

WHITENESS, RACISM, AND AFRIKANER IDENTITY IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the production of post-apartheid Afrikaner identity in South Africa. Centred around the private sphere of the *braai*, the article draws on discursive psychology to investigate the participants' dilemmas and struggles over their identity as Afrikaners, South Africans, and Africans, and the ways in which these identities are being redefined. The 'backstage' talk that is usually reserved for fellow whites or Afrikaners illustrates a clear difference between public and private constructions of Afrikaner identity. While the participants rejected many stereotypes of Afrikaner identity, they simultaneously recycled key discourses underlying apartheid ideology, particularly discourses of black incompetence and whites under threat. Participants generally claimed status as 'Africans' but strongly resisted assimilation with 'Africa' or a broader African identity. The article concludes that the construction of the Afrikaner community as embattled and systematically oppressed might provide powerful support for extremism.

IN NOVEMBER 2010 THE AFRIKAANS AUTHOR Annelie Botes shocked South Africa when she said in an interview: 'I don't like black people [*Ek hou nie van swartmense nie*].'¹ She went on to say that 'In my formative years in Uniondale there were no black people. If one was walking around it was a trespassing crook. And then you must run, because he's going to catch you [*In my grootwordjare op Uniondale was daar geen swartmense nie. As daar een rondloop, was dit 'n bandiet wat dros. En dan moet jy hárdloop, want hy gaan jou vang*].' Throwing caution to the winds she went on: 'I know they're just people like me. I know they have the same rights as me. But I don't understand them. And then ... I don't like them. I avoid them

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1. Hanlie Retief, 'Hanlie gesels met Annelie Botes', *Rapport*, 20 November 2010, <<http://www.rapport.co.za/printArticle.aspx?iframe&aid=789b4c2e-9fdf-4a1e-847e-af6e8cf1b3ff&cid=2356>> (2 March 2011).

because I'm scared of them [*Ek wéét hulle's net sulke mense soos ek. Ek wéét hulle't dieselfde regte as ek. Maar ek verstaan hulle nie. En dan ... hou ek nie van hulle nie. Ek vermy hulle, want ek's bang vir hulle*].² In the course of the interview she characterized blacks [*swartmense*] as angry, violent, uneducated, unskilled, incompetent, baboon-like, and criminal.

The public and media reaction to Botes's frank interview was immediate and intense. The South African Literary Awards (SALA) association withdrew their ZAR30,000 award for her book *Thula Thula*, and the newspaper *Die Burger Oos* terminated her services as a columnist.² However, Botes 'said she had received about 1,000 emails supporting her comments', members of the public contributed ZAR10,150 to a fund to replace her lost prize money, and sales of her latest novel *Thula Thula* quadrupled.³ As one blogger noted, Annalie's mistake – and the reason for the groundswell of support – was that she said 'things publicly that one usually only hears around the *braai*leis (barbeque) in white suburbia'.⁴

This article explores backstage talk of white, middle-class Afrikaners about blacks – the talk that is usually reserved for fellow whites or Afrikaners only – and explores how Afrikaans people are reinterpreting their identity in post-apartheid South Africa. As a way of stimulating talk about identity, belonging, and exclusion, the interviewer asked participants to discuss the extent to which Afrikaners are Africans, with the aim of teasing apart the tensions, dilemmas, and conflicting claims made by individuals in order to see how Afrikaner identity is evolving. Participants' responses were analysed with two questions in mind. First, how are group boundaries being produced and reproduced to position Afrikaner identity in relation to 'Africa' as a physical space and set of symbolic resources? Second, what strategies or arguments are being used to construct post-apartheid identity? Our analysis identifies three interconnected discursive activities that participants used to produce a post-apartheid Afrikaner identity. First, participants did much discursive work to discard certain visible aspects of Afrikaner identity. Second, while they jettisoned these aspects, they maintained whiteness as central to Afrikaner identity, thus maintaining their claim to white privilege. Third, while rejecting apartheid, participants simultaneously recycled key discourses underlying racist

2. SAPA, 'Afrikaans writer's award stripped over comment', *Dispatch*, 9 December 2010, <<http://www.dispatch.co.za/news/article/94>> (2 March 2011).

3. Yolandi Groenewald and Tarryn Harbour, 'Author Annelie Botes stands by racist comments', *Mail and Guardian* [Cape Town], 26 November 2010, <<http://mg.co.za/article/2010-11-26-author-anneli-botes-stands-by-racist-comments>> (2 March 2011).

4. Marius Brand, 'Annelie Botes exposes braai-leis banter', Web log comment, 1 December 2010, <<http://mariusbrand.wordpress.com/2010/12/01/annelie-botes-exposes-braai-leis-banter/>> (2 March 2011).

apartheid ideology, particularly discourses of black incompetence and whites under threat. Taken together, these strategies produce an Afrikaner identity based on racial exclusivity, racist notions of inherent black inferiority, and out-group threat.

Afrikaner identity

Historically, Afrikaner identity has drawn heavily on Afrikaner nationalism, which depended on several tightly interwoven discourses. These centred on themes of religious, racial, and cultural purity, superiority, calling, and the struggle for autonomy against oppression – which included the struggle for an independent language. J. C. van Rooy, in his capacity as chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond, made the following statement in 1944:

God created the Afrikaner people with a unique language, a unique philosophy of life, and their own history and traditions in order that they might fulfil a particular calling and destiny here in the southern corner of Africa. We must stand guard on all that is peculiar to us and build upon it. We must believe that God has called us to be servants of his righteousness in this place.⁵

In May 1948, the National Party came to power with the vision of a ‘new’ South Africa to be ‘built around a new hierarchy with Afrikaner identity at the core’.⁶ Afrikaners were ‘encapsulated in a network of schools, social clubs, churches, [and] cultural and business organizations which created a self-referential Afrikaner ideological world’.⁷ The impact of this complex network of religious and educational institutions cannot be overstated, since it ‘dominated the historical consciousness of most Afrikaners’.⁸

Language is a complex matrix of symbols through which groups express themselves, and is therefore intimately tied to notions of group identity.⁹ The production and defence of languages serves to defend claims for both unique and shared identity. For example, the cultural recovery of Gaelic language(s) justifies claims for Scottish and Irish independence from England,¹⁰ and arguments for transnational Celtic

5. Leonard L. Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (Vail-Ballou Press, Binghamton, NY, 1985), p. 29.

6. Melissa E. Steyn, *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to Be: White identity in a changing South Africa* (State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 2001), p. 37.

7. Jonathon Hyslop, ‘Why did apartheid’s supporters capitulate? “Whiteness”, class and consumption in urban South Africa, 1985–1995’, *Society in Transition* 31, 1 (2000), pp. 36–45, p. 5.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Glynis M. Breakwell, *Threatened Identities* (John Wiley and Sons Ltd, New York, NY, 1983).

