping centers...It just became a part of our life.

One older English-speaker was vehement about the fact that Nelson Mandela was not an innocent political prisoner; he was leading a terrorist group that planted bombs that killed innocent civilians. Whether or not one agreed with his politics, she said, he was in charge of activities that were wrong. She also argued that the international community had been fed propaganda and did not realize the extent of this terrorism in South Africa. A number of other informants had this same argument about the terrorist activities of the ANC. While they understood or might have agreed with the ANC's justifications, they disagreed with the tactics. Some of them argued that the ANC should have tried negotiations, which glosses over the long history of the ANC's attempts to do just that.

But more progressive informants argued that the Communist threat was overblown to give an excuse for the government to do as it wished, whether it was exploit the mineral wealth of Angola and Namibia or increase militarism in the townships. The nature of the anti-terrorism laws were such that anyone could be arrested as a terrorist for being against the government. Though anyone could be targeted for their anti-apartheid activities, the implicit message equated blacks with terrorists.

For most informants, however, the strength of some of the propaganda deteriorated in the late 1980s. When Namibia had their first elections in 1989, one informant began to question the word "terrorist."

Sam Djama was a terrorist leader who became the president of Namibia. So that put everything in question. We had all these guys labeled as terrorists and now suddenly they're respected people? So basically it became – everything was just a game of words...

**Was there really a Communist threat then?**

It was there, but it was very fashionable. Anybody that was anti-government was communist. It was just the buzz word.

In any struggle against ‘terrorism’, the challenge is to maintain a strict differentiation between oneself, or your government, and the enemy. The irony of the South African situation was not lost on one informant, an older Afrikaner, who had served in the military:

It was surprising to me in later years when we were finally allowed to read stuff like the communist books, we actually discovered that the whole National Party's philosophy was basically, it was almost like it was taken out of the communist paradigm...the way everything was planned. The way everything was set up for you.

**Strong central government and--**

Yeah, the government basically decided for you what you can think, what you are allowed to hear, what you are allowed to talk about—regimented who is allowed to do what. They actually predetermined your whole life for you from the start. It was eventually very bad, so even when we grew up, we eventually discovered the whole philosophy behind the government and to think that the church was supposed to be Christian and then to discover it was actually governed and controlled by the government where the government and the church would sit down and say, on this Sunday we will preach about that. And that Sunday we will preach about that.

For those who were conscripted or who signed up for military service, experiences of propaganda about terrorism were quite eye opening. The rhetoric that was used to solicit support for the war was similar to what can be found in other countries. A younger Afrikaans-speaking male:

**And how was this war explained to you that you were a part of?**

I think it's big propaganda, a sort of brainwashing thing. You have to protect your country and keep all these evil forces from outside trying to invade us through Angola basically.

The army was divided in two between the permanent force, who were mostly conservative and Nationalist Afrikaners, and the conscripted, who were often more liberal and, my informants told me, more likely to be English than Afrikaner. One older English-speaking man who was conscripted to serve on the border spoke openly about his experiences protecting the mortar crew at the border. When I asked him about Koevoets

or rekkies, he said, yes, he knew what was going on because they were in his camp. He said the permanent force guys would bring young conscripts into the Angola bush to hunt down 'terrorists' but the propaganda had a tenuous hold.

They [younger conscripts] would come back and they would talk, and they'd say, "Well why, why did we shoot this, why did we do this?" All these questions, and then this rekkie, permanent force guy would come along and say, "Well this is why we're doing it."

**What kind of things was he saying? and was that good enough for these guys?**

Good for some, but others would just carry on, "Why, this is not right. Why did we target that place or this village..." "Why did we just shoot?"... These were guys that were 18, 19... We were in our mid-20's. We were saying at that point in time, "This is not right," you know, so you get caught between this delicate situation where you're trying to help these young guys, talk to them, get them through these emotional things, yet not upset the whole balance ... 'cause if we spoke too much, they would send us back away from these camps to a more central point or even further back into South Africa because they didn't want us there, because we were going against what the cause was... And I had a couple of friends who were shipped out [from the border]... One guy and a couple of us were labeled as the rebels, you know, always questioning things, "Who is this guy to lead us, who is he? He's nobody in civilian life and he thinks he's somebody in military life, you know."

For some, an awareness of the level of brainwashing stayed hidden until after the war. A younger English-speaking male expressed it this way:

**Is it in hindsight you are calling it brainwashing or at the time?**

At the time, believe it or not, I was extremely patriotic and to the sense that, they tell you what to do and you fight for your country. You are taught that you are fighting for your country and until recently, probably until 10 years ago when the new government came in, I was, and I'm not proud to say this, I was slightly racist.

Other informants argued that greed was the underlying factor behind the government's actions and that propaganda was used to cover up this fact. The following are from older Afrikaner men:

And so, it was, Communism, like the so-called *swart gevaar* [black threat] was used to propagandize and to motivate the war. But the, I believe, the

underlying thing was more the land; they were fighting over the natural resources.

\* \* \* \*

The biggest eye-opener was when I was actually in the military and started discovering what was the real methods and processes about why they did certain things at certain times and then discovered that everything was basically a lie that was told you, right from as a kid...It was always told to you that there was this big communist threat. Yes there was a threat, but not as bad as they made it out to be. It was more a case of a lot of Ministers wanted to line their pockets and make themselves rich.

These perspectives contrasted with those of many of my female informants, who did not have such a 'cynical' take on the war. Many of them had siblings, cousins, or uncles who had fought at the border. Some of those who returned home had severe cases of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or what one informant called being "bush mad." A gender divide prevented the men from talking about their experiences with their sisters, mothers, and girlfriends.

But as the war went on in the 1980s, people were less and less interested in fighting it:

I think at that stage, people were starting to see through this...a lot of my friends tried to not go to the army, and some of them actually managed not to go, you know. People didn't feel, you didn't feel very patriotic toward South Africa and you didn't feel that you actually needed to go to war and protect your country. Actually everyone saw it as a waste of time.  
[Younger Afrikaner]

*Coming into Awareness.* People from both generations and both white ethnic groups expressed regret about having been brainwashed. These experiences caused a fall from grace in which they realized that everything they had grown up believing was a lie and that unconscionable acts were done to people of color in South Africa by a government that they had grown up trusting.

But at the beginning, you clutch onto what you've been told, to be obedient and believe what authority tells you...but the evidence of what

you see is different and it's quite something to come to grips with that and come to, "No, this is wrong, this is not how it's supposed to be. You can't justify that."

These informants were highly educated, skilled individuals who felt they had gone to excellent schools. For some, all of whom were progressives, the eventual awareness of their own ignorance and inability to do anything about the atrocities caused them to feel useless, cynical, defeated, bitter, and disempowered.

During the apartheid era, a number of informants would hear about what the international media was saying about South Africa and they just could not (and did not) believe it. Only when they themselves traveled abroad, could they begin to comprehend the umbrella of propaganda that they had been living under. The first quote below is from a trained engineer:

It was weird. It was eye-opening. All this stuff's going on and we don't know about it. I remember having anti-foreigner sentiments because people were picking on us as a country. But actually people outside of the country knew far more about what was going on than the average white in the country. So now people are still saying we don't know, we didn't know. I mean it was there. You have to be naive and I think we were. *I actually used to be quite bitter about it, about being manipulated so much, because we were rendered useless. We could have done so much better and made a contribution to make it a better place... I hadn't been educated enough to know or figure out how to make a contribution. But I think now the government was so successful in dumbing people down and soliciting their support, they're extremely good at taking white kids and making them fit the mold (my emphasis).*

\* \* \* \*

Oh, the day I discovered one big fraud in South Africa. It was unbelievable, like a ton of bricks just fell on my head. We discovered what these people were *really* doing. It was extremely sad. It was both liberating at the same time as well as disheartening because suddenly you realize that everything that you have learned up until now is a massive fraud. So your whole 24 years of your life is basically one massive fraud. **So you were still in the army then, did you finish out your service?** Yes I did. It was very difficult to do that.

The feeling of one's world caving in was not solely in the domain of my white informants, however. One black informant explained what growing up in a "so-called independent" homeland was like.

When I was in high school, that's when politics started turning clear to almost everyone in the street, but before then I think there was misinformation because we were, back then, X (homeland) was a semi-independent state from South Africa but that independence was granted for a specific reason. I think it was containment that if you have tribes divided from each other they won't come together and get involved in such kinds of things...

So the leaders of these homelands had a task to make sure that these areas were depoliticized, so any form of politics that ever reached the ground was a lot of misinformation. When we were growing up, there was indoctrination going on that the Freedom Fighters that were coming [were terrorists]...the military used to kill those people whenever they came.

With the end of apartheid, despite the disempowerment people felt, there was also relief for English-speakers and a few younger Afrikaners who finally began to bridge the gap between the schizophrenic sides of themselves and their society. Recognizing propaganda and brainwashing was their first step in coming to terms with the 'apartheid of the mind' in themselves.

## The Status of Being White

Under apartheid, being white meant that you lived in a system that ensured your right to an good education, steady work, safety, a home and family, and many other opportunities and necessities. The legal, political, and security structures of society were oriented towards providing these privileges, but only a minority of whites understood the cost of this white privilege or how it shaped their actions and beliefs. The propaganda explained differences between how blacks and whites lived with an emphasis on cultural differences. Therefore, for whites growing up on one side of the color line, the economic basis of their privileged lifestyle often went unnoticed. They inhabited a sphere where their white skin held symbolic capital and the economic underpinnings of that capital went unnoticed, in white society. Though they recognized that they had better houses, had cars, access to education, etc., most people did not confront the fact that these resulted from systemic and historical inequalities, not people's choices or cultural differences. How were whites shaped by this privileged upbringing? What were the social expectations within white society that maintained this privilege and its boundaries?

Differences are evident in how this privilege was inhabited by English-speakers versus Afrikaners but the 'apartheid lifestyle' itself was not dissimilar between the main white ethnic groups. Racial privilege existed for both. The following quotes from two younger white informants give evidence of this lifestyle:

The house was definitely more luxurious than most houses here [in the U.S.]. It had a swimming pool and a huge yard, and hardwood floors. The houses are just a lot more grand at home than they are here.

\* \* \*

It was assumed growing up that I would live in a white neighborhood. It was assumed that I would have a white job, you know. It was assumed that I would have black servants, so in that sense, yeah, it was certainly – we were set for life. There was no way that by screwing up or not paying

attention to our education or not investing our time wisely in the community that we would end up living on the other side of the tracks. It wasn't gonna happen, ever.

Of the white informants, the younger generation had a keener sense of what privilege exactly was and is, and the politics of race. The older informants emphasized the privileges that were lost: “Thirty years ago whites were so secure; the blacks were in order, in their place and look how things have changed.” “Life for whites long ago was fantastic—the whites had a marvelous life... you see white people begging in the streets now not blacks anymore. It's shocking.”

In contrast, the following shows the broader understanding of both English-speakers and Afrikaners in the younger generation.

We were white so we enjoyed a certain privilege and yet not committing to support black people because that would have been too costly. If we had sided with a black person, then we would have foregone our own status as whites, right? [Younger English-speaking man]

Younger informants also were more articulate than older informants about the downsides of this kind of privileged lifestyle. A number of them felt that whites were limited by their ignorance about other people's experiences in South Africa, i.e., experiences of people who lived on the other side of the color line. The sense was that whites have been blinded by their privilege.

A younger Afrikaner woman remarked:

People [other white South African immigrants to U.S.] talk about voting or not voting and about the crime in South Africa but they don't realize that most South Africans don't have anything worth stealing. They aren't going to get hijacked because they don't have a car.

Never understood the black perspective at all, having grown up in a white, English privileged society, having moved into the army. You don't understand really a lot of the stuff...I put my head in the sand. [English-speaking man]

However, I did have one older Afrikaner informant express the feeling of privilege and the level of discomfort that came along with being treated differently.

I would go to a place close to Swaziland and you would see them and they would like, almost like, not bend over but, “Hey this is the big boss” and then you say to these [guys],...“It’s nothing.” Actually some people might abuse it, but no you could feel it. Once you talk to them awhile, you are in there, and then comes the thing that everybody is the same.

**How would you feel it? I’m not sure what you mean.**

You feel out of place if you go to a place and everybody thinks you are so good, you know? You are the best, you are the guard or whatever. You feel out of place. You say, “Hey, this is not the case.”

For a number of the younger informants, they felt that this privilege put them in a box and now they feel that they are not relevant to South Africa or representative of the people. They argue that their role in South Africa is limited because they come from a “very over-privileged, unrepresentative little sector of society.” (See Box of Being White for more on this topic.)

Another outcome of this privilege that people in both generations emphasized was the need within white society to protect and improve ones status. A number of informants impressed upon me the importance of material wealth and status in white South African society, pointing out that though the same exists in the U.S.—it was much more stringent in South Africa. “People are very aware of their status in South Africa.” “I needed to look good.” Such pressure existed for both men and women, but the white women I spoke to articulated a particularly personal feeling of this pressure to look a certain way:

Of course we were fashion-conscious and we'd want to go shopping together...South Africans [whites] generally are very materialistic. Like all their money goes on clothes and jewelry and into the home and making things more beautiful and keeping up with the Joneses...Like you can't be seen – if you get engaged and your diamond isn't huge, it's a disaster, you know?

This kind of pressure to retain one's status and defend the status quo of white privilege also made some individuals feel a sense of alienation and division within their own social groups. White women might be shunned for not dressing right or having a large enough diamond and men might be looked down on for not having the right job or earning enough money to buy a new car. But even more damaging was the fact of schisms. As one older Afrikaner woman put it, "There's just, especially the white people, everybody has their own little opinion." Schisms occurred at all levels—political, social, and religious. The pressure to stay within your community by conforming was quite strong and was enforced socially as well as legally. "Socially it was like you have to do your thing if you're gonna stay part of the community."

Since white society under apartheid was the result of an extremely racialized political system, the resulting status quo within the society became the manifestation of this racial hierarchy. As such, the defense of the status quo is linked to a defense of white privilege and, therefore, an example of new racism in which the status quo is used to resist changes that would equalize society in terms of this racial hierarchy. As such, as one younger English informant pointed out, defending white privilege did not necessitate holding explicitly racist views about blacks.

[Whites] would be fine with anything just as long as their privileged way of life wasn't threatened. So it's not even about race. It has far more to do with class and money. They would not hold views like 'a black person is stupid.' I think they are too educated to hold stupid views like that, but they were not happy about anything that threatened the status quo.

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*Superhuman Beings.* The experience of being white during the apartheid era was one of privilege, but what did people of color think about whites and who they were? Black and

Colored informants pointed out the limitations of growing up within such privilege. One young Colored informant told me about her sister's problems working with Afrikaner whites and pointed out a weakness of these Afrikaners.

They still have that attitude of "I'm Boss, and you do as I say...I'm superior and you just don't know what you are talking about" and so they are never wrong. *They can't take any criticism.* (my emphasis)

Another informant explained that whites are not equipped to compete. Since whites had a strong affirmative action program during apartheid, whites did not have to compete with the whole population for top-level positions.

If there is a white person here and we need to have a supervisor, he is a supervisor by default. He doesn't have to be smarter than anyone. There will probably be somebody within the group that knows the job better than anyone; he will be doing the supervising but he will never get that position. The white person will talk to him and they will work out on everything.

As a result of this history, the white classmates of a black informant were unprepared the changes that came after apartheid was dismantled.

