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**“One Does Not Simply Skip a Braai”:
Afrikaner Identity, Nostalgia and Community
through Braai Practice in the New Zealand
Diaspora**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Social Anthropology

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Abstract

This study explores how diasporic Afrikaner identity is formed, reconfigured and maintained through braai practice among migrants in New Zealand. Drawing on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation and BNIM interviews, it investigates how Afrikaners reassert cultural memory, diaspora identity and a sense of belonging around the braai fire. The braai, beyond the superficial notion of being ‘just another barbecue’, emerges as a deeply rooted cultural phenomenon shaped by individual and collective histories, forging a multi-sensory realm of nostalgia, communal bonding and gendered social roles.

Through potjiekos, pap-en-smoor and braaied meats, participants articulate heritage and memory, while encountering new social contexts in their adopted homeland. This study demonstrates that braai is not solely about cooking but about forging communal ties, sustaining Afrikaner memory, re-enacting ancestral practice and negotiating contemporary diaspora tensions. The thesis adds to existing scholarship on diaspora identities and how migrant communities adapt historically meaningful practices to new environments.

The analysis reveals how the braai promotes a cyclical interplay of nostalgia, transformation and social affirmation, bridging historical narratives of Afrikanerness with the complexities of migrant life in New Zealand. In attending to the braai’s multisensory material culture (fire, food and speech, among others) this research reveals the intricate ways diaspora communities preserve, translate and reinvent cultural practices. The study contributes to broader anthropological debates on diaspora, identity formation and the interplay of memory and social practice, highlighting how everyday socio-cultural acts generate belonging in transnational contexts.

Finally, it offers a nuanced perspective on how Afrikaner migrants reinterpret their cultural heritage through the braai, ultimately showing that it is neither a static artifact of the past nor a mere barbecue, but a dynamic expression of Afrikaner identity, community and nostalgia in a foreign land.

Acknowledgements

Change was the only constant in the completion of this project. Over the six years it took to complete the research and writing of this thesis, I evolved into a completely different person. Through that, I came to understand true friendship, self-acceptance and what it means to love and be loved. While primarily speaking of race relations in America, a quote from James Baldwin stayed with me during that time, “[l]ove takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within” (Baldwin, 1963, pp.102-3). I felt this applied generally, not just within the dynamics of social tension, but also in personal relationships and within the Self. This project saw many a mask’s removal, and for that I’ll be forever grateful.

This doctoral research would not have been possible without the support, generosity and guidance of many people. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Robyn Andrews and Dr. Graeme MacRae, for their guidance and encouragement throughout this project. They both saw me through my Master’s, and yet for reasons unknown, continued to work with me on my PhD, despite the project taking a little longer than expected. Your critical insights, patience and editorial markup have shaped both this thesis and my development as a scholar.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Afrikaner identity has long been debated, beginning with the cries of Hendrik Biebow in 1707, who announced his identity as an 'Afrikaander' (a term traditionally reserved only for indigenous black¹ Africans), to the protests against imperial British rule in the 1800s, through to the highly politicised debates of the 20th century until now, when many Afrikaners are leaving South Africa in search of home elsewhere. It appears there's been no end to the discussion on who qualifies as an 'Afrikaner' since the arrival of the Dutch in the southern tip of Africa in the 17th century.

More recently, however, Afrikaners have navigated the fall of an institution central to their identity. Apartheid (meaning 'separation') was emphasised as a central pillar of their ethnic identity, through political propaganda, social norms and legal enforcement. The fall of this policy in the early 1990s meant that Afrikaners now had to separate their own ethnic identity from an ideology that had quickly become repulsive, navigating a 180-degree turn in socio-political ideology while simultaneously losing an accustomed preferential status in many aspects of life in South African society (Alberts, 2012; Vestergaard, 2000).

Since that same period in the 1990s, the rate of emigration from South Africa, and immigration to New Zealand, has increased exponentially. This has resulted in over 35,000 Afrikaans-speakers living permanently in New Zealand today (Stats NZ, 2018a) with an estimated 10% of white Afrikaans-speakers having left South Africa overall (Jagtenberg, 2019); this figure may be overly conservative, given the lack of statistics taken by South Africa's government.