10. Karl W. Deutsch, ‘International affairs: The trend of European nationalism – the language aspect’, *The American Political Science Review* 36, 3 (1942), pp. 533–41.

identity.¹¹ The struggle for Afrikaans as an independent and uniquely African language had a similar importance in justifying the political freedom of Afrikaners in South Africa:

Afrikaans linguistics emerged within the context of struggle for the recognition of Afrikaans in all domains. The Afrikaner *Broederbond* and National Party gave this language struggle (*taalstryd*) a nationalist direction by incorporating it into the larger drive toward political dominance.¹²

Afrikaans has always been a keystone of Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner identity¹³ and is traditionally seen as the ‘repository of Afrikaner heritage, Afrikaner creativity, Afrikaner soul, Afrikaner power ...’.¹⁴ However, with the advent of democracy, South African language policy was revised and Afrikaans became just one of eleven official languages in South Africa.¹⁵ At the time of writing, the fall from grace of Afrikaans as a language of power is ironically demonstrated by the fact that the National Language Policy Framework is available online only in English.¹⁶ Just as after the Second World War the German language was shamefully associated with the holocaust and wartime aggression, Afrikaans is currently symbolically associated with South Africa’s apartheid past.¹⁷

The end of apartheid has left Afrikaners to face an overwhelming existential crisis:

The future of the new democratic government is premised on the demise of everything that Afrikaner nationalism has always stood for. Afrikaners cannot escape the fact that the apartheid system was put in place *in their name*. The Nationalist ideology that shaped the old South Africa, like all ethnocentric narratives, placed the Afrikaner in the centre. They were the most important population group: they were in charge.¹⁸

11. Michael Dietler, ‘“Our ancestors the Gauls”: archaeology, ethnic nationalism, and the manipulation of Celtic identity in modern Europe’, *American Anthropologist* 96, 3 (1994), pp. 584–605.

12. John Joseph and Talbot Taylor, *Ideologies of Language* (Taylor and Francis, London and New York, NY, 1990), p. 132.

13. Vie Webb and Mariana Kriel, ‘Afrikaans and Afrikaner nationalism’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 144 (2000), pp. 19–49.

14. Melissa E. Steyn, ‘Rehabilitating a whiteness disgraced: Afrikaner white talk in post-apartheid South Africa’, *Communication Quarterly* 52 (2004), p. 158.

15. Department of Arts and Culture, ‘National Language Policy Framework’ (Department of Arts and Culture, Government of the Republic of South Africa, 2003), <http://www.dac.gov.za/policies/LPD_Language%20Policy%20Framework_English%20_2_.pdf> (22 February 2011).

16. *Ibid.*

17. Michael G. Clyne, *The German Language in a Changing Europe* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995); Hermann Giliomee, ‘The rise and possible demise of Afrikaans as public language’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, 1 (2004), pp. 25–58.

18. Steyn, ‘Rehabilitating a whiteness disgraced’, p. 154, emphasis in original.

Frederick van Zyl Slabbert¹⁹ argues that now that apartheid has failed, there is a general feeling of confusion and lack of direction amongst Afrikaners. This existential crisis culminates in the simple question: 'Who are we?'²⁰ Van Zyl Slabbert asks the following questions:

And what now? Who will associate freely with the concept 'Afrikaner'? How will those who linked their Afrikaner identity to the control of political power participate in the process of giving new content to the word Afrikaner?²¹

The word 'Afrikaner' means 'African'. To some extent, claiming to be African is therefore at the core of Afrikaner identity. Many prominent (and often dissident) Afrikaner writers have engaged with the question of whether Afrikaners are African. Breyten Breytenbach argues that, despite the fact that 'Afrikaans is just the Afrikaans word for African', he both belongs and does not belong in Africa.²² Similarly, Max Du Preez writes that:

Just as I cannot change the colour of my skin, I cannot become an American, European or Australian. I would be an alien forever, like a polar bear in the Pretoria zoo. My soul is African. My skin colour is the only European thing about me ... African/Afrikaner. I am both. I call myself after the continent twice ... I am a native of this land, but unlike most other natives, I am pale.²³

However, Afrikaners are not the only Africans and it is therefore tricky to claim an African identity while maintaining racial, ideological, and cultural purity. Therefore, 'African' was not used as a racial category under apartheid:

The problem was it translated back in the *Boer* language into the word Afrikaner, which was the very name the white Dutch descendants called themselves. Africans were referred to by white officialdom as black or Bantu.²⁴

However, with the fall of apartheid, 'African' is now a self-selected *racial* classification essential to government policies such as employment equity.²⁵ Therefore the rhetorical struggle over who can lay claim to being 'African' has important consequences for defining who belongs, who deserves access to resources, and the fairness of structural redress such as

19. Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, *Tough Choices* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2000).

20. Steyn, 'Rehabilitating a whiteness disgraced', p. 153.

21. van Zyl Slabbert, *Tough Choices*, p. 79.

22. Breyten Breytenbach, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (Taurus, Cape Town, 1984), p. 321.

23. Max du Preez, *Pale Native: Memories of a renegade reporter* (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2003), p. 5.

24. David Stead, Bola Olufunwa, Fiona Ledger, and Penny Boreham, 'The story of Africa' *BBC World Service*, no date, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index.shtml>> (17 June 2010).

25. For example, 'South African Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998' (Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, Cape Town, 1998).

affirmative action. For example, the leader of the Vryheidsfront Plus (a right-wing political party representing many Afrikaners), Pieter Mulder, argued in Parliament that he is 'an Afrikaner and an African' and that since he is not a European (from Europe) he reports his race on official forms as 'African'.²⁶

However, whiteness is historically linked to privilege.²⁷ Whiteness is almost universally a racial or ethnic category that also offers the opportunity to maintain this privilege.²⁸ In South Africa, this privilege manifested itself in terms of both political power and economic advantage, which was reserved for white South Africans. While political power is no longer the privilege of white South Africans, economic privilege continues.²⁹ Although major strides have been made towards equity in the middle class, little has changed at the economic extremes. For example, in the job market, 27.9 percent of black South Africans are unemployed compared to just 4.6 percent of whites.³⁰ Despite the fact that change is slow and uneven, white South Africans are grappling with massive shifts in their position and identity in South Africa:

The social revisions brought about by the political realignment of the different population groups in relation to each other are far-reaching, complex and multiple. Not least among these is the re-negotiating of identities. South Africans, willingly or unwillingly, successfully or unsuccessfully, are engaged in one of the most profound collective psychological adjustments happening in the contemporary world.³¹

Afrikaner nationalism constructed and maintained Afrikaner identity, as well as the ideology of apartheid. The use of Afrikaner cultural and historical symbols (including the Afrikaans language) formed a very important part of this construction. Afrikaner nationalism was instrumental in constructing Afrikaner identity as the most powerful ethnic identity in apartheid South Africa. This 'version' of Afrikaner identity was then maintained by a self-referential world. Afrikaner nationalism, apartheid,

26. Pieter W. A. Mulder, 'Repliek: Pres. Mbeki se staatsrede', in Hansard, 14 February 2007 (Parliament of South Africa, Pretoria, 2007), pp. 29–30.