They had to compete with everyone else, so to them that was hard because they were not equipped for dealing with that kind of situation...For white South Africans it's a different situation. They are from a different world altogether. Job security was not an issue, but now it's an issue. They don't know how long they will stay in those positions because you have to be competent now. You don't just sit in your office and think everything is going to be just fine. That's the challenge...

However, for this black informant, as a youngster he wished he could have been white for the privileges that it brought:

I thought that if I had an opportunity to be white, I would grab it with both hands, because I thought being white makes you have access to all these privileges. I just thought that they were *superhuman beings*, that's what I thought.

He explained that he thought all whites were smart and had money. This person grew up in a rural area and, at the time, did not recognize the links between his oppression and the larger system that privileged whites.

When I asked whites what they thought about his comment, many of them, surprisingly, were stunned and speechless. A number of people chuckled awkwardly. Most people assumed that blacks hated whites and thought whites were all racists or they thought, based on their friendship with their servants or other help, that blacks looked up to them as ‘boss’. They did not realize that in the eyes of some blacks, at least, they were idolized as superhuman or that their white skin held symbolic significance.

A few said they could understand this person’s perspective if they were in a rural area and had no TV or radio. They felt that if this person had seen whites driving cars and running businesses and large farms that they might view whites as larger than life. A number of informants mentioned that they had heard that some blacks thought whites got free money out of ATM machines. This story was used to explain the ignorance of blacks, i.e., they did not know that whites had to *work* for that money, they did not understand how banks functioned or how the business world functioned. This was one way that people understood his comment, that blacks idolized whites but they did not understand white society.

A progressive younger person was shocked that a black South African could grow up in South Africa and not understand the link between white privilege and black exploitation. Her parents were pointing out such inequalities to her from a young age and she assumed that African parents would do the same. “But maybe they didn’t want to cause unrest,” she explained. In South Africa, most black parents encouraged their

children to get an education. They did not want their children protesting, since they could be arrested or killed. She thought this might be the case for this informant's over-admiration of whites. Another person admitted that, yes, "to a degree we are snobby and we do think that we're superhuman."

In contrast, a more conservative person defended the system by explaining that he never heard of anyone being held back. He did not see why this person would say this about whites, explaining that blacks could buy cars too; they just needed to work hard for it like whites did. Furthermore, he argued that blacks had the same opportunities as whites; they just did not use them. A similar comment by an older Afrikaner woman: "I thought that whatever they are doing is what they wanted to be doing, like I am doing what I want to do."

Very few people understood the power behind their position and status as whites. Only one older Afrikaner man recognized this connection:

I think he's right, because I never bothered as a white to think about it, which meant I assumed or accepted the status quo and not thinking for one moment that I'm doing wrong. No, I think if you grow up in a situation where the whites have it and they can do it better than you can, you might think that maybe they are superhuman. *But whose job is it to release him from that error? It's the superhuman's job.*" (my emphasis)

Whereas black and Colored informants pointed out the status of whites, most white informants were unaware of the symbolic power of the white privilege they held under apartheid. When discussing the subject of being white, most of them associated having a distinctly white racial identity with extreme right-wing white supremacy. This association causes many whites to seek a colorblind attitude that does not "see color" in order to disassociate themselves from this right-wing extremism. However, it leaves the question of how to redefine their whiteness unanswered. Following my inquiry into what

they thought of the “superhuman” comment, I asked people: “what kinds of stereotypes about being white did you grow up with?”

A generational difference emerged in that older informants had fewer explanations of what it meant to be white than the younger generation. For older informants, being white meant one of two things: being superior—i.e., having an education, being the boss, not working at McDonald’s or being a garbage man—or being a right-wing racist/extremist. While younger white informants in both ethnic groups also had these two definitions, they also said whites were:

- rich or ‘the haves’ versus the ‘have-nots’
- whites are people taken care of by blacks
- guilty because their privilege was won at a cost; they have to apologize
- a problem, i.e., you are responsible

The only comment that was positive about what it means to be white was a response I received when I asked a conservative informant if there were similarities between how whites are here in the U.S. versus South Africa. His reply leverages historical and racist stereotypes about who blacks and whites are.

It’s the same, cause much of the time the majority of the white people are using the opportunities, they know what they want and through hard work they achieve it.

Probing further, I questioned people on what they knew about black or Colored people’s stereotypes about whites. The majority of my informants were unable to answer this question. They explained that they never had thought about it before, that they would never have asked someone what they thought about whites. This type of disconnection resulted from an embodied apartheid that left whites unaware of feedback from people of color. Some white informants offered stereotypes that they *thought* blacks and Coloreds had about them such as, they hate whites and they think that all

Afrikaners are racists. Only four informants were able to tell me what black people they had actually spoken to had said about whites.

A younger English-speaking informant explained:

I know they think we are unhappy—stiff and unhappy. White people have other people looking after their children; they don't have lots of family living in the house, no music, no sharing. I think they find it kind of sterile and isolating. I had one conversation with a black woman and she just thinks that white people are sad—all the time.

An older Afrikaner who had grown up with Zulus said the word *mulungu* defined whites as “bad people.”

If you translate that directly it was very stereotypical because that was the only experience they had of the majority of whites. Very bad, very mean, always slapping them around. Very common.

Two other informants could remember conversations with blacks or Coloreds in which they learned that these individuals felt that whites were snobbish and over-privileged and taken care of by the government. Of the 32 whites I spoke to, these four respondents were the only ones who could answer my questions out of *conversations* they had with blacks, not just rumors about what blacks thought about whites. Again, this just exemplifies the kind of separation that existed between whites and everyone else living in South Africa. The limitations of the kind of privilege whites experienced are not often discussed, but they are important to shed light on in order to understand what changes need to occur for white South Africans to adjust to and adopt a new role in the New South Africa. Though being part of a dominant group brings privileges and access to wealth and opportunities, it also results in practices, beliefs, and expectations that are socially limiting.

## Afropessimism

In his 2004 Presidential address to the nation, Mbeki emphasized the history of racism, colonialism and apartheid in South Africa and in Africa:

“For a millennium there were some in the world who were convinced that to be African was to be less than human. This conviction made it easy to trade in human beings as slaves, to colonise countries and, today, to consign Africans to the periphery of global human society, as a fit object for sustenance through charitable donations.

Necessarily, the great journey we have undertaken has to be, and is about redressing the harm that was caused to all Africans. It is about overcoming the consequences of the assault that was made on our *sense of pride, our identity and confidence in ourselves*. Through our efforts, we must achieve the outcome that we cease to be beggars, and deny others the possibility to sustain racist prejudices that dehumanise even those who consider themselves superior...

We share this and other goals with the rest of our continent and the African Diaspora, as well as the billions across the globe who continue to suffer as millions in our country do. Nothing can separate us from these masses with which we share a common destiny...

We are greatly inspired that having achieved the goal of the total liberation of Africa from colonial and white minority domination with the defeat of the apartheid regime, our Continent acted to establish the African Union and initiate its development programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Our common task is to ensure that these historic initiatives succeed in their objective of taking Africa forward to the victory of the African Renaissance. Democratic South Africa will play its role vigorously to promote the achievement of this goal.”  
(<http://www.iol.co.za/> my emphasis)

In a recent issue of ANC Today (April 2, 2004) Mbeki argues that “Afropessimists” inside and outside of South Africa have an interest in perpetuating racist stereotypes against everything African. These people threaten the success of democracy in South Africa, he argues, and “refuse to accept that as Africans we can build a successful, stable and peaceful non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous democracy.”

The importance of the kinds of embedded attitudes that Mbeki calls

Afropessimism cannot be overstated. An example of how these attitudes were reflected in my interviews is the following quote from a progressive, English-speaking woman:

I think that the more white South Africans aren't a part of that society, the harder that things are going to be in that country for everybody, the blacks too, because in general they [blacks] aren't very good business people. And the economy it's been shown that the economy since the blacks have been in rule and so many of them are getting into the work force that the businesses, the economy is not doing as well. So, I just think they still need the whites.

Though many of the whites I spoke to minimized the impact of various rituals, such as keeping separate cutlery for 'the help', the blacks and Coloreds I interviewed all spoke about the impact of such rituals. A significant explanation for such a contrast lies in the purpose these rituals served within white society. As Steyn (2001b:16) points out, in South Africa the oppressor was psychologically dependent on the oppressed for a sense of identity. What I found in the growing up experiences of my white informants was that their sense of themselves, their way of orienting themselves in the world relied on Afropessimistic stereotypes about blacks. Whites within white society rooted their daily practices in a structure that turned on the perspective that blacks were not as evolved as whites and were inherently less developed. As a result, these stereotypes about blacks remain salient—perhaps less for how they define blacks than for the purpose they serve in white identity making (Said 1987; Fanon 1967).

Therefore, most whites I spoke to were not sympathetic to the struggle that Mbeki articulates, i.e., the fight against racist attitudes towards blacks. Despite the fact that most whites did not even know what was happening on the other side of the color line, their judgments of black perspectives are swift. Most of my white informants were

critical of 'the blacks' and the government, saying the focus on the past is causing South Africa to go downhill.

I begin with a discussion of prevalent stereotypes of blacks that white informants spoke with me about and what they thought qualified as racism. I follow this with an exploration of the experiences of informants who were on the receiving end of such rituals and Afropessimism.

In the interviews, I asked people to tell me what other people said about blacks. Phrasing the question this way avoided putting people on the defensive. I also wanted to get a sense of the 'groupness' of these frameworks, rather than pinpointing which individual believed or said what.

The power of these stereotypes shows the *culture* of racism that existed within white society, i.e., something larger than the individuals within it and a set of meanings that structure their shared experiences. This culture of racism drew on shared meanings that rooted whites to their world. For most whites I spoke to, this shared meaning shaped their daily practices. Therefore, even if they as individuals were nice to 'the help', they were participating in and being shaped by a larger social structure that gave their life meaning by oppressing black, Colored, and Indian populations in the country.

The stereotypes that drove this sense of white identity can all be traced to those that led de Gobineau and others in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to popularize a racial hierarchy of whites on top and blacks at the bottom. In contrast to whites, blacks were seen as inherently lazy, stupid, hypersexual, perverted, dirty, dangerous, less evolved and stuck in their traditional ways, and irrationally superstitious.

*Ignorant/Stupid.* When I asked one younger English-speaker about other people's stereotypes about blacks, she summarized: "They are just stupid and dirty and couldn't run the country on their own if they tried, you know? And thank God they've got us to do it for them."

These attitudes were present in what other informants said, particularly the perspective that blacks were ignorant and easily deceived.

Most of the black people will think that if you go to an ATM machine that you just have a card and you just have an endless money supply. So they all basically think that as well, so they would believe that the government is just supplying the white people with endless amounts of money. And they don't realize that the white people basically had to work for the money. [Conservative Afrikaner man]

\* \* \*

They would not use condoms and they would not use any type of birth control because they said it was the white person's way of trying to control the black. So they actually just multiplied profusely and it was normal to have 5-8 kids, but a lot of times they didn't have jobs. So they would have a menial job and they didn't have money to support their kids and then the white people who were more educated, the average number of kids in the family was two and so we could afford to feed our kids and clothe our kids and stuff like that because we only had two or maybe three... So I was very aware of it but I also could see that a lot of it was because of ignorance. I think if they had been educated with me in my class when I was going to school, things would have been very different now. [Progressive English-speaking woman]

These attitudes are subtle. As the last quote shows, not all interpretations of difference between races are based on a view of traits as unchanging and essential. This person was arguing that if blacks had gone to school with her, that they would have been trained in family planning and would not have had as many children. Yet, her perspective shows an attitude of 'new racism' in which the status quo is defended as the correct option. She does not take into account the meaning of children in different cultural groups or the fact

that life expectancy was much lower for blacks than for whites, which would lead parents to want to have more children in the hopes that some survive.

On the other hand, this stereotype about blacks is tricky because for large portions of the black population who never had the opportunity to go to school or were provided 'Bantu education', they *are* illiterate and unschooled and many do not understand the (white/European) bureaucratic structure. Yet, the knowledge that they do have, their experiences, and their survival tactics go unnoticed. The way that blacks orient themselves in the world and their perspectives are simply seen as ignorant. No room is given for the fact that cultural beliefs coupled with experiences shape the way people perceive their world.

*Lazy.* A number of white informants felt that blacks rode on the coattails of hard-working whites. Their view was that whites as a group have been giving and giving to blacks and still they want more. The underlying paternalistic attitude is that blacks cannot succeed on their own, they are lazy, and they need to be cared for by whites. One younger Afrikaner woman sarcastically explained the thinking of her community: "We know how they are, we know they are lazy people and they need to be taken care of." Another informant told this story about his gardener:

That they are stupid and I mean, that they don't want to think. They don't have this *oomph*, I call it *oomph*, the drive to do something. It's easy, "the white man is going to give it to us. Why do we have to think? Why do we have to do something about it? We are going to get it." And I think that's either stupid or just being ignorant. [Nationalist older Afrikaner]

Another person explained why whites had to sometimes be hard on blacks.

Unfortunately, a lot of the black working people were lazy and they could steal if you just turn your back, so you always had to keep your eye on them. [Conservative younger Afrikaner]

The irony of these attitudes came out in an interview with a younger progressive informant: “‘If they worked hard, they would be able to get out of where they are,’ which is absolute rubbish, of course. Within that political system, they could have worked to death and nothing would have happened. They would still be stuck where they were.”

“*Not Economic.*” An older Afrikaner man explained the failure of blacks in Namibia to successfully farm the land they have received through land reforms there.

The blacks are not economic, what is the word, are not agriculturists. You know, traditionally the blacks are just subsistence farmers; their tribal tradition is to have a small piece of land to grow, sufficient for what they need.

And in speaking of land reform in South Africa, he felt:

I might be wrong but I'm not aware of any black-owned farm that is economically viable and that is producing on the same level as the white farms are producing or were producing. Just put them on the land, spend money trying to educate them on how to farm, give them the hardware and the material to farm with and it's not going to work.

His comments reflect a general skepticism about the ability of blacks to learn how to farm in a way that is different from their traditional methods. This attitude relies on the idea that blacks are inherently (aka biologically) unable to do certain things. His perspective ignores the fact that whites were successful farmers because they received subsidies from the government, loans for machinery, and had blacks working the land for them for very little pay. Rather than seeing the problem as one of economics, social control, and funding, he argues that blacks are just “not economic,” i.e., not agriculturalists.

*Dangerous/dirty/perverted.* When I initially heard the term *swart gevaar* (black peril), I thought it meant the whites feared being overpowered by blacks. Though it carries this

meaning today, the history of the term references the fear that blacks will rape white women (Cornwell 1996). Such fears fueled questions about colonial interactions with ‘natives.’ This dual meaning still seems prevalent.

They will run away with your little girls and rape them, they will—every black man wants to rape a white woman.

\* \* \*

They are all dangerous; they are all out to kill you if they get a chance. They will steal—they will take things from you if they feel that you owe them...The biggest one was, black men will always try to kill you. If you see them, get away.

**As a white woman?**

Yeah, get away, they will try and kill you.

**Is there any explanation of motivation?**

No.

These types of attitudes are not only explicit, but they also have become embedded in rituals of segregation maintained with ‘the help’, such as not putting dishes used by blacks and whites in the same sink to wash them for fear of cross-contamination.

They would not use my mother's toilet because you just don't put a black butt on a white toilet, you know (laughing). I mean that's something really stupid and small. I said to my mom last time I was there, why is L. going out there to use the toilet, what's wrong with your toilet? Well, how can you even ask me that? It's just not done.