With so many Afrikaner migrants moving elsewhere, their specific cultural practices and their ethnic identity are taken with them, contributing to their newly formed and reformed identities in their adopted homelands. One of the most prominent of these practices is the braai, which this thesis investigates not only as a key marker of Afrikaner belonging but also as a dynamic social event that is carried, adapted and performed in the New Zealand diaspora. Although having superficial resemblance to the barbecue, many Afrikaners will

¹This thesis follows a convention in keeping with governmental documents and related research on the topic. The use of racial terminology should not be taken as reification of outdated racial classifications. Further, I have opted to decapitalise their use in some small, if insignificant, nod in the direction of their potential future erasure. This makes grammatical sense, showing that, as we now study 'ethnicity' and not its predecessor 'race', these outward designators are descriptive (i.e. the adjective) of ethnicity and not ascribing (i.e. the proper noun) inherent biological characteristics (cf. Frueh (2002, p.4)).

assert that this is false equivalence. In the very small body of research on Afrikaner ethnicity, the braai almost always features but little is said of its importance beyond being a place for socialising. The purpose of this project was to address this gap by examining how the braai, beyond issues of identity alone, serves as a complex social practice embedded with history, nostalgia and community.

The focus of this thesis is not limited to ‘identity’ in an abstract sense. Rather, it emphasises identity and social practice in tandem. Specifically, it examines how certain cultural activities (such as the braai) are mediated, reconfigured or preserved through migration, while also revealing broader social themes such as cultural materiality and navigation of class. Indeed, the braai highlights how objects, social settings and community gatherings shape and reflect a sense of belonging, tradition and cultural continuity. By exploring how the braai practice persists, transforms or adapts in New Zealand, we gain deeper insight into the social forces at work in Afrikaner identity maintenance. In this introduction, I outline the central arguments, place the study in context, describe its rationale and relevance and explain the overall scope of the thesis. The study moves beyond macro-features of identity to examine how a culturally significant practice, the braai, unfolds socially, materially and sensorially among Afrikaners in the diaspora.

Background information

A little study on identity can be a dangerous thing if you are not careful. From start to completion, my doctoral study took six years. During this time, how I identified myself outwardly took multiple significant changes in direction, in my relationships, neurology and even ethnicity, leading to an almost unrecognisable Self when comparing the ‘2019 Kris’ to ‘version 2025’. The impact that this anthro-psychological change has had during my studies is immeasurable and certainly altered the course of my future direction. I am not quite sure how a deep dive into the identity-related practices of a migrant community, of which I am not part, impacted on my own self-understanding, but what it does indicate is the intense complexity that lies within the study of identity in anthropology. Like a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon that is my doctoral study, it created a typhoon within my Self.

With this in mind, it is important to note that during my time in writing this thesis, I separated from my partner who was instrumental in introducing me to the Afrikaner community in New Zealand and assisting my command of the Afrikaans language. My, now dissolved,

relationship was, in part, the reason why many of my participants felt comfortable trusting me to research their community, as is made evident throughout their narrative. The need to state this outright will become evident through reading. However, to align with my participants' narrative and couch the study in the time which it was conducted, throughout the thesis when I refer to "my partner", it is my now ex-partner to whom I am referring.

It is through my partner that I became interested in the community, which seemed to welcome me openly, boisterously and in full flavour. My interest in languages led me to start learning Afrikaans, which served to open the community to me even more, who genuinely saw the language as all but 'useless' as a second language, particularly outside of South Africa, as demonstrated through a participant's quote during interviews:

The fact that you speak Afrikaans makes a huge difference. I think it makes a big, big difference. And even the fact that you've [gone to] the trouble of taking [Afrikaner migrants] as a topic for your field of study. I mean, it just gives a huge feeling of- 'Somebody went through the trouble of doing that and speaking Afrikaans.' I think it [builds] a lot of trust.

My association with the community, coupled with the lingering questions after completing my Master's degree on the macro-features of Afrikaner identity (Finlayson, 2018), led to the present study's design. That said, throughout this thesis, I present a facet of identity that is not my own. This is not anthropology-at-home in terms of working with my own community (though they certainly live within the society in which I was raised).

Research aims

This research aims to investigate the post-migratory identity of Afrikaners living in New Zealand and the changes to identity-linked practice they make in order to successfully operate, subjectively speaking, in New Zealand society. The research achieves this through the specific lens of braai practice, of those who left South Africa and settled in the north of New Zealand (an area not far from my home).