27. Margaret Wetherell (ed.), *Identities, Groups and Social Issues* (Sage, London, 1996).

28. Meredith J. Green, Christopher C. Sonn and Jabulane Matsebula, 'Reviewing whiteness: theory, research, and possibilities', *South African Journal of Psychology* 37, 3 (2007), pp. 389–419.

29. Kgomoitso Nyanto, 'South Africa: apartheid legacy difficult to shift', *New African* (July 2006), pp. 22–23, <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=21500168&site=ehost-live>> (9 November 2008); Thembisa Waetjen, 'Measures of redress: defining disadvantage in a university access programme', *South African Review of Sociology* 37, 2 (2006), pp. 200–17.

30. South African Institute of Race Relations, 'South Africa Survey 2008/2009: Employment and incomes' (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2009), <<http://www.sairr.org.za/research-and-publications/south-africa-survey-2008-2009/employment-incomes/2008-2009%20-%20Employment%20%28Web%29.pdf>> (22 February 2011).

31. Steyn, *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to Be*, p. xxi.

and Afrikaner identity were, for many years, practically inseparable. The fall of apartheid, and the failure of Afrikaner nationalism, therefore represented an intense crisis for Afrikaner identity. Melissa Steyn analysed letters to *Rapport*, an Afrikaans-language daily newspaper, and found that Afrikaans correspondents were engaged in 'intense', 'active', and 'aggressive' defence and production of identity.³²

Our analysis explores how Afrikaner identity is being constructed in post-apartheid South Africa, focusing particularly on the relationship of Afrikaner identity to whiteness and African-ness. However, where Steyn's study explored the production of post-apartheid identity in public contexts such as newspapers,³³ this article explores identity talk in the private, backstage context of private interviews at social events hosted at participants' homes.

The discursive psychology approach

This study applied the lens of social constructivism and, in particular, discursive psychology, to the 'ongoing, self-conscious, and contested discursive activity'³⁴ of constructing post-apartheid Afrikaner identity in talk. This approach explores how language and symbolic resources are actively deployed by participants to produce identities; how particular identities are rhetorically defended against implicit alternatives; and how these identities, as accomplishments, link to broader issues of power and ideology.³⁵ The analysis cannot claim to describe comprehensively all the ways in which Afrikaner identity can be constructed, but instead it identifies and describes specific strategies that *can* be used to produce particular forms of identity and how these identities work as discursive and rhetorical productions.³⁶

We conducted interviews in Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State, and one of the firmest bastions of Afrikaner power under apartheid. Bloemfontein has an urban population of about 111,000 people and a broader rural district, Manguang, with a population of about 700,000 people. In Bloemfontein city, Afrikaans whites are still in a numerical majority. Of the 111,000 residents 72,000 (65 percent) are white, and 89 percent of these white residents report Afrikaans as their mother-tongue.

32. Steyn, 'Rehabilitating a whiteness disgraced', p. 162.

33. For example, *ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

35. Derek Edwards, 'Discursive psychology' in Kristine L. Fitch and Robert E. Sanders (eds), *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, 2005).

36. David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction* (Sage, London, 2001).

In the broader Manguang district, white Afrikaners represent only 10.7 percent of the population.³⁷ In the past Afrikaners dominated local government structures in Manguang. Their representation now matches their demographic profile, with roughly 11 percent of the jobs in the district municipality currently held by whites (of whom the majority are Afrikaners).³⁸

A snowball sampling technique was used, with the only criterion for selection being that the participants considered themselves to be Afrikaners, and were accepted as such by the two acquaintances of the first author who facilitated contact. Each of these two facilitators invited several of their own friends to their homes to participate in the interviews about Afrikaner identity. All participants, as it turned out, were white, middle-class Afrikaans speakers who live in the suburban setting of Blomfontein (see Table 1 for demographic details). We intentionally sampled middle-class people who were not members of extreme right-wing political organizations.

The interviews took place on two separate evenings at the homes of the facilitators. On both evenings, unsolicited by the interviewer, the hosts decided to organized impromptu *braais* (barbeques). The guests – at what had now become social functions – took turns to join the interviewer (the first author, a white male Afrikaner) in a private room for individual semi-structured interviews. The interviewer observed talk around the *braais* during the short breaks between individual interviews. No interviewing took place during these periods with the groups.

Interviews centred on the following three questions, but allowed participants to raise issues that were not in the interview schedule:

How would you define an Afrikaner?

How would you define an African?

What do you make of the fact that ‘Afrikaner’ is the Afrikaans word for ‘African’?

The social context of a private *braai* attended exclusively by white Afrikaners at a friend’s house produced a racially and culturally homogeneous private space, and elicited the type of in-group talk that – as Annelie Botes pointed out – is rarely spoken in public or mixed settings. Of course, the *braai* is a distinctive social arena associated with alcohol, rugby, hunting, meat, and hypermasculinity. These features of the interview context certainly impacted on the talk observed, but these culturally

37. Statistics South Africa, ‘Census 2001 Interactive Statistics’ (SSA Interactive Statistics Interface, 2012).

38. Mangaung Local Municipality, ‘Annual Report 2010/11’ (Mangaung Local Municipality, Bloemfontein, 2011).

Table 1. Participant demographics

	Age	Occupation
Female	31	Personal assistant
	29	Restaurant manager
	25	Guidance counsellor
	22	Student
Male	71	Retired government employee
	64	Retired businessman
	55	Farmer
	34	Operations manager
	34	Advertising consultant
	32	Bar manager
	32	Carpenter
	30	Hairdresser
	30	Lawyer
	28	Disc Jockey
27	Plumber	

homogeneous social events are a common feature of white South African culture and the attitudes recorded are likely to be generalizable to events of this type.

Interviewing, transcription and analysis was done in Afrikaans in order to retain as much of the original meaning as possible. Unfortunately, it is unavoidable that any translation implies an added layer of interpretation. Interviews were analysed using a discursive and rhetorical approach, paying careful attention to strategies by which participants constructed and defended identity positions and the discursive resources they drew on to do so.³⁹ In this frame, identity is seen as something socially constructed and fluid. The results cannot be used to argue that all Afrikaners everywhere construct their identity in similar ways. The results do, however, demonstrate important features of the strategies and constraints of identity production for Afrikaners a decade and a half after the fall of apartheid.