It is obvious how these attitudes and rituals are based on a perspective that blacks are inherently dirty, dangerous, and perverted. As Stoler (2002) argues, these types of rules and regulations within white society not only support white supremacy, but they also reign in and regulate whites who are part of this dominant group in order to maintain the superior position of whites as a whole and the boundaries of this dominant group's identity. Yet, within white discourse, rules and regulations were defended on the basis of other factors such as protecting the safety of women and children.

The following exchange about the abolition of the pass laws gives weight to this point. This younger English-speaking informant argued that pass laws were in place as a safety thing.

**A safety thing for whom?**

For the people and for tourists because the people that they did catch that were in the city at midnight who didn't obey the curfew were doing wrong. Stealing and raping and – I'm not saying that about everybody but that's why it was so strict. They put down a law and stuck to it and it worked.

**And now that that has been lifted?**

Look at all the rapes and things that are going on now. The big thing now in South Africa is that the men with AIDS are raping toddlers and babies, newborn babies because they've been told that it's a cure for AIDS. And nothing gets done about it. I mean they go around raping and that's it.

*Smaller brains.* The notion that blacks have smaller brains, or different brains, is also still prevalent as an explanation of differences between blacks and whites. An older English-speaking woman asked me:

Haven't scientific experiments shown that blacks brains are smaller? And I don't mean to be derogatory at all...there were experiments done in this country and in Africa about the capacity of the brain structure or the difference of the brain structure...They don't have good judgment on distance, so many blacks are killed running across the roads in South Africa because they don't have good depth perception and distance. And I just remember P. saying something to the effect that there are definite differences in the brain, in the functioning of the brain. Not to mean that they're less intelligent, but just that it functions differently.

This woman's comments reflect a historical (and current) argument that differences in brain and skull sizes showed that black Africans were the missing link (halfway between primates and Europeans) or were a different species of human. These kinds of biologically based interpretations of difference usually imply that this 'difference' really signifies the inferiority of blacks. Even if the speaker denies such a conclusion, the larger historical context and social understandings connote such an interpretation.

*Superstitious.* A number of informants expressed frustration at the superstitions that blacks in South Africa still hold onto. The perception is that black Africans are too stuck in their traditions; these traditions prevent them from modernizing and developing along western lines.

There's black people—and I know my brother would say I'm a traitor for saying this—who believe that having sex with a virgin is going to cure them from AIDS. They believe throwing bones will foretell the future. They believe talking to their grandfather's spirit will tell them what to do. This is ridiculous superstition! It doesn't belong in this century—but I'm not saying they shouldn't be heard. I'm just saying, we [white liberals/progressives in South Africa] don't want to talk about this. We don't want to talk about what a disgrace it is that they are robbing graves for people's bones so that they can foretell the future. This doesn't happen in this world. Black people in South Africa can still have more than one wife, but to attack that is to be anti-African. Hello!! [radical feminist Afrikaans-speaker]

Another informant told this story about encountering black South Africans who believed in the *tokoloshe*.

The black people are very, very superstitious. And our maid, even though she was very religious and believed in God and had a Bible and things like that, she still had her bed on bricks. They have a witch doctor that the blacks believe in that is called a *tokoloshe*... One day I said to her, "S. why is your bed on bricks?" "Oh, it's for the *tokoloshe*." They believe the *tokoloshe* is a small man that is very well endowed, if you understand what I mean, and if your bed is high enough, then he will walk underneath the bed and won't bother you. But if your bed is not high enough, then he will hit his head against the side of the bed and then he is going to do something to you. I mean, most blacks, even today, still believe in the *tokoloshe*. It's like a witch doctor. It's also to do with fertility. So when I was working, I talked to one of the black guys I was working with and said to him, "I'm curious, do you believe in the *tokoloshe*?" "Oh, of course there's a *tokoloshe*." I about fell over because here's this educated guy with a degree and he's programming. I said, "You really believe in the *tokoloshe*?" He said, "Yeah."... To hear somebody say something so, to me, ridiculous. I was just dumbstruck. I couldn't believe that I was talking to this guy and he so firmly believes it. [Conservative Afrikaner woman]

These attitudes are part of a larger Eurocentrism in South Africa that denigrates the cultural beliefs of black Africans and frames these differences as a sign of white superiority. The underlying perception is that development along western lines is inherently better than what Africans can do or were doing in their lives before European contact. A number of people talked about development among blacks in terms of evolving and progressing, using neo-evolutionary language to describe this process.

Such an interpretation minimizes the impact of colonialism and apartheid:

I mean those Zulus, they were warriors. I mean if any tribe got too big and they started being a threat, the Zulus would just go in and wipe them out, reduce them so that they are not a threat anymore. So they were very aggressive people way back then already. I mean that's the way they live. So we went and brought culture in and things like that, it wasn't what they were used to. It doesn't fit in with their culture, so the civilization we brought to them, I don't know if they were ready for it. I don't know if they will ever be ready for it.

As is evident in these explications of stereotypes about blacks, apartheid shaped the way people view differences between groups of people in South Africa. The system reinforced the idea that there are essential, biologically based differences between racial groups that are linked to social and cultural traits. Therefore, in adjusting to a New South Africa in which the ANC's nonracialist platform counterbalances these ideas and tries to overcome the racial hierarchies of the past, many whites are at a loss as to how to interpret differences between whites and blacks and Coloreds and Indians/Asians. In my interviews, I found people either relying on essentialized differences or on a colorblind attitude that attempted to "not see color." This latter attitude largely ignored the social, economic, and political fallout of apartheid. Within the rhetoric of nonracialism, whites can now use this idea of colorblindness to continue to deny the importance of the impact of history on the current state of affairs. For many, systemic and structural change is not

seen as something necessary to overcome the racist past of the country. Giving blacks the vote is as far as this should go.

The problem of how to negotiate and interpret difference remains. During European expansion and settlement, the initial 'contact zone' where two cultures/races meet was wrought with confusion and exploitation at a number of levels. For white South Africans in the post-colonial/post-apartheid era, the 'contact zone' where they now meet blacks in a new way does not seem much improved. There are few tools for working and understanding across difference than those that were in use under colonialism, at least not on a large scale. The key distinction of these present contact zones is that they take place within a history of exploitation of Africans whose land was stolen, whose families were broken up and strained by apartheid laws and migrant labor, and who have suffered a poverty that has wreaked havoc upon their cultures and societies. Not unlike in other white settler nations, it is this structural and institutional history and its legacy that whites ignore or minimize. This denial remains strong due to the fact that whites' orientation of themselves in the world depends on their ignorance of this history and its impact.

*Afropessimism and Racism.* When asked what counts as racism, most of my informants agreed that overt prejudices about what blacks are capable of are obviously racist. An older English-speaking woman gives an example from a white supremacist extremist that she met:

"They are inferior, they've got no place to be on an equal footing with me. ... They were less equal. They would never be as intelligent, even if we had gone to school together in the same class." He would say, "Well, you know, the blacks are inferior mentally. They will always be inferior. That's just a different race group." He was very apartheid conscious and *practicing apartheid.* (my emphasis)

Another English-speaking woman describes her father as a racist:

His attitude was, and it still is today and nothing will change him, blacks are like—there are so many of them, there's so much crime, the only way to eliminate this problem is to bomb the locations where they live. That was his attitude. He was very upset after the 1994 elections, he knew that the blacks were going to take over—he was devastated, devastated.

Not only in prejudices towards blacks but also in their actions, people would be seen as racist. “People that wouldn't want to live next to black people, wouldn't want to go to the same restaurant as them or wouldn't have them as friends.” Such practices of apartheid were usually not reproduced through explicit training:

I don't think anybody ever sat me down and explained, black people are not our type, you are not going to marry one, okay? They didn't have to. I absorbed enough that that conversation was never an issue. Even marrying an Englishman, no one ever said to me, “You can't.” But I knew that it was going to be a problem. That's how it works.

Not simply highlighting differences between blacks and white, these practices gave form to the ‘psychological map’ in which whites are honest, civilized, cultured, intelligent, and loyal and blacks are heathens, untrustworthy, anarchical, and ignorant.

Such essentialized ideas of what it means to be black or white are limiting for everyone, but, in particular, the impact on people of color in South Africa has been much more powerful than most whites acknowledge. My black and Colored informants spoke to their experience of this side of the apartheid wall.

One younger black male I interviewed had gone to an Afrikaner university to study agriculture. He said he was “hungry for knowledge.” He and other blacks slowly came to the realization that their education was being forcibly limited.

I realized that there seemed to be some professors whose goal was to make sure that I don't get the knowledge that I want...As students we realized

that there are certain areas where there is a deliberate act by the professors not to give us all the knowledge that we want...

You are supposed to do three practica working with animals and we realized that we are not doing any of those things and that means that we are not going to come out as good as what the calendar [curriculum] says. We brought that demand to the attention of the authorities. What was discouraging was that the professors look at it in a very negative way, they felt that it was okay for us to take those classes without doing any practicum and to us it was a little odd...

The professors were supposed to come up with blueprints for experimental farms and come up with budgets, but they never did and the university authorities said, okay we want to do this but your professors don't seem to want to do this... That's when we realized that these guys don't want to do their job and we used to go on stayaways, class boycotts for a week, even two weeks until they realized that this is serious, but the whole exercise was just futile because they never did any of that throughout my five years of stay in that university...

We used to get comments that were very politicized, from these professors, which kind of told us that there is an agenda here, that these people don't want us to be as good as we are supposed to.

**So these were all white professors?**

Yeah, they were all white, Afrikaner professors... That was when I realized, I told myself that racism or apartheid to me is not the limit.

In contrast to the white informant who thought that blacks were not economic and were not agriculturalists, this young man was in a university and was trying to get an education in agriculture. What he ran up against was not his own limitation, but the limitations placed on him by white Afrikaner teachers who did not want to adequately train him. Through these kinds of practices, many whites in South Africa created the sorts of 'realities' that they were projecting.

A younger Colored informant spoke about her family's history and the Group Areas Act of 1950, which moved Coloreds out of areas that were designated as 'white areas'. She tells of how apartheid impacted her childhood and the pressures of poverty and the resulting violence. Her story is so compelling, I quote it at length.

My mother was a victim of the Group Areas Act when she was nine years old. They had a small holding [piece of land] with horses and cows and

goats. Her dad was a councilman. My grandmother had 14 children so we were a very big family. They were very wealthy and then the government decided to claim that area as a white area and they forced them to move to that little two-bedroom duplex. Actually they forced them twice, they forced them into Paarl and then they declared Paarl white and then they forced them to Bishop Lavis and then my grandma lost everything. Her husband died and then she lost everything. So then you realize that you are the third generation of oppressed...

My early childhood was in what they call a scheme, where the government came in and built duplexes so you would have rows and rows of duplexes—a housing development or the projects you would call it here. We had two bedrooms and a living room, kitchen, and bathroom. No electricity and no hot water and asbestos roofs. I think my health problems now are related to being exposed to that and the mold on the walls. I can look back and say, this is why I am not well now...Eighteen people [lived together], not counting the people we took into our home. We always had friends or cousins or grandmas or friends moving in or moving out...

South African society is saturated with violence at every level. As a child you go through it as an observer, but also as a victim because you have the oppression from the government and it gets pushed on the adults and the adults don't have an outlet except to get on the kids. And then the older kids will abuse the younger ones, so there's that vicious cycle going on and on and on...

A lot of violence, a lot of abuse in my home. They were alcoholics and we lived on the Cape Flats, Bishop Lavistown. You can't go there. (laughter) People are afraid to go there. It's gangtown. It's worse now. Ever since I can remember there were gangs there. My dad was a gangster. (laughter) My uncles were all gangsters... Lots of violence, gang fights, drinking, marijuana... My youngest uncle was sent to a boy's detention facility for hacking someone to death with an ax. He got off on mental illness, so he didn't have to serve a life term. He was only in his teens when he did it. He got out when he was eighteen. He's dead. He died when he was 41. People don't live very long over there. (laughter) In the last 13 years that I have been here, I've lost 22 family members. Last year I lost four cousins. One of them was an execution- style assassination--gang violence...

When I first came here and I saw how people lived I was very angry and bitter—not so much against the South African government, not so much against the riot police. I was so angry at my parents for not standing up and protecting their children and then as I got a little older and had kids myself, I realized how powerless people become when their rights as children have been taken away.

She also explained:

I can sense when people are racist. Probably because I'm more sensitive to it.

**What does that feel like?**

Uneasiness in your chest, a tightening feeling in your chest, you know, there's something not right about this person.

Finally, another younger black informant who is very well educated about economics explained how racism is not limited to South Africa. In the global arena, it still operates to disenfranchise blacks and in turn, hurt Africa and South Africa.

I think we need to reach a stage where western governments and business can trust blacks in South Africa that these are the people they can really do business with in a trustworthy manner...

Because the history of blacks in South Africa because of Apartheid has been of massive protests every year and a number of working days will be lost because workers will be fighting for our rights. That is the picture that most of the people have about black South Africans—that they don't like to work. All they like is to protest...

**What you are saying is that even within the global economy there is still racism from the people who own a lot of these multinational companies towards emerging black entrepreneurs and farmers?**

(Nods in agreement) I think so...

When you are negotiating, the African countries are always at a lower level; they don't have that much bargaining power. I'm saying this because—okay, we were saying about the link between the whites in South Africa and the western business corporations, that is because you take out the whites in South Africa [i.e., emigration] and one way or another you are going to reduce the negotiation levels between the South Africa business corporations and the Euro business corporations, for example. Because you are talking about people who, even if you are South Africans, they are not just South Africans, but they probably have their own investment in Europe and western countries. They have even some of their siblings living in Europe. They intermarry with Europeans. There is a strong link between white South Africans and the Europeans.

Stereotypes about blacks and Coloreds persist, despite the fact that a black middle class is emerging and moving into previously white-only neighborhoods, driving their Mercedes to work. Beyond simply making racism illegal, do whites need to address how they

orient themselves to the world before Afropessimism loses its grasp in white society? As a black informant explained: “People were not...deep down themselves, they did not want to be racist but they were taught to be racist and they grew up in that system in such a way that racism became second nature. There's no way that you are easily going to convince people to do away with that kind of a culture.” How can whites orient themselves to the world in ways that do not rely on negative stereotypes of blacks in order to function and provide meaning?

## **“Guilt and Responsibility”**

“If any question why we died  
tell them, because our fathers lied.”

Rudyard Kipling 1865-1936  
*Epitaphs of the War 1914-1918*  
*Commonform, 1919*

Posted on the Southern Cross Africa website (<http://home.mweb.co.za/sa/savimbi/>)

The question of guilt and responsibility arose immediately in a conversation I had with someone at the South Africans in Colorado *braai* and pointed to generational and ethnic fault lines. She, an Afrikaner South African, told me that people in the older generation of whites felt blamed for being racist and for either overtly or inadvertently supporting apartheid. And, she explained, the younger generation does blame them.

Well, it wasn't subtle. It wasn't like they [blacks] lived in another neighborhood or went to another university. It was the law. This stuff has been debated in Parliament and these people have been voted for who said these things, who made those laws and this happened before I got to vote. So people like B's mom, who said that she didn't know, she didn't know—well, as a voter, you have a duty to find out. They voted for these people. I feel like saying ‘we didn't know’ is just too glib. If they didn't know, they should have made an effort to find out.

I took her accusation seriously and brought it into all the rest of my interviews. I asked people, “Someone in her 30s said the older generation feels blamed by the younger for being racist. What do you think about that? ‘They say they didn’t know, but they voted these people in,’ she said. Do you agree they (for younger generation) are or your generation (for older generation) is to blame?”