Research questions, rationale and importance

When preparing to carry out this research, I originally intended to explore the changes that self-identified Afrikaner migrants living in New Zealand make to their identity practice after moving from South Africa, by comparing pre-migration and post-migration settings in both South Africa and New Zealand, respectively. The global spread of COVID-19 meant this was no longer possible in the way that I had envisaged, which I detail in the Methodology. The virus was officially declared “a pandemic” by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020, nine days after booking my flight for the first of two fieldtrips to South Africa and two months prior to departure. Like many countries before and after, South Africa closed its borders quickly. Without a South African point of reference, research based on the changes that occur post-migration became increasingly difficult. I conceded it was not impossible but would rely entirely on participants’ views of themselves and their life in South Africa. This is an important viewpoint, but I wanted a broader look at the subject from other angles as well. Nonetheless, I continued the study with a focus on the braai in New Zealand, independent from the comparative act of migration, expecting to pick up on another facet of particular interest. This key interest is in how the braai, while often glossed over as an identity marker, also functions as a social mode of being where relationships, memories and material resources intersect, revealing broader questions of cultural continuity and transformation.

Contrasting the prevalent association with Christianity (discussed in the following chapter), the most striking omission from current research on Afrikaner identity is its connection with the braai, despite regular mention of this in relation to the performance of Afrikaner Being. To date, there is no research that I am aware of, aside from a brief article on the chemical composition of braai smoke (Venter et al., 2015) and the relationship between fire and violence during the apartheid years (Feldman, 2002). The braai is very often recalled in research as being an important space for performing Afrikaner identity, or is at least, described as a principal site at which research is conducted (Barkhuizen, 2013; Cain et al., 2015; de Gelder, 2004; du Toit, 2003; Hagen, 2013; Inkeri, 2019; Jagtenberg, 2019; Philipp & Ho, 2010; Verwey, 2008; R. G. Wasserman, 2016; Wessels, 2016). The volume of citations within these two preceding parentheses indicates just how important the braai has been in studies on Afrikaner identity, practice, migration and mental wellbeing. Despite this, little is said about its importance beyond being “a place for people to come together, to be in community with each other” (Cain et al., 2015, p.7), “perhaps the most uniting cultural affair in South Africa” (Inkeri, 2019, p.136) and a place that “makes [Afrikaner migrants] feel at

home. It is like bringing a piece of home to the place where you are now” (Philipp & Ho, 2010, p.92). These are notably meaningful statements that require further research.

Unfortunately, none of these studies that mention the braai say anything significant about it, using it primarily as a field site or as a component in Afrikaner migrant nostalgia (which I also do, in Chapter Five). To further qualify the statements made in these and future studies, research needs to be conducted on how and why the braai is important. What does it mean and how is it performed? Prior research has indicated that the braai is a suitable field site for social research. This is a reasonable position to hold but this study will help explain why that is and assist future researchers in better engaging with their participants within the braai environment.

Having attended many braais over the decade prior to research, I came to realise that how I felt about a braai, specifically, its purpose and its significance, was different to that of Afrikaners. I was approaching the braai like I had approached a barbecue, despite not attending any barbecues after meeting my partner in 2005. For this reason, I proposed to explore this practice more fully than has ever been done in Afrikaner research, changing my research focus accordingly. Thus, that which was originally a predetermined *field site* for identity research, became the identity research itself.

Alongside identity, social practice emerges as a significant dimension of this exploration. Participants’ choices of braai equipment, materials or methods often communicate social messages – markers of class, tastes, ingenuity or tradition. Likewise, the question of who joins the braai, how conversation unfolds and whether rituals of ‘authenticity’ are enforced reveals new layers to Afrikaner social life in New Zealand. Indeed, the braai is as much about collective storytelling, remembering, hierarchy and nostalgia as it is about cooking food and nourishment. By foregrounding both identity and social practice, we move beyond ‘identity as label’ and delve into how ever-changing identities are enacted in practice.

Building on the gaps identified in existing Afrikaner identity research, this study reframes the braai itself as the central site of inquiry. Rather than treating it merely as a backdrop for socialising, the braai is viewed as a dynamic cultural practice through which identity, memory and belonging are actively negotiated. In foregrounding both the material and sensorial dimensions of braai practice, the study moves beyond questions of just ‘where’ identity is performed to ask ‘how’ and ‘why’ it is lived experientially in the New Zealand diaspora.