Producing a post-apartheid Afrikaner identity

Our analysis and discussion focus on three interconnected discursive activities that participants used to produce a post-apartheid Afrikaner

39. Michael Billig, *Arguing and Thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology* (Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 1996).

identity. First, participants did much discursive work to discard certain visible aspects of Afrikaner identity such as Afrikaner stereotypes, history, and culture, while rejecting overt racism and downplaying the importance of the Afrikaans language in contemporary Afrikaner identity. Cutting ties with the apartheid past sanitizes Afrikaner identity and limits culpability for the historical wrongdoings. Second, while they jettisoned these aspects of Afrikaner identity, they maintained whiteness as central to Afrikaner identity. This strategically distances Afrikaner identity from black African identity and lays claim to white privilege. Third, while making displays of rejecting apartheid, participants simultaneously recycled key discourses underlying racist apartheid ideology, particularly discourses of black incompetence and whites under threat. Far from redrawing the cultural boundaries as they integrate into the 'rainbow nation', these strategies produce a ghettoized Afrikaner identity based on racial exclusivity, racist notions of inherent black inferiority, and out-group threat.

Discarding 'the Voortekkers and that shit':

(1) You know, you can find yourself in shit street by calling yourself an Afrikaner today.⁴⁰

(2) Um ... so that is how it fits into my life ... I, uh, prefer not to tell people that I am Afrikaans.⁴¹

Participants spoke frequently about the disadvantages of being seen to be an Afrikaner. As one participant said (Interview extract 1), calling yourself an Afrikaner can land you 'in *kakstraat*' (in shit street). One's identity as Afrikaner can therefore be a liability – but it is not being an Afrikaner that is problematic, but calling yourself an Afrikaner. So being Afrikaans becomes something to be hidden, something that you prefer not to speak about (Interview extract 2). However, simply not speaking about it is not enough – participants also actively distanced themselves from many stereotypical aspects of Afrikaner identity like conservative dress, culture, language, history, and overt racism.

For example, in response to the question 'How would you define an Afrikaner?' many participants referred to gross stereotypes of the conservative Afrikaner:

(3) And my family don't wear long socks and short pants (laughing) you know, I mean ... so um ... in that way I feel well, it's just, it's not who me and my family are.⁴²

The description of the Afrikaner in long socks and short pants came up several times and was always followed by laughter and a disclaimer distan-

40. Interview, male, 27 years, 5 December 2007.

41. Interview, female, 25 years, 30 November 2007.

42. *Ibid.*

cing the participants' own identity. The image dates from the 1970s and 1980s when many Afrikaner men wore 'safari suits' and matching long socks (combs were often carried inside the socks, as mentioned by some participants).⁴³ Participants often drew on this outdated caricature as an extreme against which they could demonstrate their more modern, progressive, and pluralistic versions of Afrikaner identity.

Other caricatures that participants derided included the Voortrekkers – the Boer pioneers, who trekked inland from the Cape to find freedom and self-determination, and who have always been a central symbol of Afrikaner nationalism.⁴⁴ In the apartheid education system 'The Great Trek' was a central part of the national history syllabus and most children studied the government-sponsored story of the Voortrekkers every year for most of their primary and high-school careers.⁴⁵

(4) I can't even remember the story of the Voortrekkers anymore. I can, I learnt it, but I can't remember it. For me it's ... go and ask someone to tell you about it, I can guarantee you (laugh) they won't be able to remember either, nobody in my generation.⁴⁶

(5) You know, the Voortrekkers and that shit ... good for them (laughs), good for them, but that's old news now ...⁴⁷

In a similar way to the image of short pants and long socks, the image of the Voortrekkers locates key aspects of Afrikaner identity in the distant past – so distant that 'nobody in our generation' will be able to remember it. The first participant quoted here (Interview extract 4) distances herself by forgetting ('I learnt it, but I can't remember it'), but the second participant is more forceful, calling the story of the Voortrekkers 'shit'. However, it is also subtly suggested that it is not just the Voortrekkers that are being distanced, but 'all that shit', which we suspect refers to the baggage of Afrikaner nationalism. Therefore, by jettisoning 'the Voortrekkers', they also distance themselves from the Afrikaner nationalist discourses which the Voortrekkers represent. This rejection of Afrikaner culture was not limited to caricatured symbols, but was sometimes targeted more broadly:

(6) My life is not about ... where I came from, it is about where I am going ... culture is important, but I am not a big culture guy ...⁴⁸

This participant makes it very clear that his culture is something that belongs in the past ('where I come from'). Afrikaner culture might be 'important', but it is not very important to *him*, as if clinging to Afrikaner

43. Pat Hopkins, *Cringe, the Beloved Country* (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2003).

44. Steyn, *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to Be*.

45. See Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*.

46. Interview, female, 22 years, 5 December 2007.

47. Interview, male, 32 years, 5 December 2007.

48. *Ibid.*

culture could hold him back. By maintaining that 'where he is going' is more important, he jettisons Afrikaner culture as something 'important' but not personally useful and which might interfere with his future in post-apartheid South Africa. The following participant goes further and actively criticizes Afrikaner culture:

(7) Q: So there is a part of you, of your traditional culture that has been handed to you ... from your ancestors, which has been sort of discredited ... ?

A: Yes.

Q: Which sort of ...

A: It, it, it, it offends me. That's all ... that's all that our culture is made of. That's all, our culture is racism We have no culture at all.⁴⁹

He states that Afrikaner culture is synonymous with racism and he finds it offensive. This participant distances himself from his culture to such an extent that he believes Afrikaners are left with 'no culture at all'. Another participant described the ways of the 'old Afrikaners' by referring to the stereotypical Afrikaner farmer and describing the slow-paced 'life on the farm'. He then continues to criticize those Afrikaners who still cling to that way of living:

(8) Yes they have. They definitely got stuck.

Q: Why don't you live your life according to those rules?

A: My life is too fast for that, man. That's how it is. Today's life is just faster.⁵⁰

This participant therefore constructs the life of the stereotypical old-style Afrikaner farmer as slow, outdated and 'stuck', in contrast to his own life that is 'just faster'. This represents stereotypical Afrikaner culture as outdated and ill-suited to the fast pace of modern life. This seems to be another way of jettisoning the 'ox-wagon identity' he describes elsewhere.

These participants make every effort to discard central metaphors of the Afrikaner identity tied into historical Afrikaner nationalism, such as history, language, overt racism, and *boer* culture (the farm culture). It appears that, to some extent, these participants view their identity as Afrikaners as a liability in post-apartheid South Africa.

It surprised us that participants also devalued the cultural importance of the Afrikaans language. Since Afrikaners often use 'Afrikaans' as a synonym for 'Afrikaner',⁵¹ we expected the language to be central to Afrikaner identity. We were therefore surprised that some participants were eager to distance themselves from the language, or at least from the *taalstryd* (the struggle for language).

49. Interview, male, 34 years, 30 November 2007.

50. Interview, male, 27 years, 5 December 2007.

51. Cornel T. Verwey, "'Hoe ek die hele storie sien...': present-day narratives of Afrikaner identity' (University of Cape Town, unpublished honours dissertation, 2005).