This solicited a wide spectrum of fervent responses since guilt and blame and responsibility are hot topics for white South Africans abroad as well as in South Africa. No one wants to be blamed for apartheid. Everyone did agree that the older generation feels like they are blamed, whether or not they agree that they should be blamed. “I do

know that there is a sense among them that they are the ones now that can't be forgiven because they made this big mess.”

Of the younger generation of whites, some of them agreed that the country is a mess and that it is the fault of the older generation. Others believe the older generation is not to blame because they were brainwashed to be racist; they feel that the older generation did not have any options because the level of social control was strong.

Many whites that I spoke to feel defensive about the issue of guilt because daily life in the New South Africa involves a barrage of attitudes, verbal exchanges, and crimes (against those with money and goods) that make whites feel that they are guilty, are privileged, and that they should change. Many of them feel they are blamed for apartheid even though they do not feel that they as individuals did anything wrong. This is true for all whites, regardless of ethnicity, though one Afrikaner informant noted that speaking Afrikaans or having an Afrikaner name means one is targeted even more. For a number of people, this pressure to feel guilty informed their decision to immigrate. A younger English-speaking woman summed it up:

There is this underlying level of resentment and they will grab your groceries, they will scan them, they will throw them onto the counter and put their hand out for your money. They won't say a word to you, there's this aggression. For those in the younger generation, this influences their desire to leave South Africa.

She also explained that the younger whites should not be blamed, since they were not old enough to even vote. “I mean I don't feel guilty about apartheid because I couldn't do anything because I was too young to have an influence.” This attitude was prevalent among the younger white informants. They emphasized that they were too young to have any impact, they could not vote, and some said they cannot understand

why they are now hated. A young English-speaking man: "I could never understand the hatred. Why must I be hated? Hate the cops, those guys, sure, by all means. Don't hate me; I'm just here." They also felt that they did not do anything wrong but they still suffer the consequences and therefore are motivated to emigrate.

In contrast, those in the older generation exonerated themselves by emphasizing that they did not know what was really going on in the country.

I wasn't aware of what was happening when I was growing up because I never had experienced that [racial discrimination]. I never had to be told I couldn't go here and I couldn't go there because I was the wrong color. So I just wasn't aware that I was super or superior or anything...It was never an issue. And we never mixed with the people who it was an issue for because we were segregated. We just didn't know.

Others in the older generation argued that they had no options. The strong pressure to conform kept them from opposing the system. An older Afrikaner man explained, "If I look back on that time, you know, just simple things like being decent to the tea-boy in school was not acceptable." Still others in this generation who were more conservative and Nationalist argued that whites improved blacks. One older Afrikaner male made this point in reference to new patterns of anorexia in black South African girls.

You would hear them on the TV say these black kids are getting the white man disease...If those black kids want to do what the white man does, live the way the white man lives, get a better body and improve herself, why not let her go and do it? If more of them do it, the country will get better... Blaming the blacks for doing the white man thing—what do they want to do, go back to the Bush and be primitive? Hunt with a bow and arrow, is that the way it should be?...What's the white man doing in the country? He's improving the place, he's developing the place, he brings his skill and stuff and if don't they want to join him, what do they want to do? They want to go hunting again?

In terms of their perspectives of each other, some younger informants empathized with those in the older generation who get blamed for apartheid. A younger Afrikaner informant explained:

They didn't know any better...I feel sorry that they can't let those barriers down to actually go out and make friends with a black person and go home with him and let his wife feed you. They are terrified to go in their black locations because their perception of it is that they're gonna get murdered because they're white, and they are in that respect a bit closed to it.

Another younger English-speaking woman felt that the majority of older Afrikaners were to blame. "I still hold them responsible for apartheid. I do. You can't hold an entire people responsible, but large portions of it."

As a whole, the older generation could understand the frustrations of the younger white generation and their reasons for immigrating. The following are both from older Afrikaner men:

They're not responsible...They don't have a future, because positions will be taken by the blacks. So they have a reason to complain. It's a very sad state of affairs. So, I suppose it's right that [they] are now saying well, "You are responsible for the situation," but they don't understand. It's not a real balanced point of view because they weren't part of it.

\* \* \*

They are too young to be part of the older groups, which is responsible, yet they are too young for the younger group that is growing up in this whole situation. And they have this "abandonment anxiety"—"what's going to happen to me, what am I going to do?"

This kind of short-term mentality of apartheid, in which government leaders fought unsustainably to uphold a racial segregation that could not last, led to a conundrum in the post-apartheid South Africa for those who are working age whites. An 'abandonment anxiety' seemed to course through the narratives of many in the younger generation of whites. Some of them felt judgment towards those in the older generation

and their failure to not only do the right thing morally, but to do the right thing so they as younger whites would not feel they had to leave the country. For some, the implication was, how could they do that to our country—make it so we would have to leave because of a fear of backlash and being targeted for being white? “If this [U.S.] is the land of opportunities, South Africa's the land of missed opportunities. That's in a sense what I feel.”

Of course, another important division was between Afrikaners and English-speakers. Younger Afrikaners said that if there is blame, you have to blame the whole older generation, not just Afrikaners. In contrast, the younger English-speakers say that the older Afrikaners are to blame, not the entire generation. In particular, Afrikaners feel they are singled out because they were the majority of whites that supported apartheid. Yet, as some point out, there were many English-speakers that also supported the Nationalist Party at one time or another. One older Afrikaner woman put the overall blame on the English as the ones who were originally “snotty” against blacks during colonialism. She also felt that because of the language link with international English news, Afrikaners were blamed for everything and viewed as racists, but “I really do believe there are a lot of English people that have the same feelings [about blacks].”

Yet, the complicity of both white ethnic groups was also emphasized by one younger Colored woman:

And as far as the Afrikaner person feeling [guilty], yeah, they do, they were. It's true. I mean how can you deny that? It's like saying, Nazi Germany, the next generation saying well, really they were good people except they were Nazis and they killed 6 million Jews!

**And what about English-speakers?**

Well there's this little rhyme, 10 little liberals. It's the story of five little monkeys jumping on a bed, one fell off and bumped his head. Then there were four—well, when the struggle began there were 10 little liberals and

as the struggle continued, there were nine, then there were eight and then, you know, they just kept leaving as things got worse. So the saying in the Colored community was, it's better to trust an Afrikaner than to trust a liberal because with an Afrikaner, you know exactly where you stand and with a liberal you don't know if he's going to be around tomorrow.

**So they all go to Europe or Australia or New Zealand?**

Yep.

A surprising number of whites did not know why apartheid existed. I found this true for some individuals in both generations and both white ethnic groups, but more so in the older generation. For those who did not know the history, their feelings of guilt were usually much less. Without an awareness of the history of apartheid and colonialism apart from the propaganda, these informants felt that they as individual whites were free of responsibility.

I don't know why. Why was that? Who started the whole apartheid thing and why? What made them different to us? Who decided?...I'm a product of the apartheid; I didn't cause it. [Older English-speaking woman]

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I can't say whether I think the way they set up the government and ran the country forced the blacks into their situation or not. I don't know. [Older Afrikaans-speaking woman]

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There was a system in place, the Apartheid system, they...were trying to give all the different cultures an opportunity to govern themselves. So it wasn't like they were trying to separate the people and stuff like that. So, it wasn't just like the politicians were trying to keep them [blacks] down or anything. [Younger Afrikaner man]

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I don't know why people put so much emphasis on the white and the black. I mean, that's just the way I grew up. I still remember "whites only" like on public bathrooms or the line in the post office "whites only".

**So you don't know why there was such an emphasis on black and white?**

Yeah, I don't know why that was in my country. Why was it like that? I just grew up with it. I don't know why, you know? Who made that rule? The government probably? Like the early government, like when my grandparents grew up and my dad was young, I mean, I don't know, who decided white and black, that we have to be separated?

**So what do they teach in school about that?**

Gosh,

**Was there ever any explanation?**

You know, I really cannot give you a straight answer, I cannot really tell you. I don't know. [Younger Afrikaner woman]

In light of this lack of knowledge, it is not surprising that a number of informants felt that they have no role in or responsibility to South Africa. They do not understand the meaning of the historical significance of being white. Though they recognize specific privileges, they do not understand how the symbolic capital of white skin came into fruition.

Whereas some of the above individuals did not feel responsible for apartheid or their part in the system, a few informants did recognize the difference between individual guilt and corporate guilt. One younger and one older English-speaking woman and an older Afrikaner man said they do not feel personally guilty because they had treated individual blacks with respect (which a lot of people said), but they said they did feel corporate or racial guilt as white South Africans. The following story is worth quoting in full:

A friend of mine told me a story, this was about four or five years ago. He had a black garden boy who came to him and said, "Doctor, I have a savings account at the post office but it's pretty inconvenient, the post office closes at 4:30. Can you help me transfer my money from the post office to the bank? ...He took him there in his car and my friend said to him, "Now, be careful this code with which you draw money out, you keep the pin to yourself." And then the black man said to him, "Doctor don't you want to see my card?" He thought, 'I've seen a thousand plastic cards' but anyway, not to disappoint him he said, "All right, show me your card." This black man took out his card and he said, "Look doctor, I have a card, I'm now human."

And when my friend told me that, I thought, 'Dear God, I have been a member of a society that over three centuries told the concept to a man, made in the image of God, that his humanity is associated with a plastic credit card.' That was the first time I really felt guilty, not individually, but I experienced what I call corporate guilt.

For one younger English-speaker, this sense of corporate guilt was instilled from a young age:

White guilt—that's what we all felt. And we overpaid our maids. We gave them too much stuff. We are constantly chest beating, brow wiping about white guilt. All of our friends talk about it all the time. We know we're so privileged. We know that it's about oppression. We never ever believed that we were superior inherently and we always had a strong sense that our privilege and material superiority was being won at a great cost.

In contrast, for most whites, a hyper-individualism seemed to allow them to believe that since they had never physically hurt a person of color or done anything overtly racist against them, that they were free of guilt. What these individuals lack is a sense of how they as whites were part of the system, i.e., the corporate system that had gained control through forced relocations of blacks and moving Coloreds and Indians/Asians into townships. “I think it was a select group of officials and people that actually enforced certain rules that are specifically to blame. But the population in general is not cruel.” Again, while the overt practices of old-fashioned racism/apartheid were evident, most informants did not recognize that only adjusting the way one interacts with individual blacks did nothing to change the racist status quo.

But I would say probably my mother's generation, in their 60s and older practiced racism more so than what we did. My friends and I as well, weren't as much racialistic as what our parents were. We were able to see people for who they were rather than for what color they were...It was our parents, age 60 and onward, who practiced apartheid and were more racialistic than we were.

For my informants that felt that they had not done anything particularly wrong and neither had their parents, they argued that they were just doing what was expected. And, of course, according to the rules within white society at the time, they had not done

anything wrong. A younger Afrikaner woman explains this in the following quote, where she also displays her confusion as to whether they should feel guilty:

...Especially the Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, I guess, are seeing themselves as responsible for fixing the problems...I just think they should feel guilty, I just don't feel they should feel guilty. There were mistakes, they solved the mistakes, so go on, you're not responsible. I mean to a certain extent, but not to undermine yourself, or trying to get away from your language and trying to give up everything that you believe in. It's like you're not, you're still who you are, you're still Afrikaans-speaking, you're still a white person, you're still—stand on your rights, stand up for yourself. I don't think that anybody should go like, "I'm sorry." Like you're not, you know, *you did what's expected of you and so now go on*, so that's my feeling. And I have a hard time with black or white who's still just rousing the past, like if somebody who's black tells me, well it's the way it is because I'm black, I'm like, get over yourself! I, that's my feeling, honestly. Black or white, just get over it. (my emphasis)

The conundrum at the center of the issue is that whites were doing things that were approved of within white society, but for many blacks and other people of color, these actions were wrong, exploitive, and oppressive. The depth of the social conditioning in white society was recognized by a number of my white informants.

I don't think it's more like, the older people are more racist, it's just they grew up in a different environment so you've got to take that into account that that's how they feel. If you are with a mixed group of people from the day you are born, you aren't going to see anybody different than anything else but if you grow up, you go to this, you go to that, you are going—you know, *that's kind of in you, it's something that you cannot change*. You don't have to feel a resentment against them [blacks] but it's just going to be different. (my emphasis)

It is not clear how these ingrained attitudes and practices would be changed. Most people said they think it will all get worked out within a few generations, hoping that once people of all races are going to school together and working together changes will occur. Yet, as evidenced in the U.S., though laws may change, whites who want to hold onto

their white privilege will do so through means that are not overtly illegal but which uphold a racist status quo, i.e., new racism.

This hyper-individualistic focus combined with frustrations about the emphasis the ANC has placed on the past (apartheid and colonialism) made a number of people argue that they want people to get beyond blaming. A younger English-speaker:

People should wake up and get a life and stop blaming the past and stop being so hurt, everybody was hurt, not just the blacks. I had a grandmother that hated the Afrikaners because she was English and because of the [Anglo]-Boer War and she lived in the middle of South Africa! So you can't live like that. So it's not just black and white; it's English/Afrikaans, it's Dutch—you know... Because her husband was killed in the Boer war. So it's Afrikaans and English.

Another young Afrikaner woman explained, “I’m just a little harsh, but I, you know, life is life... whatever it is holding you back, get over it.” Many of these individuals had little patience for the Afrocentric focus of the ANC, feeling like they were just harping on the past and using the ‘race thing’ to try to get ahead. Frustrations people have with the current government and its focus on blacks makes some whites feel tired of the whole political issue.

I do find that most South Africans are so tired of the whole politics thing that they don't want to talk about it, like they'll talk about crime but politically, there's no sense like, yeah, we f---ed up— yes, we're fixing it and this is how we are going to fix it and let's treat our neighbor well. It's like, the same old, same old, let's talk about something else. [Younger Afrikaner woman]

Others are so frustrated about affirmative action and black empowerment programs that they argue that reverse racism is happening, much in the same vein as conservatives in the U.S. have done in response to Civil Rights policies. In the case of South Africa, some white immigrants feel that blacks are to blame for ruining the country.

On the other side of the color line, one black informant felt economic and political blame could also be cast on Europe.

If you look at the economic issues, it was highly profitable for the Europeans because South Africa was the largest gold exporter in the world so the ones doing the manual job in the mines were blacks and they were paid something close to nothing. That means it made the price of gold cheap in terms of what it would be if they were paying for every cent or paying for labor appropriately.

So a lot of European companies that had invested in South Africa were taking advantage of cheap labor and so on under the Apartheid rule. They were producing, but for their own markets. They could take the profits back to their countries. They could even export the products they were making in South Africa and send them back to their own countries. I think it was the economy that was at stake. All the oppression was just to control the economy.

Overall, nobody wants to be seen as guilty of being racist. In my interviews, I felt that I had a hot potato no one wanted to hold. Despite the fact that people understood how deep the brainwashing and propaganda ran and that society had norms that affected whites deeply, there was a reflexive denial in most people about being blamed for doing anything racist. Though informants argue that there was a strong power to conform to the group, they slip into a hyper-individualistic framework to argue, "I didn't do anything wrong." "Because I don't see them [my parents] as perpetrators, they just were in the system."

As a result of these post-apartheid changes, many whites have felt they *had* to leave South Africa. "Now, they feel like they have to make apologies because they are white... You are white, you are a problem, so I'm very happy to be away from all that." Now, the racial categories that white colonialists and white apartheid leaders set up have come back to haunt those who are classed as white. "People will look at you first as a white South African before they see anything else." By moving to a majority white state,

most of these informants can avoid engaging and working with this inheritance and the *habitus* that goes with it.