Drawing together the theoretical threads of recognition, authenticity and cultural materiality, and situating them within the lived realities of migration, clarifies my project's primary research questions. These questions guide the chapters that follow, each unpacking a distinct facet of braai practice, from fuel choice and sensory evocation to gendered performance and positioning discourse, and together illuminating how Afrikaner identity is reproduced, adapted and sustained in a new homeland.

Primary Research Questions

- How do Afrikaners in New Zealand express and maintain cultural identity through the braai?
- In what ways does the embodied act of braaiing invoke memory, nostalgia and modes of belonging?
- How are these expressions inflected by both subjective experiences of migration and the broader socio-cultural frameworks in the new homeland?

Phonetics guide

As a student of anthropology, I often read texts with words containing languages of which I have no knowledge. It has always been a personal frustration of mine that I'm never certain of whether I'm pronouncing the word correctly, if only in my head. To rectify this in my readers' experience, I have offered help in the form of footnoted phonetic pronunciation. While I have used International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols, it should be noted that I am not a linguist, nor trained in the precise art of IPA. Although I had extensive help from *The Handbook of The International Phonetic Association* (1999), Donaldson (1993) and Swanepoel (1927), these phonetic aides should be taken as a *guide* only and not a true example of IPA Afrikaans.² However, I must also acknowledge the great help I received from Gary Barkhuizen at the University of Auckland who directed me to Christa van der Walt at Stellenbosch University, who then directed me to her colleague, Michelle van der Merwe. This linguistic trail led to Michelle connecting me with Esmaré van der Merwe, an editor at the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (WAT), one of the primary Afrikaans dictionary publishing companies. Esmaré was kind enough to review my phonetic best guesses, tweaking errors where necessary. All of this has given me peace of mind about not leading

² [af.ri'kã:s]

readers astray with faulty pronunciation. A full glossary list of Afrikaans terms, their pronunciation guides and English equivalents can be found in Appendix One. For simplicity's sake, I have not offered phonetic guides for full Afrikaans sentences.³

Terminology: barbecues and braais



Figure 1: Timucua Indians with a *barbecò*a (de Bry, 1591)

‘Braai’,⁴ like many Afrikaans words, is derived from 16th century Dutch, and may mean either to cook outdoors over hot coals or gas flame or can mean to fry in oil (i.e., in a pot or pan). The latter is usually made obvious through context, but the standard meaning of the word is clearly the former. ‘Barbecue’, and its various spelling forms, has a more disordered history. The word originally referred to the slatted structure on which the indigenous people of the Caribbean, the Taino, either smoke-cured or cooked their meat over heat (see *figure one*). Early colonialists heard the Taino use a word, possibly *babricot* (Veteto et al., 2011), which to settlers’ Spanish ears, sounded like *barbecò*a and this where English eventually

³ Should it be helpful, there are various international phonetic tools online that can assist in correct pronunciation of IPA. One such tool can be found at <https://ipa-reader.com> (IPA Reader, n.d.).

⁴ [bra:i]

derived its final form (Reed, 2007; Warnes, 2008). This is a very brief account, and as Warnes (2008)⁵ explains, the term's genesis is complex in both etymology and colonialist ideology. 'BBQ' is even more unclear but this shortened form has become an important spelling, particularly in advertising.

Prior to beginning this project, with respect to the braai, I had learned that the New Zealand barbecue is seen as a very different form of socialising. 'Throw a prawn on the barbie',⁶ complete with derogatorily emphasised rural New Zealand accent (usually mis-delivered as proximal Australian), is an often-used jab at the New Zealand barbecue by migrants from the Johannesburg-Pretoria vicinity. This phrase appears to be a variation derived from a 1984 television advertisement starring Paul Hogan in which he says he'll "slip a shrimp on the barbie" (Cornell & Hogan, 1984) for the American tourists that he is encouraging to visit Australia. This proved to be a very popular advertisement in the United States and the line continued to be disseminated through cinema, for example, in the films *Dumb and Dumber* (Farrelly, 1994) and *Dukes of Hazzard* (Chandrasekhar, 2005).