(9) I, I am not one of those people who want to *fight* for Afrikaans ... It is only the language I speak ... I, I ... it's a communication tool, man.⁵²

Historically Afrikaans was much more than 'a communication tool' for Afrikaners and was intimately tied to the very core of Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner identity. Given the historical importance of the struggle for language in the emergence and maintenance of an Afrikaner nation, it initially seemed strange to us that modern Afrikaner identity could be produced by denying the importance of *die taal* (the language). However, on reflection we began to understand that expressing pride or pleasure in the Afrikaans language has become difficult *because* of its central place in the racist, supremacist Afrikaner nationalism that produced and sustained apartheid. As André Brink argued, even before the oppression of apartheid had reached its height:

What, at the beginning of the Language Movement, was the forte of Afrikaans (the fact that it was a political instrument) has developed into an Achilles heel. For as the Afrikaner became politically dominant his [sic] language began to bear a stamp of exclusiveness – White Afrikaner Nationalist Calvinist exclusiveness.⁵³

Therefore, distancing oneself from the language struggle, like distancing oneself from the Voortrekkers, is a way of disowning the worst features of Afrikaner history. However, at other times participants did refer to language when asked about their identity and sometimes understood questions about general Afrikaner identity to be questions about language:

(10) Q: How important is being an Afrikaner to you?

A: No it's, for me it's not an issue whether I am an Afrikaner or not, whether you are an Afrikaner or English ... it's not about the language, for me it's more about the personality.⁵⁴

It should first be noted that the above participant answers a question that pertains to his ethnic identity as Afrikaner by referring to the Afrikaans language, but downplays the importance of language to his identity. Participants not only downplayed the *personal* importance of Afrikaans, but the importance of Afrikaans in national affairs:

(11) Like I'm saying, one must try and get a balance in South Africa where you say, okay, Afrikaans is just as, just as important as South Sotho or, or English.⁵⁵

This argument for equality of languages goes against the long struggle for the recognition of Afrikaans as a dominant language in South

52. Interview, male, 32 years, 5 December 2007.

53. André P. Brink, 'English and the Afrikaans writer', *English in Africa* 3, 1 (1976), pp. 34–46.

54. Interview, male, 28 years, 5 December 2007.

55. *Ibid.*

Africa, which formed such a prominent part of Afrikaner cultural history.⁵⁶ Indeed, despite the long battle for supremacy with English, this young Afrikaner is now arguing for linguistic equality and 'balance'. Bear in mind that, in apartheid South Africa, attempts were made to teach even Southern Sotho speakers in Afrikaans, and 'equality of languages' was barely extended to English. While South Africa had two official languages, it is common knowledge that from 1948 the South African civil service was dominated by Afrikaans. Despite the fact that much of the struggle for Afrikaans as a language was waged 'against' English, the following participants describe their everyday use of English as camouflage:

(12) Q: Do you ever feel weird when you are in a group, or in company ... and you are the only Afrikaner there?

A: No, it's easy for me to switch, say if everybody is English, and to speak English and ... to fit in.⁵⁷

Note that she does not deny the fact that she might be self-conscious about being an Afrikaner, but instead argues that it is 'easy' for her to 'switch' and 'fit in'. In other words, she can easily jettison her language, which would then make her less conspicuous as an Afrikaner. Many participants agreed that the Afrikaans language maybe an identity liability, to be carefully hidden in public.

(13) Q: The fact that you are an Afrikaner. Do you ever get a bit of an, um ... a type of a self-consciousness about it or, are you aware of it?

A: Ah no, because I can speak English so well. So I don't feel like that. You see the big thing, the big thing for me is, I can speak English properly. You know, it is my language of choice and it is the language of, sort of the working world. So because I have that, then I don't feel that I am ... not that disadvantaged.⁵⁸

Like the participants above, this participant does not deny that being an Afrikaner can be problematic or uncomfortable in modern-day South Africa, but instead denies being 'self-conscious' or 'aware' of her identity as an Afrikaner because she 'can speak English so well' – she can speak it 'properly' and is therefore not 'that' disadvantaged. The subtext, of course, is that if you cannot speak English properly, then you cannot avoid being self-conscious about being an Afrikaner and you cannot avoid being disadvantaged.

The historical stereotype of Afrikaners is closely associated with racism and participants were acutely aware that Afrikaners are often assumed to

56. Hermann B. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2003); David Harrison, *The White Tribe of Africa* (Macmillan, Johannesburg, 1985).

57. Interview, female, 31 years, 30 November 2007.

58. Interview, female, 25 years, 30 November 2007.

be racist. As a result, talk about Afrikaner identity also had to defend the speaker against potential criticisms of racism:

(14) Look, there are many people who don't like it when those around them make racist comments ...⁵⁹

(15) Look, I watch what I say. Often at work there will be a joke that I heard ... which is maybe a little bit racist, but it's not that bad ... but because I know that they might take it the wrong way, then I don't do it. I am very aware of not saying anything in front of people of a different colour which might offend them ... but yes, when I get home I swear and I say that type of thing.⁶⁰

These participants describe 'racist comments' and 'racist jokes' as something that people 'don't like' or 'might take the wrong way'. Therefore they are neither admitting that they are racist nor claiming that they are not – but they are arguing that their identity forces them to be vigilant against perceptions of racism and that utterances that might be 'taken the wrong way' must be reserved for an in-group audience. In other words:

(16) Look, don't tell a kaffir he's a kaffir ... he's a human being, man.⁶¹

This comment is deeply cryptic. It is not 'don't tell a *black man* he's a kaffir', but don't tell a '*kaffir* he's a kaffir', suggesting that the unspeakable derogative is also the preferred term, but that you must say 'he's a human being, man' in public. On the other hand, the participant may be making an argument for fraternity and equality, but it seems unlikely. Other participants argued that this kind of blatant racism is part of the 'old Afrikaner' past and something that does not form part of modern Afrikaner identity:

(17) Um ... there is ... some Afrikaners that are still old Afrikaners that still swear and shout and it's 'kaffir' and '*meid*' and ... you know they still go out in the evenings and go look for them to *bliksem* them [beat them up] and that type of thing, they are still out there.⁶²

The above quote deals with 'shouting', 'swearing', and 'going out', all of which are public acts of 'those Afrikaners'. However, this is the same participant who earlier stated that 'when he goes home' he 'swears' and says 'that type of thing' himself (Interview extract 15). The following participant also refers to racist violence as something that should not be used to 'categorize' him. He juxtaposes racist violence with the image of the stereotypical 'brandy-drinking' Afrikaner, which is similar to the dated image of the Afrikaner in long socks and short pants discussed above. Other participants drew on similar imagery:

59. Interview, male, 27 years, 5 December 2007.

60. Interview, male, 34 years, 30 November 2007.

61. Interview, male, 32 years, 5 December 2007.

62. Interview, male, 34 years, 30 November 2007.

(18) You know, don't be an asshole that drives around in your *bakkie* [pick-up truck] on weekends assaulting people just because they are black. Nicely *poesdronk*, full of brandy, hates kaffirs and ... driving around beating people. I am sorry, I am better than that. So I won't let myself be categorized like that.⁶³

He maintains that he is 'better than' the stereotype he is condemning. Yet, while he is condemning violence against black people (in public), he still uses a deeply derogatory term ('kaffir') in his condemnation of racist violence in the private context of the interview. Elsewhere he stated that 'I am not saying that you shouldn't hate kaffirs' and thus condoned covert racism. Therefore, he is not condemning *racism*, but only the public violence often associated with racist Afrikaners.