## MIGRATION

### “Life Changed”

Out of 36 informants, only three came to the U.S. before 1990. For the majority of my informants that have settled here permanently (not counting students and visitor), they were interested in emigrating out of South Africa due to the social and political changes that were going on. Only a few individuals stated that they moved because they had a problem with living under black rule now that “terrorists are running the country.” The rest have moved because of crime, affirmative action, unemployment, a decrease in the (white) standard of living and the quality of education, decreased opportunities for their children, work opportunities in the U.S., or they married U.S. citizens.

The two most prominent ‘push factors’ behind emigration were affirmative action and crime. Stories about these two issues unleashed heated accusations from whites and Coloreds about the current government’s foot dragging in terms of these problems. A number of these individuals fervently argued that current affirmative action policies are “reverse racism” or “reverse apartheid” because “jobs should be gotten based on a person’s merit, not their race.” Quotas or percentages based on race are racist, just like apartheid was, they argued. I note that for some more conservative informants, this was the only time they came close to admitting there was anything wrong with apartheid. When I asked people how inequalities of the past should be reconciled, there was a general consensus among all of my informants that the South Africa government should put more effort and money into education first rather than pushing affirmative action in the marketplace now. A black informant felt that “the only way to free a human being is education.”

As a result, individuals in both generations of whites as well as black and Colored informants argued that affirmative action should be slowed down; however, individuals in these racial groups highlighted different reasons for their statements. The two black informants felt that affirmative action should be slowed down to stop the flow of skilled whites leaving the country. Recognizing that this hurts the economy, they argue that skilled whites ought to be encouraged to stay and contribute. Yet, one informant pointed out that if they are racists, South Africa does not need them to return. The second reason they both cited is that affirmative action is creating a small black elite and not benefiting the larger black population as a whole. Such a critique is similar to those that followed the civil rights movement in the U.S., i.e., that the changes have only helped a few, while the majority still suffer from inequalities leveled on them as a group in the past.

Both whites and Coloreds repeatedly said that the government is too focused on blacks at the expense of other race groups in the country. For Coloreds, they feel they are once again stuck in the middle. As one younger Colored woman explained, “As a Colored, you are neither white and neither black, so when affirmative action came in, a lot of Colored people didn't get jobs because they are not black enough.”

Many whites argued that blacks are in jobs they do not know how to do, which has decreased the level of services in the country and created problems for whites that work with untrained blacks. They felt that whites that work for unqualified blacks are the ones that are keeping things going. Many of them repeatedly argued that the most qualified person should get the job, based on merit, not race.

A number of whites in both generations shared the view of an older Afrikaner man who said, “Right now it's a big thing in South Africa, it's very obvious, the fact that

the white male is on the extinction in South Africa. It's a case of people trying to overcorrect what's happened in the past—affirmative action and also a lot of reverse discrimination.” As he points out, whites are now hitting a new wall that was created by apartheid but not experienced by whites until it ended. They are now being ‘marked’ as white and not given priority in the opportunity structure. Now, many of these immigrants use and see their own racial identity, defending themselves against being marked white in this time of repairing the injustices of the past against blacks. As Steyn (2001a:89) has pointed out, now that the political system is oriented towards changing racial privilege, many whites feel that it is not about social justice; rather, many feel as if their sense of entitlement is being confiscated.

As I discussed earlier, this fall from grace carries with it a feeling of abandonment and disenfranchisement, not to mention blood-boiling anger and resentment towards the current government. The sting to material wealth, jobs, and status causes many to blame de Klerk for “handing the country over” or as one Nationalist Afrikaner put it “the Dutchmen went down without a fight this time.” The blame also is placed on the ANC for being racist and corrupt. Some informants argue that affirmative action policies simply provided an impetus for cronyism—that if you are someone who had been on Robben Island, Exiled, and are Xhosa (aka REX) you would be promoted within the government. One English-speaking informant explained this in light of the level of resentment Zulus have for how much political power the ANC has captured. Other informants pointed out that the previous government was corrupt and so is the current one. Still others felt that the country is going backwards and becoming “third world.”

In the New South Africa, a number of whites can no longer rely on being 'adequately' compensated for their skills. Many of my informants explained that though they are qualified, they cannot get work or they are underemployed. These experiences stand in stark contrast to their past in South Africa. For many, the large-scale injustices of apartheid for Africans and other people of color in South Africa dim in contrast to the current disenfranchisement of the white male. Most whites were unaware of the affirmative action programs that supported their privileged lifestyle in the past, so they criticize the current policies that seek to equalize these inherited inequalities. The injustice of it rings in this account of a younger Afrikaner woman about her neighbor:

There was a saying going around that if you are a white male, especially educated, you are not going to find a job. There was a guy living next to us who was in his forties and he had this great marketing degree and years of experience with Panasonic in South Africa and he ended up getting a job as a delivery boy delivering pizzas. It's not because of lack of trying. He applied to hundreds of places. He just said, forget it. He's a white middle-aged man, there are no opportunities for him anymore and he was one of the classic examples of not finding a job mostly because of affirmative action. That was sad because he had great experience, very well spoken, he should have gotten a good job.

As this woman articulates, there is an expectation among many whites that things should be a certain way based on their past experience in the country. Now, many whites have to face the reality that employment does not solely depend on merit, and never did. Social, cultural, and symbolic capital always shape employment opportunities. In response to the changes of the last decade, many whites defend the old order, or their white worldview, by denigrating the new order as illogical, improper, and illegitimate (Steyn 2001a).

Yep, when they took over, just doesn't matter, I mean you've got education, you won't get a job and then this guy walks in and he gets a job because he needs to get the job, it's 'disadvantage' or it's 'affirmative

action' and you can see the company going backwards but 'that's alright, he needs the job, it's his position.' [Nationalist older Afrikaner man]

One way to solve this uncomfortable existential positioning is to immigrate. A number of people said that when they were told to their face they were the wrong color for a promotion or for getting a job, despite their qualifications, they were motivated to find ways to leave the country and obtain a job elsewhere where their pay would be commensurate with their skills and education. "I was applying for positions that I had absolutely all the qualifications for and they would turn around and say to me, you are perfectly qualified for this job but you are too white. Well, okay, so that's something I have no control over." [Progressive, younger English-speaking woman] The pull factors to come to the U.S. include the higher quality of life and the opportunities they have to become entrepreneurs, travel, live in safe neighborhoods, and buy affordable material goods that are no longer available in South Africa.

For white informants, the older generation's experience of affirmative action differed since many of them had a chance to establish their careers and families in South Africa before the transition. In contrast, younger whites felt they could not sacrifice themselves in South Africa by working at a job that did not pay well, reward their educational level, or improve their career. Many of these individuals feel blamed for something they did not do and they feel the impact of aggressive affirmative action policies in a more direct and personal way than older white South African immigrants.

As one progressive, younger English-speaking woman explained,

My attitude is still very much that it's going to take maybe 20 years for South Africa to really sort itself out, economically, politically, and just really get over the aftereffects of apartheid. I was hesitant to spend the potentially most productive 20 years of my life in a country where I'd be faced with affirmative action all the time, not being able to get ahead

because I was being blamed for something I had no control over. As much as I like South Africa, I just couldn't sacrifice that much for it. So I was looking for ways to get out and live my own life without having it hanging over me. I managed to do that and a bunch of my school friends have too.

This same woman said she is a part of a cohort of people of her generation who have left.

My parent's generation, they are staying because by and large, they are too old to really get out. But my generation, the whites, they are pretty much gone. Out of 120 [from her graduating class], I'd say there are maybe 15 –20 that are still in South Africa, I'd say the rest are still out of there. That's a frightening statistic. I don't know what the South African government or people could have done to prevent that but I think it's too late now. They are gone.

For these white immigrants, living in South Africa presented challenges that they felt they did not want to, or could not, meet and overcome. In South Africa, not only is a steady income necessary for survival, it also supplies the means for retaining status. For many of my informants, a step down in one's class level due to affirmative action policies and black empowerment programs was too much of a threat to their normal existence.

Wealth and status provided the means for whites to maintain their symbolic superiority to blacks. Without the economic ability to maintain these class and racial distinctions, many informants felt they had to leave South Africa to find a way to maintain their status, class, and quality of life elsewhere, i.e., transplant the *habitus*. The economic underpinnings of their privilege have been revealed, which leaves many of them quite uncomfortable. Underneath the surface of these changes is a challenge to the apartheid-era ideology that said whites are inherently more civilized, efficient, and hard-working.

Of course, the majority of immigrants out of South Africa have found a way to do this in Britain, Australia, the U.S., Canada, and New Zealand. In all of these countries, their skin color, status orientation, and economic capital seem normal and acceptable. In

these countries, they do not encounter the same pressure to adapt to a society that is reorienting itself to social and structural justice; instead, in all of these countries whites are a dominant majority that has been differentially shaped by varying levels of postcolonial and post-segregation white status and privilege.

Another key reason these informants left South Africa was because of crime. Among the white and Colored informants stories of crime and violence wove through all of my interviews. What is clear is that *white areas* are experiencing greater levels of crime than ever occurred during the apartheid years. Opinions vary as to the reason for this increase and a number of different factors come into play.

Experts in South Africa debate whether crime has truly increased nationwide or whether reportage has increased. Ted Leggett, a criminologist from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) argues it is crime reporting that has increased, not crimes themselves (Jonathan 2004b): “Prior to 1994 the majority of South Africans [i.e., blacks] wouldn’t have reported anything to the police. They weren’t co-operating with the police because being seen doing so could have got you killed,” he explained. The Medical Research Council showed that in 2001 blacks were 17 times more likely to be the victims of murder than whites (Jonathan 2004b). These figures contrast with white immigrants’ emphasis on the increase in violence against whites. Such an emphasis speaks to the continuing presence of the apartheid wall.

A younger Jewish/Colored woman’s comment:

**And the crime and poverty are worse now?**

I don’t know, they weren’t allowed in the white areas, so maybe it was because no one saw it, but to me, poverty’s increased. South Africa looks so 3rd world now, compared to what it used to look like, which is great because it *is* a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country. But when I grew up, South Africa, well, white South Africa was like being anywhere in the world that was a 1<sup>st</sup> world country. Black South Africa was the same as it is now.

Few of the white informants shared this person's insight into the duality of South Africa's combination of first and Third worlds. The majority of white informants argued that South Africa was now slipping from being a First world country to becoming a Third world country, not aware of how 'Third world' most of the country was before. During apartheid, many whites were oblivious to their own (and the government's) violence before and very aware of the violence of blacks (Steyn 1999). Not surprisingly, this same trend shapes the way many whites encounter the New South Africa. A shocking statistic from ISS shows that in 2001, more whites committed suicide (676) than were murdered (465) (Jonathan 2004b). Though crime and violence are part of life for all individuals in South Africa, for whites the level of fear and the current discourse about crime plays into the historical fear of *swaart gevaar*. The 'apartheid of the mind' that whites have inherited is one shaped by propaganda and brainwashing, so the fear that many whites have towards blacks *as a group* affects how people interpret South African reality. I am not arguing, however, that this fear is solely racial. Anyone in South Africa can be targeted for having material possessions, being female or young, for their ethnicity, etc.

Yet, the powerful stereotypes of the past have come around to be real, i.e., racist notions about blacks as overly sexualized, criminals, deviants, too traditional and superstitious shape how whites interpret South African society today. Melissa Steyn (2001a:97) makes this point in discussing "white talk" as the strategy of framing issues in an equalizing way in order to underplay the need for adjustments on the part of whites. In terms of crime, she argues that whites use "white talk" to "confirm what many whites feel they always knew about 'them,' drawing on colonial constructions of the nature of Africa and Africans" (Steyn 2001a:99).

The physical manifestation of these changes in white society and evidence of the fear whites have can be seen in how most whites live in South Africa today. In most of South Africa whites (and middle- to upper-class blacks, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians) live in a “prison” or “cage” of locked doors, security gates, electric fences, burglar bars and panic buttons. Some roads bear signs that warn “Hijacking Hot Spot” signifying that drivers should not come to a full stop at stop signs; rather, they ought to roll through them slowly so as not to get hijacked or killed. The level of vigilance required to live in the new South Africa is something that my white informants found traumatizing, stressful, exhausting and infuriating. Similar to Steyn’s (2001a) findings, white informants felt a strong deprivation relative to how they lived under apartheid. People spoke of being afraid to go places, of having to drive around the house to make sure no one was lurking, and hiding their purses under the car seat. A young Afrikaner woman explained, “Take my sister, who lives on a farm, but every night she locks up and she's got a gun next to her bed. She doesn't go to town without thinking about being robbed and killed.”

For some, crime was a source of increasing racist sentiments:

A friend of mine was held up at gunpoint and another friend's father was murdered, and another friend carries a gun now because he's been jumped a few times. I think the racism has got worse now because it's not a legal apartheid deal. It's a ‘I have money and I'm driving a BMW that I've worked my ass off for, and you're not going to come and take it from me just because you think you deserve it.’ So, people are protecting themselves and taking the law into their own hands. [Younger Colored/Jewish woman]

When I asked one younger English-speaking informant how apartheid had impacted her, she emphasized that it is now the crime that has made apartheid affect her:

It's more like they had it affect me, you know, the blacks had it affect me because they were the ones which robbed our house, and they're the ones which are getting the affirmative action jobs, and they're the ones who

mugged me, and you know they're the ones who broke into my brother's car and smashed it up, they're the ones who, you know sort of like, we drove to the airport and held a gun in the car. I mean, it's just shit like that.

Another informant's story of violence has definite racial overtones:

[My parents] are very religious Christians and they were held at gunpoint in their house for about an hour. They kicked my dad to the floor and they held the gun to his neck and said, "You white bastard,...you f--cking bastard, we're going to kill you." And they wanted to know all the time where my mom was, but my mom was hiding under the sofa and my dad, all he said [to me] was, "We got a second chance at life. They pulled the trigger and it didn't go off."

For nearly all of my white informants who moved to the U.S. in the 1990s, incidences of crime were often the final blow. One younger Afrikaner woman spoke about her sister's incentive to move to Britain. "She'd been attacked by a black man who broke into her place and tied her up and stole all her stuff. And then a week later, they came back again because obviously they figured out that she was living by herself. She was a soft target... But that was just the final straw, living in that type of fear." Another informant spoke to the terrorism and other violence that he had grown up with and his desire to protect his children from the current crime and violence.

And then I got hijacked in Johannesburg and the violence and stuff just became way too much. Listen to the gunfight and another person gets killed. The worry, you send your kids to school and there's no guarantee that they will come back. They were targeting schools and churches at that time. Places that are supposed to be places of peace. I grew up with that too, I experienced that. I don't want my kids to. My kids will not grow up with that kind of life.

Finally, the randomness of crime and the senselessness of it echoed throughout people's stories. An older English-speaking woman explained, "Some friends of mine, their 19-year old daughter was shot and killed. And then a friend of mine, her cousin was killed

while he was putting gas in the car.” An older Afrikaner woman spoke about her employees:

People that worked for me stole some of my stuff and would sell it without me knowing and just pocket the money... Our car got stolen and then we got it back and then I would drive to a shopping center, got back, the grill was gone. We had a microbus, the grill was gone. And then I went to the school one night and got back to the car and the rear mirrors were gone. That was the night I said to my husband, “Okay, you still want to go, we can go.” I had it.