These extracts demonstrate that there are some aspects of Afrikaner identity that are being jettisoned in both public and private, such as the image of the *boer* with long socks and short pants; or the violent, brandy-drinking, *bakkie*-driving racist. Other aspects of Afrikaner identity can only be fully exposed or experienced in private or in like-minded company. In public your Afrikaans language must be concealed; you must 'fit in'; you must suppress your sense of humour to avoid appearing racist; and you must conceal actual racism to avoid 'be[ing] categorized like that'.

While participants discard certain (no longer useful) aspects of their identity that threaten to tie them to the past, the next section shows how they work to retain more useful aspects of their identity. Participants keep whiteness, with all the benefits that this entails, as a central part of Afrikaner identity.

Reclaiming whiteness: Whiteness is not about 'race', but about power and privilege.⁶⁴ In post-apartheid South Africa, as in apartheid South Africa, 'for most, if not all, South Africans race remains a primary constituent of identity'.⁶⁵ Participants universally defined the boundaries of the category 'Afrikaner' first by race and then by language:

(19) Q: How would you define an Afrikaner?

A: An Afrikaner is a white person who speaks Afrikaans. Short and sweet.⁶⁶

Whites lived on the privileged side of a society that used race as an organizing principle in apartheid South Africa. It is hardly surprising that participants claim whiteness first and Afrikaans second in defining Afrikaner identity. By holding on to whiteness the participants are holding on to

63. Interview, male, 27 years, 5 December 2007.

64. Natasha Distiller and Melissa E. Steyn, 'Introduction: under construction' in Natasha Distiller and Melissa E. Steyn (eds), *Under Construction: "Race" and identity in South Africa today* (Heinemann, Sandton, South Africa, 2004), pp. 1–11, p. 7.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Interview, male, 34 years, 30 November 2007.

power and privilege. Therefore, while they are prepared to jettison critical elements of Afrikaner history, language and culture, they are not letting go of their whiteness. Participants not only protect their own whiteness, but they are aware of sharing whiteness with English-speaking South Africans:

(20) Q: Do you feel that Afrikaners are starting to accept Africa more?

A: Yees ... uhh [big sigh] No! I, I, I personally feel that Afrikaners and English have moved closer together ...

Q: Mm.

A: Uh, after '94.

Q: Mm-mm.

A: Uh, probably because it's whites. You know.⁶⁷

Although South African whites still maintain many forms of power in South Africa, 1994 is seen symbolically as the year in which overt political power was lost. Although much has been made of South Africa's relatively peaceful transition to democracy, this participant references the event in terms of *not* accepting Africa (and Africans) more. On the contrary, following the loss of overt political power, he says Afrikaners have not moved closer to Africans (whom he previously defined as 'black') but closer to English speakers ('because it's whites'). Steyn maintains that this 'psychological path is well known; the tropes that bind English and Afrikaans into a common front of privileged "whites" are well rehearsed'.⁶⁸ The following participant describes his sense of shared identity in marginalization:

(21) Probably because it's now sort of ... it feels as if it's sort of against us, against Afrikaners now and so on, and especially against the white man these days.⁶⁹

Not only do these participants hold on to their whiteness, they appear to be much more conscious of sharing this whiteness with English speakers, who are now partners in a society that is 'against us', 'against Afrikaners' and 'especially against the white man' in general. Why did these participants actively jettison language, culture, and history from definitions of their identity but emphasize their whiteness, despite the fact that whiteness is also constructed as a liability in modern South Africa? We argue that there are three reasons. The first is that whiteness is not something that *can* be jettisoned so easily, since it is literally 'written' on the skin. The second lies in a shared sense of being under threat. The third lies in pragmatic usefulness: while language, history, and culture are part of Afrikaner identity, they are not useful in post-apartheid South Africa.

67. Interview, male, 64 years, 5 December 2007.

68. Melissa E. Steyn, 'Rehybridising the creole: new South African Afrikaners' in Distiller and Steyn (eds), *Under Construction*, pp. 70–85, p. 76.

69. Interview, male, 34 years, 30 November 2007.

Whiteness, on the other hand, still affords access to power and privilege. While political power is no longer the privilege of white South Africans, economic privilege continues.⁷⁰ Although major strides have been made towards equity in the middle class, little has changed at the economic extremes. For example, black representation at top management level has only reached 22.2 percent.⁷¹ At the other extreme of the job market, 27.9 percent of black South Africans are unemployed compared to just 4.6 percent of whites.⁷² Meanwhile, there were approximately 5,863 white households living in informal 'squatter' settlements in 2007, compared to 1,179,006 black households in similar circumstances,⁷³ underlining the extent to which white families have access to economic and cultural capital compared to black families.

Rejecting apartheid but resurrecting apartheid ideology: Before discussing how participants produced an image of radicalized racial threat, it is important to note that apartheid was almost universally condemned. The following is a good example of how this was usually done:

(22): Apartheid was the biggest injustice ever ... it should never have happened.⁷⁴

Although most participants rejected apartheid outright in the same manner, they did so in the shortest possible way. There was little reflection on apartheid, its effects, or ongoing injustice related to the previous centuries of white rule. If one considers the vast difference in the amount and intensity of discursive work that participants do to reject apartheid, compared to the other constructions, it places the sincerity of this condemnation under question. It seems plausible that condemnation of apartheid is seen as the 'right' answer. At the same time, participants were acutely aware that they are living in a country 'that is redefining itself as African':⁷⁵

(23) Q: Do you think that there is more of a blending of Africa and South Africa? Do you think that South Africa is becoming more African?

70. Kgomotso Nyanto, 'South Africa: apartheid legacy difficult to shift', *New African* 453 (2006), pp. 22–3; Waetjen, 'Measures of redress'.

71. The figures are less than desirable', *Financial Mail* [South Africa], 4 April 2008. <<http://free.financialmail.co.za/projects08/topempowerment/zftec.htm>> (25 February 2011).

72. South African Institute of Race Relations, 'South Africa Survey 2008/2009: Employment and incomes'.

73. South African Institute of Race Relations, 'South Africa Survey 2008/2009: Living conditions and communications' (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2009), <<http://www.sairr.org.za/research-and-publications/south-africa-survey-2008-2009/living-conditions-communications/Survey%202008-2009%20-%20Living%20Conditions%20%28Web%29%2026.10.2009%20%28A%29.pdf>> (22 February 2011).

74. Interview, male, 55 years, 30 November 2007.

75. Steyn, *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to Be*, p. xxii.

A: Yes now, now for sure ... now for sure. More than in the past. Um ... in the past, especially with the white government and that, people ... you kept your ... you kept your borders closed ... now, *ag* yesterday man, it's becoming ... it's becoming Africa now and ... um ... I think the Afrikaner has a problem with that ... that it's becoming Africa now. It's getting too close to home I think. In the past it was very encapsulated, very safe ... you can sleep with your doors open at night and ... um, it is not like that anymore the ... the Afrikaner doesn't like it, I think.⁷⁶

This participant starts by describing apartheid South Africa ('with the white government') as a place that was 'very encapsulated' from Africa because 'you kept your borders closed'. His conclusion implies that opening the borders and 'becoming Africa' has resulted in the country becoming unsafe, hinting at the powerful image of 'Africa' as a place of violence and criminality. He argues that 'Africa' with all its negative connotations is now 'too close to home' and he experiences South Africa 'becoming Africa' as something negative. He concludes that 'the Afrikaner doesn't like it'.

Talk of Africa (and Africans) was universally negative, and usually associated with images of uncivilized chaos, decay, or barbarism; it was used as 'evidence' for predictions about South Africa's future:

(24) Q: So you don't see becoming part of Africa as a positive thing?

A: No. I've been everywhere in Africa. I have been fucking high up in this continent and I can tell you that the further away from SA you go the shittier it gets. If you need your passport to drive across the border into Africa then it's not worth it. There are no more tarred roads that you can drive on. I'm sorry, standards lower immediately when there are no more white people involved. Because kaffirs' standards are lower than our standards. They are busy swallowing us and it is getting worse and worse. Look at Zim, the white people have left, the place is a fuckup.⁷⁷

These narratives of the civilizing power of white people, the inferiority of blacks, and the inability of black people to govern themselves were key justifications for the colonial project. As Rudyard Kipling wrote a century before:

Take up the White Man's burden –
The savage wars of peace –
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.⁷⁸

76. Interview, male, 32 years, 5 December 2007.

77. Interview, male, 27 years, 5 December 2007.

78. Rudyard Kipling, 'The White Man's Burden', reprinted in the *Modern History Sourcebook*, <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kipling.html>> (22 February 2011).

The references in Interview extract 24 to the perceived post-colonial decay following the withdrawal of the white colonists in Africa is a direct echo of the sentiment in the final line of Kipling's poem – that the noble work of 'civilizing' and 'curing' the natives will [always] 'come to nought' as a direct result of their apparently incurable 'sloth' and 'folly'. The apartheid ideology was even less optimistic than Kipling's, abandoning the notion that black Africans were civilizable. For example, Verwoerd justified the separate and intentionally inferior education of black South Africans with the argument that 'there is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?'⁷⁹

These racist discourses were the primary ideological drivers of colonialism and apartheid and yet they are spoken in modern-day Bloemfontein without apology, hedging or defence. Indeed, in Interview extract 24 the dropping of 'standards' is equated to being 'swallowed' – as if whiteness is consumed or obliterated once 'standards lower'. The following participant cites similar 'evidence' within South Africa:

(25) Realistically speaking I don't think that we will ever be in power again, so the country will never come right again ... um, the country will only go backwards, crime will only increase ... um, everything will only go backwards ... um, yes, so there is nothing ... That you can make a living here, I won't argue with that, but I am not optimistic that things can go well again.⁸⁰

This participant sets up the apartheid past as a 'golden age' when 'we' were in charge and the country was 'right'. Now that whites are no longer in power, he argues, South Africa can 'only go backwards' and 'can never come right again'. Once again, this central pillar of apartheid ideology – that blacks are incapable of governing themselves – is recycled openly, without shame or defence. Other participants were subtler in their support of racist apartheid ideology:

(26) I see myself as an African, but I don't want to associate myself with half of the things they do.⁸¹

This participant had stated elsewhere that 'Africans are black' and excluded himself from this category based on race:

(27) Q: What comes to mind when I say 'African'?
A: Somebody who is black and speaks a black language.⁸²

79. Hendrik F. Verwoerd (no date), as cited in Michael Morris, *Every Step of the Way: The journey to freedom in South Africa* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2004), p. 165.

80. Interview, male, 34 years, 30 November 2007.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

This participant is grappling with the dilemma of trying to lay claim to 'African' identity while at the same time resisting the association that the category has with blackness ('the things *they* do'). Since we already know that this participant excluded himself from the category 'African' based on race (Interview extract 27), we should be suspicious of the reason he offers in Interview extract 26, namely the *actions* of Africans. This appears to be another example of 'separation de-"racialized"'.⁸³ When 'race' is removed as a reason for separation (instead citing *actions*), racial separation arguments have more credibility. It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that he claims to see himself as an 'African', he still refers to other (presumably black) Africans as 'they'. The next participant (who had also previously defined Africans as black) again argues for separation based on actions, instead of race:

(28) Now it's not a question of I don't want to be a part of their country but ... they are busy fucking it up so much that I am not interested anymore. Do you understand? If it worked well then I would have said 'awesome'. Do you understand what I am trying to say? So it's not a question of ... I don't want to be part of it ... because they are black. I don't want to part of it because it is so shit there.⁸⁴

This participant also produces racial separation, black South Africans as 'they' and South Africa as 'their' country. She argues that she feels separated from black South Africans, not because 'they are black', but because they are 'fucking up' the country. These participants are arguing for the same racial separation and white supremacy inherent in apartheid discourse; however, in a post-apartheid South Africa they cannot do so based on race. Instead, they are basing their arguments for separation on the *actions* of black South Africans and apparent evidence of mismanagement and decay. Therefore, although they give the appearance of rejecting apartheid, they are fully engaged in recycling apartheid discourse and ideology.

A parallel (and more potent) strategy for justifying racial separation was by reproducing apartheid discourses of racial threat. Under apartheid rule, many of the regime's most oppressive measures were justified by cataclysmic discourses, such as referring to blacks as *Die Swart Gevaar* ('The Black Threat') or describing the strategy of the anti-apartheid resistance movement as 'the total onslaught'.⁸⁵ These discourses of racial threat have clearly survived the transition to democracy almost intact amongst these participants:

83. Richard Ballard, 'Assimilation, emigration, semigration, and integration: "white" people's strategies for finding a comfort zone in post-apartheid South Africa' in Distiller and Steyn (eds), *Under Construction*, pp. 55–61, p. 55.

84. Interview, female, 25 years, 30 November 2007.

85. For example, De Wet Potgieter, *Total Onslaught: Apartheid's dirty tricks exposed* (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2007).