Perhaps in a larger sense, people feel they need to justify leaving South Africa. For some, this might mean emphasizing the push factors that led to their emigration. A younger Afrikaner woman saw the desire to leave an unpleasant situation as in the nature of whites.

That's self-selection— people who went to live in South Africa wanted to get away from Europe. They already were running away. They already had a tendency to hide, to not change what they didn't like. Their answer has always been to just move and I'm part of that, aren't I? It's like, “Okay, this is a mess, let's go”—and that's how it's been in Europe. “We'll go somewhere where we can try again. We'll build our own school, instead of engaging.” That's our genes I think.

Another informant explained, “But that's life. That 's life, everybody moves at some stage.”

Of course, on the other side of the apartheid wall, this generalization does not apply. A younger black informant provided a picture of life for his parents, people who could not readily emigrate. His story offers a glimpse into the lives of the majority of blacks in South Africa who cannot paper over the racial or economic privilege of their situation by arguing that they are genetically destined to move.

[My parents] never talked about those things [e.g. freedom]. They grew up under a harsher environment than we did so whatever was happening, they had given up and the only hope was God—that you just have to get used to it. There was no way out. They were more worried about their daily

lives—things that everyone needs— like food, shelter, those things. Freedom was not one of them because they didn't think it was ever going to happen that black people would be free because those were the people that experienced the toughest of apartheid. They are the people who were forcibly removed from their areas... You cannot grow food or anything, so to them it was not necessarily about freedom—it was about removing me from where I could survive at ease to a place where there's all sorts of troubles for me to survive.

In light of this history, he offered a different perspective on the 'problem' of crime in

South Africa:

We're talking about people who have been through tough things in life, that things aren't that scary anymore. If you have seen your parents being gunned down, somebody's car being taken doesn't mean anything to you.

From this side of the apartheid wall, the current crime and violence in South Africa are problems to be reckoned with, not escaped, and are viewed in light of a history of irrational violence during apartheid. Now, the hope is that the level of crime will go down through more police action; however, the factors that lead people to commit crimes also need to be addressed. A number of my informants argued that education ought to be a priority, as well as addressing poverty. As one black informant pointed out, many young criminals are those who gained paramilitary training during the anti-apartheid struggle. These individuals, who have no other training or education, are responsible for some of the problem of crime, he felt. By ignoring the history that created a situation where it is more profitable for these young men to commit crimes than to work, many white immigrants protect their symbolic (and other) capital by remaining on the white side of the color line, albeit in another country. The power of their ability to do so was commented on by a younger Afrikaner woman. Such insight was rare among the white informants I interviewed. "I already have a problem with calling myself South African. We're a bunch of colonials, if you look at history. We're Europeans and went there like

locusts to eat what we can, *but we always knew that our white skin would get us out of there and I don't think that's changed. I don't.*" (emphasis mine)

## **The Box of Being White**

Though most white informants have been able to smoothly immigrate to a country where whites are a majority, for many of them their trips back to South Africa and the ensuing interactions with individuals in the country remind them of why they left. Now being white is viewed as a liability and a problem. The identity of whiteness is now marked for what it signifies: a history of privilege that has led to material wealth and access to opportunities. Unlike the protected circles of white society that existed before, now nothing shields whites from being targeted by people of color, or other whites. Many white informants felt blamed, but as I explored in Guilt and Responsibility, many whites in both generations do not feel they are to blame as individuals. One informant was particularly vehement about what this implicit accusation felt like. “There's no way we are going back because immediately you are stuck into that role again. Immediately you are white, immediately you are part of the problem, before you've even said a word to anybody. You are white, you are a problem, so I'm very happy to be away from all that.”

White informants are finally experiencing the outcome of the extreme racial polarization that occurred under apartheid. A younger English-speaking male explained.

No matter how enlightened one is in terms of color or race, how integrated you intend to be, you still look like you look and unfortunately we polarized that nation so much that everybody's taken on face value. So they don't really care what your political persuasion is or how friendly you are. You look like you look, so I'm sure that black kids grew up with, not the same prejudice, but a similar sense of prejudice about what white kids are, as we did.

For whites, growing up under apartheid did not provide them with a lens with which to see how the polarization of South African society impacted *them*. Now, they are forced

to face the 'box of being white' that is their inheritance from colonialism and apartheid. For many informants this new awareness has come too quickly and is too much of a shock. They have few tools for comprehending and adapting to these changes in order to find ways to contribute.

“People will look at you first as a white South African before they see anything else and it doesn't matter what you think. Based on that, they will make assumptions about you and you've got to fight to prove that those assumptions are wrong, all the time.” [Younger English-speaking woman]

For those who stay in South Africa, one informant felt that there were two choices:

Either you become Mother Teresa, or you live like white South Africans do—you put up walls or act like you don't see it. They [whites] will drive by the most horrendous thing and they act like they don't see it. And they DON'T see it, to be fair to them. I go there, and after a month, I don't see it either because you live behind the wall. We've got barbed wire surrounding you to isolate you. There are whole areas of your own country that you don't go to; there are radio stations you don't listen to; there are papers you don't read because you don't want to know about the shit that goes on, you just don't want to know. And I don't want to live like that. *I think it kills you inside; you live a lie.* So no, you are the problem. (my emphasis)

I added emphasis to highlight how whites have been impacted by an 'apartheid of the mind' that shields one from being able to perceive, engage, or relate to much of South African reality. This informant points to the harm done to whites by remaining on one side of the color line. For immigrants, they may escape the forces in South Africa that would have them engage, but in terms of overcoming the limitations they have inherited from apartheid, many of these individuals remain bound within the *habitus* oriented to apartheid.

When I asked white informants what role they thought whites had in the New South Africa, six individuals across the sample argued that there was no role for whites now that they are a minority in a country where the black majority has the power. Another reason they gave was the fast pace of affirmative action, blaming these policies for pushing whites out of private industry as well as the public service sector. Others argued that whites have no role because they are just trying to survive, living in their homes as if they were prisoners. One younger, Afrikaner informant felt that whites have no role because they lost their chance, i.e., they ruined their chance to contribute. Now, they just need to get out. “The future isn't me. The future is that little kid being born in the village in Zululand and what decision is he going to make. We should go back to Europe. Go back where we started.” [Younger Afrikaner woman]

All informants, however, including black and Colored, agreed that whites *should* be encouraged to contribute education, skills, and invest in the country. The reasons and context people gave for such contributions varied, however. Whites in the older generation felt that whites should contribute in particular to business and conservation because blacks are not good at business and have less respect for the land. A number of younger whites said that whites should contribute knowledge about how to run the country, while acknowledging that this is a paternalistic and colonialist view. Most younger white informants understood that the opportunities and skills whites could offer the country were learned, i.e., not inherent, biological traits that whites possessed.

The two black informants thought that there was a role for whites in the New South Africa. One younger male argued that they ought to be a check and balance for the new government. He also emphasized a critical economic role for whites:

Their role is to get involved in building the nation and increasing their investments. Just after 1990, there has been a lot of disillusionment amongst the white people and a significant proportion left the country because they thought 'Everything has changed, we're not going to survive', so that is not good for the economy. Those that left are people who have money. If they can invest in the country, that will help the country, our economy will be able to advance. We have a lot of skilled white people in different areas. With their involvement, we will have the ability to go forward.

As mentioned in Afropessimism, whites also serve as links to whites in the western world. I asked one of my more educated younger, white informants about this:

**Someone I spoke to said he thought whites were the link to Western countries and corporations.**

They are not putting their hearts in Africa. If they are staying, it's because they can't get away—

**He said that's what was valuable about whites for the New South Africa, they could still be that link because South Africa needed that link.**

Yeah, economically.

**Do you think they are aware of that?**

No, they are not. There isn't that dialogue. There isn't such a thing as a South African— you are part of a minority, always. You are Venda or Zulu or Xhosa or Afrikaans.

The white informants I spoke to emphasized how disenfranchised they feel in the New South Africa. They feel stymied by changes that interrupt their expectations of how to operate and succeed in South Africa. While many white immigrants focus on being targeted as whites within South Africa, black informants emphasized the importance of whites to South Africa in terms of South Africa's future. The focus for whites is largely on themselves as individuals and on their families, whereas the blacks I spoke to highlighted the importance of whites to the country as a whole. Such a defense of individualism on the part of whites is often used in the U.S. to support colorblind policies that succeed in maintaining racial inequalities. A similar trend seems to exist among many of these white South African immigrants. The timing of this kind of focus and

emphasis on the individual, in contrast to the community or the nation, supports a defense of privilege and power for many of these whites that have settled here in Colorado. I do note, however, that some of the more progressive whites I spoke to would like to return to South Africa and contribute if and when that might be possible. They have remained in the U.S. due to personal constraints.

Only a few individuals recognized that whites can change how they relate to blacks and African culture and find a way out of the 'box of being white', which requires change on the part of whites. A younger Jewish/Colored woman felt that if whites are going to stay in South Africa,

They need to realize they're in Africa. It's an African country with African values, and they need to accept it, respect it and just appreciate it for what it is, 'cause it's an amazing culture. Treat the people that they employ in their houses with respect. Don't make them live in a back room that's tiny and not livable, pay them a wage that's deserved and what they would get paid.

Another woman who is older and English-speaking/Jewish thought that

If I was there, you have to participate in that world and forget about the fact that you came from a privileged world. As I say, there's still the attitude of...the whites own everything still, they've got all the money. And they aren't giving it up. I'm not saying they have to give it up but there has to be some way in which you can implement and share.

And in response to the complaints many whites voiced about feeling the 'box of being white' in South Africa, one older Afrikaner male argued that whites need to "stop feeling sorry for themselves. That's the biggest thing they can do for themselves...If they just realize the fact that culture is not what you were but where you are going. A lot of those people just sit and think about the old days and they just wish back the old days."

Some of the whites that informant refers to could include those who were the subject of the following man's comment—whites who are waiting for AIDS to take its toll on the black population.

A lot of white South Africans are secretly, and some of them openly, are hoping that AIDS will solve South Africa's problems and that eventually the Black population will be so decimated that the whites will go back in control again.

**So, they are just holding out for that?**

Exactly, and I'm not exaggerating, but a lot of people are saying, "Well you know, South Africa's got an AIDS population of, almost 40 percent of the Black people have AIDS and youngsters are dying and dah-dah-dah-dah, and it's just a matter of time, and they won't be able to run the country and they won't be able to run the farms, and tell you what, in 20 years time we'll be back in control." And that's their argument.

**Mostly Afrikaners or English-speakers too?**

And English as well. I mean, secretly, they won't admit it openly, but that's, it is, that sort of little bit of hope, some of them are very convinced about it.

As a way out of the conundrum in South Africa, such stories are another way some whites try to hold onto a past in which they felt they had a role and a meaningful orientation to (white) South African society. The inhumane fact remains, however, that it is once again blacks who, from the perspective of some whites, are seen as part of the backdrop or those that are 'sacrificed' to make this type of a meaningful role possible.

In contrast, Steyn's (2001b) informants who fit a discourse of *hybridization*, *that's the name of the game* exemplify an alternative that is much closer to what she envisions for South Africa. These individuals recognize the effects of apartheid on themselves and others and they now are open to becoming more African over time.

In an interview, Steyn (Segar 2002) argued that whites do have a role in South Africa and encourages other whites to move away from negativity. As 'recovering racists', she argues, "We are all a reconstruction in process. But if we move forward into

that space of fear, it evaporates and dissolves because our compatriots want our contribution. I think it is quite a discovery to find we are holding ourselves back.” As a white South African, Melissa Steyn (Segar 2002) has observed that black South Africans truly do want whites to play an active role in remaking South African society: “What they don’t want is exactly that holding back. That represents to them the perpetuation of whiteness, of wanting to maintain exclusive privilege, that special status for white people.” As an alternative to the ‘box of being white’, Steyn and other whites like her are beginning to remake their role in South Africa. Rather than being overwhelmed by guilt, nostalgia, or keeping their blinders on, these whites offer an example of how practices and rituals between individuals of different races can and are being transformed. Perhaps over time, these efforts will dissolve some of the walls around the box of whiteness, providing a new model for whiteness in the ‘Rainbow Nation’.

## **Nationalism and Racism: U.S. versus South Africa**

When I inquired about perceptions of race issues here in the U.S., all my informants offered highly candid opinions. Many have been shocked by what they see and experience in the U.S., since they assumed we had little racism or racial tension here based on the anti-apartheid sanctions we placed on South Africa in the late 1980s. Quite a number of them pointed out the history of near-genocide of indigenous peoples here, as well as slavery and Jim Crow. “Did I hear something about segregation in the past [in your country]?” For them, this history points up the hypocrisy of the U.S. in its criticism of South Africa.

I was most surprised by the seven people who said that racism is *worse* here than in South Africa. These individuals gave a variety of reasons for their view.

*History.* Some people based their opinion on our history of slavery, the near genocide of indigenous peoples, and Jim Crow in the South. As an example of the bluntness of people’s opinions, an older English-speaking woman said: “the difference between South Africa and the US is [white] South Africans chose to live with the indigenous people, we didn't wipe them out.” A number of people brought this up, asking me pointedly if I thought things would have been much different here if the indigenous population was still close to 75 percent of the country. Their argument was that whites here would probably have attempted to create a society that was more like apartheid if whites had not already decimated the native population.

*Tolerance in South Africa.* A number of people pointed out that South African society now tolerates differences more than we do in the US. Tolerance in South Africa stems from two different things, they argued. The first is that apartheid was so divisive and

polarizing, people now generally are relieved it has ended and are much more willing to try to get along and find common ground. Secondly, my informants argued that compared with US society, there is more diversity in South Africa. In the US, they argue, African Americans are westernized, in contrast to black South Africans who are still very tribal and only have been westernized to a certain degree.<sup>1</sup> They also point to the variety of ethnic groups, such as the differences among whites between Portuguese, Afrikaners, Jews, and English-speakers and among blacks who are Venda, Xhosa, Sotho, and Zulu, among others. As a result of apartheid regulations that sought to ‘preserve’ cultures in a segregated fashion, South Africa now has less homogenization than the US. These people argue that this kind of diversity now forces people to be more comfortable with differences compared to the US, particularly in the West.

*Colorblind/politically correct.* Another younger Afrikaner woman pointed out that things were worse here because “people are really trying not to mention that you're black and I'm white, like UHHH, like never say that word or something.” A number of people found this baffling because they could feel the racial tension in the US, but they also observed that it was not appropriate to talk about it as racial because to do so is not politically correct. One older Afrikaner man explained this contrast in his workplace: “Our company has got a policy [about racism], but when we drive around in the vehicle and you hear them talk, you say, “And geez, you talk about us?? Come on.””

*Polarization/segregation.* A younger English-speaking woman pointed out that the segregation is stricter here in the US.

Race in this country is the weirdest thing. I lived in NYC for three years and one of the reasons I was excited to live there was because it was racially diverse, but I never met any black people, never at the dinner

table, never at parties. I was more integrated in South Africa than I was in this country. It is so polarized, so divided.

Since three-quarters of the population is black in South Africa, people are forced to mix and deal with each other, people explained. They observed that here in the US, it is much easier for whites to stay within their group and not mix with people who were different from them.

*Prejudice/stereotypes.* An older English-speaking woman had this comment about interactions between whites and blacks: "I see whites' body language change here when there is a black person around. I've even noticed getting into an elevator, if a black person gets in, women hold their purses or, you know, there's an element of immediate distrust." Another white informant told me about the racism her neighbor, who she said was Mexican, experienced at a store they visited together. She was stunned that her neighbor was treated with disrespect, in sharp contrast to the respect showed to her as a white South African immigrant.