(29) You know, I can tell you that Afrikaners have been much further up in this land, but the kaffirs have now already pushed us onto the point of the continent and they are going to push us into the sea. There are already no more in Zimbabwe, there are a few, but they are going to systematically push us into the sea, brother. It's a question of time. They are going to make it unprofitable for us to be in this country and we are all going to fuck off. That is exactly what they are going to do. And those that are left behind are going to stay behind until they are all dead in 80 years time and then it is all over, then there are no more white people in this country.⁸⁶

The imagery this participant uses – of whites ‘pushed ... onto the point of the continent’ – is reminiscent of Verwoerd’s description of South Africa as a ‘piece of Europe on the tip of the African continent’.⁸⁷ Apartheid South Africa was often held up as the ‘last stand’ for whites in Africa. Note that this ‘push’ is described as happening ‘systematically’, which suggests that it is hostile as well as organized and intentional. This participant then follows the narrative to its cataclysmic conclusion, with the whites either ‘all dead’ or ‘pushed into the sea’. Therefore, he is producing a scenario in which whites are facing a systematic onslaught that will quite literally exterminate them as a group – a narrative of genocide. The images of being crowded, of being pushed, and of being forced out were common ones in these interviews:

(30) It, it, there is not ... really a lot of space for us here.

Q: You don't think it will improve?

A: No, no-no, no, no. No it will take hundreds of years. It will really ... take a very long time. And, and ... you know ... the white Afrikaners are being forced out of the country. You know these ... children who can't find work, what are they going to do?⁸⁸

Although this participant was more optimistic than others, in suggesting that things can improve, his timescale is as bleak as their dismissal of hope: ‘it will take hundreds of years’. He argues that white Afrikaners are ‘being forced out of the country’ because they ‘can't find work’. Being ‘forced out’ is something done actively, suggesting that unemployment is not just random bad fortune, but part of a systematic onslaught.

It is clear that, despite rejecting the *system* of apartheid, participants were actively recycling the ideologies and discourses of apartheid – and usually without hedging or defence. Their talk gave the *impression* of overtly rejecting apartheid discourse, but the key tenets of racist apartheid discourse were still central to their production of contemporary Afrikaner identity.

86. Interview, male, 27 years, 5 December 2007.

87. As cited in Ballard, ‘Assimilation, emigration, semigration, and integration’, p. 54.

88. Interview, male, 55 years, 30 November 2007.

The past, present, and future of Afrikaner identity

Against the backdrop of the demise of apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism, it is hardly surprising that Afrikaners (whose identity was and is intimately tied to Afrikaner nationalism) are involved in attempts to reconstruct their identity. This study used the Afrikaner/African distinction as a mechanism to investigate constructions of Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Participants constructed sanitized versions of Afrikaner identity. In doing so they jettisoned the aspects of *public* Afrikaner identity, which threatened to tie them to the accountable past. These were aspects such as *die taal* (the language), the Voortrekkers or brandy-drinking Boers in long socks and short pants. Since these images would anchor their own identities as Afrikaners in the past, they would also increase the accountability of present-day Afrikaners for the sins of their predecessors and these images were therefore discarded as identity liabilities in post-apartheid South Africa.

However, there were no indications that participants were discursively redrawing group boundaries, such that 'Afrikaner' becomes a part of a broader 'African' identity as suggested in the optimistic 'rainbow nation' discourse accompanying the transition to democracy. Instead, while distancing themselves from historical Afrikaner identity, they still laid claim to whiteness more generally and consolidated their shared identity with English South Africans by producing exposure to a shared threat. In the instances where participants claimed the category 'African', they were also careful to defend against any hint of shared identity with blackness or black Africans. We had expected that participants would lay claim to the category 'African' in so far as it would give rights in the new South Africa: rights to work; to own land; and to participate in politics. We were surprised that 'African-ness' was simply not valued in relation to 'Afrikaner-ness', and participants made little attempt to reposition themselves in relation to the black African 'other'.

Instead, participants reproduced exactly the same racist ideologies of blackness that drove and justified colonialism and apartheid. Despite their protestations against the moral injustices of apartheid, they reproduced the worst colonial and apartheid ideologies without hedging or shame, including: black incompetence, the failure of black government, the inevitable decay of post-colonial (i.e. post-European) Africa, the intrinsic criminality and aggression of black Africans, and the cataclysmic belief that black Africans will ultimately eradicate white people from Africa through emigration-under-duress or genocide.

Although this analysis has identified a limited range of strategies for producing Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa, it is nonetheless clear it has identified ways in which Afrikaner identity *can* be constructed in relation to Africa and African-ness.⁸⁹ It should be noted that there were no discernible differences between the strategies and constructions of male and female participants.

These findings are admittedly based on a small and localized sample, which limits the extent to which they can be considered general expressions of Afrikaner identity. However, the fact that these constructions could be produced at all in such an everyday social context, and the fact that they were consistently produced by all 15 Afrikaners of different ages (including some who were only nine years old when apartheid officially ended) makes these results all the more disconcerting.

These discourses of threat and genocide are gaining ground in public discourses of Afrikaner identity, with farm murders in South Africa increasingly being labelled 'genocide' by Afrikaner politicians.⁹⁰ This is concerning, because it is when the out-group can be constructed as a genuine threat to the existence of the in-group that extreme acts can be justified as noble and just, although this discursive step was not taken by participants in the present study.⁹¹

Annelie Botes responded with genuine surprise to the furore she caused when she confessed that she does not like black people and is 'scared of them'.⁹² She said 'sometimes you chop wood and you don't consider where the splinters will land ... maybe it was impulsive ... But I certainly meant what I said.'⁹³ The present study provides further evidence for Brand's suspicion that Botes simply said 'things publicly that one usually only hears around the *braaivleis* (barbeque) in white suburbia'.⁹⁴ It also confirms that a key part of contemporary Afrikaner identity is 'considering where the splinters might land' and managing public and private identity as strictly separate enterprises. In public you must be 'very aware of not saying anything in front of people of a different colour which

89. David Silverman, 'Analysing talk and text' in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2000), pp. 821–34.

90. For example, *Afriforum*, 'Fifa 2010: a celebration of genocide', <<http://www.fifa2010genocide.com>> (26 June 2010).

91. Stephen Reicher, S. Alexander Haslam, and Rakshi Rath, 'Making a virtue of evil: a five-step social identity model of the development of collective hate', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2, 3 (2008), pp. 1313–44.

92. Groenewald and Harbour, 'Author Annelie Botes stands by racist comments'.

93. *Ibid.*

94. Brand, 'Annelie Botes exposes braaivleis banter'.

might offend them'⁹⁵ and you 'don't tell a kaffir he's a kaffir',⁹⁶ but in private the racist ideologies of apartheid are still central to productions of Afrikaner identity – at least for these 15 middle-class residents of suburban Bloemfontein.

95. Interview, extract 15.

96. Interview, extract 16.