One older English-speaking woman shared this story that captured the unique social positioning white South Africans face as they enter into spaces in the U.S. where minorities here have been impacted by prejudice and stereotypes.

We've grown up in a different way. Whites are a minority in South Africa, not a majority, like here. I'll relate to you an experience. When we came to the states in 1998 before we decided to move here, we went to, I think it was Savannah, Georgia.

We ended up in a predominately black area, you know, I wanted to go to a supermarket to get some cookies and bread for the next day...I walked into the store and it was all black people in the store. I walked in and the whole store went silent, I thought, 'Well. okay', and everybody stopped... I couldn't find what I wanted, so I went to the front cash registers and I said, "Excuse me, could you please help me find X" and when they heard my accent they started to relax. They said, "Oh, where you from?" "South Africa" and I smiled and I said, "You guys, this just reminds me of

home.” Everybody just relaxed and started chatting. I think they had been more uncomfortable than I was, to be quite honest.

What that taught me was that [blacks] face more prejudice here than blacks in South Africa do, so it's a tough one, I mean I get annoyed when people here say, “I bet you did this or did that in South Africa.” I say, “Hang on a minute, look at your own history... The difference between South Africa and the US is South Africans chose to live with the indigenous people, we didn't wipe them out.

Other informants who felt that racism was the same here and in South Africa emphasized similarities in race relations. One black informant explained,

White people are as scared of black people as white people in South Africa. That is the fear that I am talking about. The reason why that happens is the society is not yet as integrated as it's supposed to be, because you don't know this black person. All you know about this black person is what you saw on TV. Black people still have their neighborhoods; white people still have their neighborhoods—except instances where people have money, then there is interaction. But for the ordinary citizens, I don't think there is interaction. That's the only thing there is to the whole integration—that if you live with people and you know what these people are capable of, there is no fear.

Others pointed out that we have racists here too and that “there's still a separation between black and white; it's not legal, but it's still there.”

Only two people felt that racism and race relations were better here in the U.S. One of them summarized: “America is definitely ahead of South Africa in terms of race relations, but by no means are they perfect.” One Colored informant explained that the US has been addressing issues of racism for a longer period of time than South Africa and therefore is better.

Finally, some people were not sure what to believe. They thought that racism was better here, but when they spoke to African Americans they were quickly corrected about the dearth of racism that they as whites had perceived. These Americans argued that racism was pretty bad, naming racial profiling and other concerns as evidence of

persistent racism. The following example of this kind of confusion expressed by a younger Afrikaner woman carries a veneer of colorblindness:

I work with a black girl now and she keeps bringing up the fact that she's black and different. I'm disappointed because she keeps saying—now this is only one black that I'm talking about, I'm not saying they are all like that—but I think maybe there is racism in that because she keeps talking about when they were slaves and they were raped and all these horrible things and I know that went on here, but I think that has gone away and especially here in middle America. Maybe down in the South now, I don't know. I know they've got affirmative action and that down there. I don't know whether or not that creates racism, but she is such a lovely girl, but she keeps going on about [the fact] that she's the only black secretary and that she sticks out like a sore thumb. I just wish she wouldn't do that. It's not like that.

**What do you think it's like? What do you mean?**

I just mean, the whites that I work with don't ever mention the fact that this girl is black, it doesn't matter. They don't see the color.

Yet others felt they could not answer my question because they could not compare South Africa to the US. They argued that differences between the two countries were too significant. One fact people pointed to was that there is a white majority here versus in South Africa where whites are a minority.

Another major difference people spoke to was the fact that African Americans were brought here as slaves, which was not the case for black South Africans. They felt that though blacks in South Africa suffered under colonialism and apartheid, that they at least were not relocated to another continent and used for free labor. Finally, a number of individuals pointed out that political parties in South Africa are still very much based on race. This fact contrasts with the US where, though blacks are majority Democratic, the political split is not as firmly along racial lines.

Others spoke to the complexity of the issue in terms of the diversity of race and ethnic groups in both countries. As one younger English woman argued: “Americans

overemphasize the differences between blacks and whites here.” She went on to explain that immigrants from Mexico get treated pretty badly. In her experience, *they* are the ones getting the “shortest end of the stick,” not blacks.

Four informants, both English-speaking and Afrikaners, defended South Africa saying, “people all over the world are prejudiced.” Evidence of apartheid thinking could be seen in their justification that segregation and prejudice are bound to occur because people are different. An older English-speaking woman explained: “There’s always going to be some race or some color that think they are more dominant than the other.” Another informant, a younger Afrikaans-speaking woman, argued: “I think it's everywhere in the world, it's not just in South Africa. I've seen here in America just as much racism as I've seen in South Africa, but the majority here are white where the majority in South Africa are black, so everyone points fingers at South Africa and forget all the fingers that are pointing back to them.”

Through the eyes of white immigrants to the U.S. who come from a very racialized society, these insights into the nature of racism here point to the ongoing struggle that both societies face in overcoming their racist histories.

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<sup>1</sup> On the face of it, this remark may seem well-founded, that black South Africans retained a tribal culture throughout colonialism and apartheid. This is true, to some extent, but the opposite is also true. Apartheid fostered essentialized notions of ‘tribe’ that often did not accord with the histories of real individuals and tribal groups. ‘Bantustans’ were organized on the basis of government-created mythologies about tribal identities and group cohesions that did not exist in the way these apartheid leaders attempted to create them.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

Let's go on to the next step, which is, [blacks need to] go to school like all other children and study hard...like anybody else and get approved or not approved according to [their] grades and how hard [they] worked in school, that's it. [Conservative Afrikaner woman]

This pilot study sketches out broad themes that I discovered in my interviews with English-speaking and Afrikaner immigrants in the U.S. In general, most informants defended themselves as “not guilty.” Yet, I found three important ‘gaps’ in the coming-of-age experiences of whites that complicate this ruling. Many informants had close relationships with individual blacks or Coloreds who worked in their home, but most white informants grew up fearing blacks as a group. Second, most white informants recognized the level of social conditioning that had shaped whites during apartheid, yet they stressed that they as *individuals* had not done anything wrong. Finally, white informants grew up with white, western countries as their ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983). Many of them oriented their values and lifestyle to the standards of these western countries, not to blacks within their country or other African countries. As a result, they underwent culture shock when the country became more adapted to blacks in the mid-1990s. These three gaps were evident in the experiences of all of my white informants; however, more specific patterns emerged. I highlight a few of these below, though I reiterate that there were exceptions to these patterns as well.

*Patterns among Afrikaners.* Among Afrikaners, those who were Conservatives or Nationalists generally defended apartheid on the basis that blacks were ‘separate but

equal' and blamed blacks for the poverty and overpopulation that existed in homelands during apartheid. These informants felt that apartheid could have worked if it were not for black-on-black violence and anti-apartheid activists, and if the world had not demonized apartheid. They argued that the world did not understand the constraints of South African society, in which whites were a minority and needed a system such as apartheid. Conservatives and Nationalists were found in both generations of Afrikaners.

On the other hand, the majority of younger Afrikaners were critical of apartheid, some of them blaming the older generation for the problems that resulted from apartheid. Of these informants, three stated that they were Progressives, the rest were either Nationalist or did not state their South African political views. I note, however, that one younger Afrikaner stated her South African political views as "one settler, one bullet." She argued that whites have made a mess of South Africa and should leave the country. Many of these younger Afrikaners recognized the "schizophrenia" of South African society and underwent some type of awakening that resulted in an understanding of the propaganda and brainwashing they grew up with. In contrast to younger English-speakers, all younger Afrikaners defended Afrikaner culture against English-speaking culture with statements about the warmth, community-orientation, humor, and other superior qualities of Afrikaner culture.

*Patterns among English-speakers.* English-speakers were Progressives who largely did not support apartheid. In general, they understood the poverty and violence in homelands and townships as products of apartheid, not a reflection of any type of essential qualities of the blacks, Coloreds, or Indians/Asians who lived in these areas. The older generation among these informants argued that they "didn't know" about apartheid's abuses but that

now they see how they benefited from an apartheid lifestyle of white privilege. Older English-speakers were also proud of their English culture and background.

In contrast, the younger generation of English-speakers spoke to the “schizophrenia” of society and their recognition of propaganda and brainwashing. They also were much more critical of English-speakers in general and their history than older English-speakers were. A number of them felt that the English as a group did not do enough to fight against apartheid; rather, younger English-speakers argued that the English were lulled by the privileges that accrued to them as part of the white group. *Generational Patterns.* While all my informants were shaped to varying degrees by an ‘apartheid lifestyle,’ the older generation emphasized that in post-apartheid society privileges were lost and that life used to be “fantastic.” In contrast, the younger generation acknowledged the privileges that they gained under apartheid but were more likely to point out the limitations of this privilege: the cost of protecting their status as whites, the isolation they felt within their own community, the current ‘box of being white’, and their recognition that during apartheid a defense of the status quo was essentially racist.

Another distinction between these two generations was the matter of guilt. The older generation argued that they were not guilty because they were a product of apartheid and they had no options. As I mentioned above, a number also said that they “didn’t know” what was really going on. Those in the younger generation argued that they were not guilty because they were too young to have done anything or to be held responsible. They feel that they suffer the consequences of apartheid but that they should not be blamed.

*Racial Patterns.* Along the color line, black informants recognized the ‘status of being white’ *at the time of apartheid* in contrast to most whites who did not recognize their status until the apartheid system began to falter. While some white informants explained the “schizophrenic” nature of apartheid society, black and Colored informants did not have this feeling of “schizophrenia.” Instead, what they spoke to was their sense of having to interact with this “schizophrenia” of white society, i.e., *will whites respond to me as an individual or as a representative of a group that they fear?* Finally, while only a few whites understood the strength and depth of Afropessimism and racism, black informants had a keen sense of how these beliefs and practices hurt blacks during apartheid and continue to impact South Africa today.

### ***Habitus of apartheid***

The ideological impulse behind apartheid came from Afrikaner nationalism, yet the system of apartheid shaped the *habitus* of all whites, not simply Afrikaners, albeit affecting these two ethnic groups somewhat differently. This *habitus* of white superiority, or whiteness-as-domination, was oriented to apartheid society, which defended white supremacy with the argument that whites were more evolved, civilized, orderly, rational, and moral than blacks. As a result, most whites were cut off from an awareness of the experiences and perspectives of the majority of the country. To maintain such a *habitus*, many whites had to do psychological violence to themselves (Steyn 1999). The split psyche that did not allow them to really *see* people of color also meant that whites did not grow up seeing their own ‘apartheid of the mind.’ This limitation was not a handicap until apartheid fell, and whites were forced to confront people of color who openly addressed this ‘apartheid of the mind’ in them as whites. The

hostility these Others (blacks, Indians/Asians, and Coloreds) feel towards them in South Africa has come as a surprise for most of my informants. Along with crime and affirmative action, this hostility has informed their reasons for emigrating out of South Africa. Some feel they have no role or place in South African society now.

Many of these white immigrants grew up orienting themselves to white society in such a way that their practices reflected a culture of racism. Even though many of them did not understand why apartheid was such a big issue in their country, they grew up knowing that the maid's drinking mug should not be washed in the same water as theirs. Such rituals and practices were part of their *habitus*, which was oriented to a two-fold goal: maintaining boundaries between black and white and embodying practices that help you keep your place within your own community. Defending themselves against being exiled from the 'status of being white', whites grew up feeling that they had to uphold their status through such rituals towards 'the help.' Such rituals maintained the separation of whites from black society, kept whites within their own race, and affirmed the symbols of white exclusion and supremacy.

Looking at the *habitus* of apartheid moves away from understanding racism as simply the expression of prejudices and attitudes towards seeing how certain daily rituals and actions reproduce *structures* of racial inequality. It is this *habitus* that white South Africans are held responsible for in post-apartheid society.

The tendency of outsiders is to focus blame on Afrikaners, but my research shows how a *habitus* of apartheid in both ethnic groups and, generally, across the political spectrum, reproduced apartheid on a number of levels. The Afrikaners I spoke with were more conservative or Nationalist and reflected an 'old-fashioned' racism. Yet, many

progressive argued, in the vein of 'new racism', that aggressive measures to equalize racial inequality on a massive scale reflect reverse racism and should either be eliminated or slowed down. Many progressives also felt that society needed to 'get beyond' race, reflecting a belief in a colorblindness that also exemplifies 'new racism.' However, all whites grew up in a schizophrenic society under a daily barrage of propaganda and in a white society that valued the status of being white as proof of the 'symbolic capital' of whiteness. So who is guilty?

*Individual versus group guilt.* Three informants pointed out that they as individuals did not feel guilty but that as whites, or corporally, they did feel guilty. These individuals understood the power that whites as a group used to sustain a system that oppressed blacks, Coloreds, and Indians/Asians, i.e., the symbolic, economic, social, and cultural capitals that maintained whiteness-as-domination. Yet, they did not see how their actions as individuals reproduced this larger structure.

Understanding white South African immigrants through the lens of *habitus* provides a framework for showing how whites were shaped by apartheid. Seeing how this *habitus* of apartheid functioned also explains why such a *habitus* remains a handicap for whites in post-apartheid society. Practices can change, however, and it is through understanding how apartheid affected *them* that whites can begin to take responsibility for their place within the apartheid system without becoming consumed by attempts to pin down or evade guilt.

### **White South Africans in Colorado**

Some white informants attempt to salvage components of a 'master narrative of whiteness' by transplanting the *habitus* of apartheid to the U.S. This can be

accomplished through an emphasis on individualism (“*I didn’t do anything wrong*”), a defense of apartheid, and/or a colorblindness that glosses over the history of apartheid. They hold onto *fields* that have meaning for them, i.e., ones that reflect a defense of the ‘status of being white.’ These individuals also argue for how these are better than current, African-influenced *fields*. But in the context of the new social, political, and economic *fields* in South Africa, this equates to a defense of white privilege and status, or ‘new racism.’ For those who emigrate, however, an awareness of the Afropessimism behind their defense of the ‘status of being white’ can be avoided, to be re-encountered only when they return to visit family and friends.

These immigrants can also join in on attacks on affirmative action and other policies that address racial inequality in the U.S. and South Africa by arguing that they are defending certain values and are not racist. Such defenses of the status quo gain meaning through a belief in an ‘invisible hand’ that operates in the social realm to somehow eliminate racial inequality over time. But as the U.S. has experienced, such an invisible hand does not exist; rather, ‘racial projects’ as practiced by actors within the system continue to racially define bodies in an effort to maintain racial inequalities and defend white privilege. Through defending community and family values against affirmative action, busing, and welfare, conservatives in the U.S. reproduce structures that implicitly leverage ideologies of white supremacy. These South African immigrants can align themselves with these conservatives and not be viewed as racists.

In this sense, whiteness-as-domination can remain a salient part of these white immigrants’ identity here in the U.S. They can avoid seeing the ‘apartheid of the mind’ that they embody and practice. They also do not have to confront how Others view *them*.

Yet, their new lives here are not seamless reproductions of what they had during apartheid—despite the fact that I did have one informant say their parents thought Colorado was like South Africa years ago (white, safe, middle class)! At the same time, life in this predominantly white state in the U.S. does not demand that they confront how their *habitus* and orientation to the world turns on white supremacist ideologies and the structures that reproduce such ideologies. In this sense, a ‘master narrative of whiteness’ is not challenged here. As a result, the limitations that they grew up with, i.e., the ‘box of being white,’ are not confronted and overcome; instead, individuals defend their symbolic capital of whiteness. Doing so continues to limit the ability of these individuals to negotiate changes, relate across differences, compete, be open to criticism, see how apartheid affected *them*, and move beyond the blindness of privilege.

How does this ability of these white immigrants to transplant a *habitus* from apartheid reflect on society in the U.S? Going further, how do these ‘boxes of being white’ shape the global racial order and the global economy? Have middle- and upper-class whites around the world confronted their own ‘apartheid of the mind’ to become postcolonial? If they have not done so, why? How might this perpetuate global inequalities?

The final vestiges of the cultures that arose from colonialism, apartheid, and white supremacy can remain in a *habitus* that refuses to orient itself to new *fields*. How and where does the re-education of whites take place on a large scale? This difficult transformation cannot be left to chance or the workings of an ‘invisible hand’ of society; resistance to change, even within oneself, can prove too powerful. As hooks (1997:178) argues, before whites can “decolonize” their minds, they have to understand the way

cultural practices uphold white supremacy. For individuals whose lives have been oriented to an apartheid lifestyle, the initial hurdle is to recognize the blurring of boundaries that previously seemed such an essential part of the 'natural' divisions of the human race.

*My journal: The colonialist/modernist project has done more than just fail us; it has left us crippled, unable to speak, tied in knots. Our pursuit of clarity dominates. The clean lines of an orange peel, white and orange, defined. Once you seek it and you are told it is right, how do you see where the orange blends into white, where the line is not clear, where you cannot clarify? How do you see that and forgive yourself for seeing it?*

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Alternative whitenesses that do not reproduce 'whiteness-as-domination' exist and continue to emerge in three populations: some individuals within this immigrant population, white South Africans who have stayed, *and* some whites who emigrated but who now return to South Africa. These individuals have begun to recognize how the past shaped them as whites and understand how a history of colonialism and apartheid led to the current challenges in the New South Africa. As a result, they have adopted new practices out of a willingness to adapt to new *fields* that are not oriented to defending or reproducing implicit notions of white superiority. These types of white identity differentiate between the phenotype of white skin and whiteness, i.e., the expression of whiteness as domination (Frye 1992). Such new identities of whiteness are also reflexive and reflect an awareness of their symbolic power (Lash 1993).

The *habitus* of apartheid shaped white South Africans deeply, yet it is not static. People's *habitus* can change to become oriented to South Africa as an African country with its own distinct social structures. Evidence of this ability of individuals to transform

their *habitus* can be found in exceptions to the patterns I discovered within my sample of South African immigrants. One individual who grew up in a conservative Afrikaner family now hopes that her younger relatives in South Africa marry blacks and become African over time. Other informants explained that they now appreciate the fact that South Africa is *African*, not a white, western country. Finally, a few informants hope to return to South Africa and contribute their skills and education for the benefit of everyone in the country. They recognize their responsibility to the country as a whole and would like to participate in rebuilding society. These examples stand in stark contrast to other informants who have tried to transplant their *habitus* of white superiority here in the U.S. Rather than attempting to recreate a close approximation of their apartheid lifestyle, these individuals see how apartheid affected them and they do not resist changing their *habitus* to overcome the limitations of their former *habitus* of apartheid.

My research shows that racial and ethnic identifiers are descriptive, not prescriptive. Anyone, regardless of background, can have experiences that interrupt the reproduction of a *habitus* oriented to white supremacy. In my study, these experiences included military service, attendance at a multi-racial school, making friends across the color line, and, rarely, discussions with ‘the help.’ These informants recognized the collapse of what they formerly thought was true, i.e., the propaganda and brainwashing of apartheid, or what Bourdieu (1977) would include as part of the *doxa*. These individuals did not attempt to reinstate the *doxa*, or, in this case, propaganda, as truth; rather, they acknowledge the collapse and are open to new experiences and truths that reshape their *habitus*. These individuals provide a model for how whites can move out of the ‘box of being white.’ By recognizing the impact of apartheid on themselves and orienting their

*habitus* to South Africa as an African country, whites can play a key role in the future of the country. Through this kind of transformation, whites participate in moving beyond the harms of racial and ethnic identities of the past, but they do so without reproducing the ills of a strict hierarchy based on assumptions of white superiority.

Examples of alternative whitenesses within South Africa are reflected in Steyn's (2001b) discussion of the narrative *hybridization, that's the name of the game*. These individuals understand how apartheid shaped them and they are willing to become more African over time. Melissa Steyn has also been one of a number of people who have participated in antiracism workshops in South Africa that address the ways apartheid shaped them as whites and inculcated racist practices. Finally, some return migrants reflect alternative whitenesses in their desire to return to South Africa to help the country as a whole, rather than focus on themselves as individuals—despite their loss of privilege, increased crime, and the racial restructuring that is taking place.

Perhaps surprising given the strong justifications whites give for leaving South Africa, upwards of 78 percent of emigrants would like to return (Isa 2004). As a result, two initiatives have been launched to help people do so. *Homecoming Revolution*, founded by Angel Jones, a former ex-pat who lived in London, encourages others to return and make South Africa better: "South Africa is fighting a global war for human capital...we need all hands on deck to make South Africa the success it deserves to be" (<http://www.homecomingrevolution.co.za/>). She also posts "good news" stories about South Africa to counterbalance negativity in the media and encourages South Africans to take a positive approach to engaging in issues in South Africa and to make a difference rather than complaining or becoming bitter.

A second initiative, the “Come Home” campaign, was created by South Africa’s white trade union “Solidarity and the Company for Immigration” which previously recruited skilled workers to South Africa ([www.comehome.co.za](http://www.comehome.co.za)). Now working to return ex-pats to the country and encourage people not to emigrate, they argue that South Africa’s economy desperately needs skilled workers to stay and invest themselves in South Africa. This group has helped 100 families return so far and also reaches out to those in the country who “have mentally withdrawn and ‘emigrated’” ([www.comehome.co.za](http://www.comehome.co.za)).

Whether in South Africa, or as immigrants or returnees, white South Africans confront four existential questions: Where is home? Can I share control? What is my role? How does all of this, i.e., the taking account of the past, reflect on me? (Steyn 2001a, 2001b). As their practices reflect the choices they make in answer to these questions, they show how whitenesses are both more embedded and more fluid and nuanced than most scholars in whiteness studies allow for. The ‘global social space’ where ideology and the material come together in *habitus* can lead towards the reproduction or transformation of both ideologies and structures, depending on the *habitus* of actors within these structures. An ideology of whiteness-as-domination led to the solidification of the apartheid state and shaped all those who lived within this society, particularly the *habitus* of whites. Yet, these practices are embodied by actors who have the ability to change the *habitus* they have inherited, giving expression to emerging white identities that both recognize the past and embrace the complex struggles of the present. Or, in the words of an insightful older Afrikaner informant, people need to “realize the fact that culture is not what you were but where you are going.”

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## **APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Describe a typical day in South Africa when you were under 10. Did life change much when you were a teenager?

2. What two political events in South Africa stand out as significant during your lifetime? Where were you when X happened? How were people talking about it? What did your parents think about it at the time? (or) How did you explain it to your children?

3. When you were growing up, how were riots, strikes, and stayaways explained to you by your parents? Or how did you explain them to your children?

4. When did you first become aware of how blacks and whites (or Coloreds and whites) were living differently? How old were you? How did people explain that to you? Did you ever talk to your maids/gardeners about it?

5. Did you ever participate in any political action? Or, were you in the army? Or were your brothers, cousins, or friends in the army?

Where were they stationed? What was their job? What stories did they tell you about what happened? Were they allowed to talk about their experiences?

6. It seems like there are cultural differences between the English and Afrikaners. What are those? Did you know many English/Afrikaners when you were growing up?

7. I've heard these stereotypes about the English--rooinekke, soutie. What do those mean? Did you ever get called those? Why/when were they used? How about stereotypes about Afrikaans-speaking people? Dutchmen, planks, hairy backs...

8. Someone I talked to said she saw a difference in the way that Afrikaners interacted with blacks compared with English-speakers. She said they were more strict, almost abusive sometimes. Did you ever notice that?

10. Someone in her thirties said the older generation feels blamed by the younger for being a bunch of racists, is how she put it. The older generation says they didn't know, but she said, "Well, they voted them in, didn't they?" Do you feel that way about your generation? Or, (if in younger generation), do you agree with her about the older generation, your parent's generation? Why or why not?

How do you feel about the younger generation? Or, what do you think the older generation thinks about the younger generation, especially all of you who are leaving?

11. One person I interviewed was a black South African. He said he grew up thinking that whites were 'superhuman' What do you think about that? He said he thought that because whites were running the country, driving cars, had education, etc.

What stereotypes about being white did you grow up with? For example, did you think that whites did certain things and not others for a job?

12. What kinds of stereotypes about whites do you think blacks had?

13. What do you think the role of whites is in the New South Africa? Do they have a role? Why or why not?

14. Do you see any parallels in how whites and blacks relate in the US versus South Africa?

15. If you were to write a paragraph in a history book about what the English/Afrikaners/Coloreds/blacks contributed to South Africa, what would you write? (or) What would you tell your kids about what the English/Afrikaners/Coloreds/blacks contributed to South Africa?

Any other comments you want to add?

## APPENDIX II: SURVEY FOR SOUTH AFRICANS IN COLORADO

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Your answers will be kept completely confidential.

- 1) Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Birthplace: (Province/City or Area) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Current Job or Source of Income: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Marital Status (please circle): Married    Single    Divorced    Partner  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Is your spouse or partner South African?    \_\_\_\_\_ Afrikaner    \_\_\_\_\_ English-speaker    \_\_\_\_\_ Other
- 6) Where were you married (South Africa, U.S., elsewhere)? \_\_\_\_\_  
How long ago? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Family Structure:  
# of brothers: \_\_\_\_\_ # of sisters: \_\_\_\_\_ # of children: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) When did you move to the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) What was your motivation for coming (circle those that apply)?  
Job  
Education  
Family  
Safety  
Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Did you know South Africans in the U.S. before you came? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) What's the highest level of education you have? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) Where did you receive your degree from? \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) What job(s) did you have in South Africa before you left?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 12) Which province and city/area did you grow up in?  
Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/Area: \_\_\_\_\_  
Was this region:    urban    suburban    rural
- 13) Where did you permanently reside before moving to the U.S.?  
Province \_\_\_\_\_  
City/Area \_\_\_\_\_  
Was this region: urban    suburban    rural
- 14) What language was spoken in your home in South Africa? \_\_\_\_\_
- 15) What language do you speak in your home in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) What is your family's race/ethnicity (circle)?  
Caucasian (specify Afrikaner, English-speaker, Jewish, other) \_\_\_\_\_  
African (specify Zulu, Venda, Xhosa, other) \_\_\_\_\_

Asian (specify Malay, Indian, other) \_\_\_\_\_

Colored \_\_\_\_\_

17) Are there local terms for these ethnic groups? If so, please list them.

18) Do you plan on going back to South Africa to live? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, when? \_\_\_\_\_

19) Did your family own their home? \_\_\_\_\_

20) Did you and/or your spouse own your home before you left South Africa? \_\_\_\_\_

21) Do you own a business or property in South Africa? (yes/no—which one?)

22) What was your mother's career?

23) What was your father's career?

24) Do you share your financial resources with your family members back in South Africa? \_\_\_\_\_

25) Did you own a TV in South Africa? \_\_\_\_\_

26) Which newspapers/magazines did your family read when you were growing up?

27) Which newspapers/magazines do you read now (online and/or hardcopy)?

28) Did you have servants in your home? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, when? \_\_\_\_\_

If not, then did you or any of your family members work in other people's homes? \_\_\_\_\_

28) Did you vote in 1994? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)      1999? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes/no)

Do you consider yourself:      Liberal      Moderate      Conservative

Do you consider your South African political views:

Nationalist      Progressive      Conservative

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

29) Which South African groups are you affiliated with now?

30) Do you keep in touch with South African family members who are in South Africa?

31) Are most of the South Africans you are friends with in the U.S. of the same general cultural and ethnic background as your friends in South Africa? \_\_\_\_\_

Which ethnic group(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

## GLOSSARY

*Afrikaan*: used by Afrikaners who want to claim that they are African and not aligned with Afrikaners and their historical support of the National Party

*Afrikaans*: language of Afrikaners or Boers

*Afrikaner*: name for Dutch, German, and French settlers to South Africa; early in their settlement, were known as *Boers*

*ANC*: African National Congress; founded in 1912; nonviolent resistance against segregation and apartheid until 1961 when guerrilla army was formed; banned for thirty years (1960-1990)

*Bantu*: term for Bantu-speaking mixed farmers that settled in South Africa between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; derogatory term: “kaffirs”; today these individuals are called blacks, Africans, or are identified by their ethnicity. Ethnic groups descended from Bantu-speaking mixed farmers include the Nguni (Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, Ndebele), the East Sotho (Pedi), the South Sotho (Basotho) and the West Sotho (Tswana), the Venda and the Tsonga

*Boer*: farmer, an early term for Afrikaner; term that conservative Afrikaners still use to signify their ancestral ties to the Great Trek.

*Border wars*: involved armed conflict between South African forces and the liberation movement in what was then called South West Africa and is today Namibia; the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO) worked within Namibia and also Angola to fight against South African forces

*British*: early colonialists from Britain

*Colored*: apartheid term for people who are mixed, i.e., white and Asian, African, or Khoisan

*English-speakers*: name for individuals of British descent

*Grand apartheid*: name of the social engineering system put in place by the National Party in 1948, the goal of which was the segregate the country, geographically, by race

*Great Trek*: northward migration of Boers away from the Cape between 1836 and 1854 after the British gained control of the Cape region

*Homelands*: as part of apartheid, these were areas designated to be inhabited by a particular black tribe; in reality, individuals from different tribes were often mixed together in these areas

*Khoikhoi*: pastoralists who first arrived in South Africa approximately 2,000 years ago; used to be called the derogatory term, Hottentot

*Khoisan*: language of the San and Khoikhoi of southern Africa; differentiates their language from that of mixed farmers, which was Bantu

*koevoets*: South African counter-insurgency forces prominent during the border wars; these units have been accused of extreme human rights violations.

*laager*: a defensive circle of wagons formed for protection; the *laager* formation eventually became an important symbol of Afrikanerdom in the rise of the National Party; a *laager* mentality is similar to a ‘circling-the-wagons’ mentality

*MK (uMkhonto we Sizwe)*: “Spear of the Nation,” the violent arm of the ANC, established in 1961

*National Party*: the party that implemented apartheid after its leaders gained control of the country in 1948; generally represented Afrikaners

*Nationalists (Nats)*: those who supported the National Party, initially Afrikaners but in 1970s and 1980s more English-speakers joined

*Petty apartheid*: segregation of public amenities such as beaches, post offices, public bathrooms

*San*: hunter-gatherers who used to live and move in bands; now largely live on reservations; ancestors of the first Modern *Homo sapiens* in South Africa; derogatory term used for them was “Bushmen”

*swart gevaar*: phrase meaning black peril

*township*: apartheid term for black, Colored, or Indian/Asian urban living area; these areas did not have any status as cities

*United Democratic Front (UDF)*: the umbrella organization of the anti-apartheid movements during the 1980s; expanded to become the Mass Democratic movement; supported the ANC and the Freedom Charter

*volk*: word for “a people” and “a nation” used by Afrikaners to refer to themselves and their community

*voortrekkers*: those who led the Great Trek

Source: Goodwin and Schiff 1995