Participants in this study mostly used the term 'barbecue' and 'braai' interchangeably.⁷ This surprised me and initially I was confused as to which they were referring to until realising that 'barbecue', when couched in a discussion about South Africans and Afrikaners,⁸ should be interpreted as 'braai' when speaking English. As explained in the Methodology, most of our dialogue during participant observation was in Afrikaans but interviews took place fully in English. When writing this thesis, I attempt to use the language that participants use, retaining their linguistic subjectivity, but for clarity, I've deviated from that policy on this point. As I will be contrasting the braai with other similar-but-not-a-'real'-braai practices, I adopt the position that the braai is "a barbecue performed within the bounds of Afrikaner culture". That said, there are many forms of the barbecue performed outside of that context. It should also be understood that when I used the term 'barbecue', I am referring to it in a New Zealand and Australian context, which resemble each other fairly closely.⁹

⁵ Although Warnes seems to trip over himself in his eagerness to decry colonial oppression, and commits some of the same ethnolinguistic crimes he accuses others of making, he does raise some important points in the use and misuse of derived language.

⁶ 'Barbie' is a colloquial form of barbecue and is common throughout New Zealand and Australia.

⁷ I discuss the interchangeability of these terms further in Chapter Four, in the light of 'interpretation' versus 'translation'.

⁸ [af.ri'ka:nərs]

⁹ Having grown up in New Zealand with an Australian mother, from my perspective they are essentially identical, varying more between individuals than the two nations.

As mentioned, 'braai' literally means 'to fry' in Afrikaans, that is to say, in a pan with oil. The intended meaning is usually conveyed in context, similarly to 'fry' in English. For example, when we talk about 'fried chips', it is clear that it is deep-fried in a pot and not shallow fried in a pan. Additionally, even when charcoal is present, there are two kinds of braais. One form of braai is devoid of external socialising and renders the braai-apparatus as a mere cooking tool, not the centre of the evening's social interaction. This is generally down to a preference for the flavour that the braai produces in food and so a couple or family may just braai a meal on their own, as may an individual. It should be noted that this form of braai is not what is discussed in this thesis as my (or anyone else's) presence at the braai would immediately add a social aspect to the meal, since I am not part of participants' immediate families. The braai that I discuss is the second kind and a type of informal 'party' event, one that is organised to varying degrees.

Further, 'braai' for the event which this study is concerned can have multiple definitions, meaning the social event (as above), the equipment and the act. For clarity, I refer to the different definitions of 'braai' separately. 'Braai vessel' is the apparatus upon which the fire is built and food, cooked. 'Braai event' is the social time that hosts spend with guests where food will be cooked in this manner. The verb, 'to braai', that is the action of cooking at the event and on the vessel, is left unaltered.

Chapter prologues: Biomythographic vignettes

Preceding each of the four ethnographic chapters, which I introduce below in a fuller structural overview, is a storied narrative generally related to the content discussed, or in the theme of, the subsequent chapter. These vignettes are inspired by Audre Lorde's (1982) 'biomythography' which is to say they're not, in the strictest sense of the word, objectively accurate, though subjectively they are. They blend elements from multiple fieldwork experiences to convey how I recall them in the present, offering an evocative glimpse of the social and sensory worlds described in that chapter. Primarily, I employ Henri Bergson's (1913) concept of time in relation to memory where the past, present and potential future are moulded together, weaving threads of inseparable experiences into one Gestaltic life-whole. In these biomythographies, I free myself from the constraint of time, demonstrating Bergson's (1913, p.122) qualitative multiplicity, where "conscious states are organized into a whole [and], permeate one another". In doing so, my hope is that they "gain a richer content".

They're not designed to detail the facts of the event. The objective is valence, conveying a sense of what it was like, including how it felt, to be there.

These experiences are written from my perspective, an outsider to Afrikaner ethnic practice. This does problematise the issue of exploring the inner world of Afrikaners; it is not my identity, nor can I claim braai as my own ethnic practice. But the experience of pure subjectivity is impossible to obtain from the Other. We can know what it is *like*, but not what it is to *be*.

However, even though an examination of pure subjectivity isn't possible, through Being-in-the-world (hyphenated) whilst being in the world together, coupled with dialogue, we can start articulating intersubjective experience. In the preface of *Phenomenology of Perception*, (Merleau-Ponty, 2012) writes, "[t]rue philosophy entails learning to see the world anew". This viewpoint resonates with his concept of *être-au-monde* (i.e., "being-in-the-world", hyphenated), adapted from Heidegger's phenomenology, where "Being" (with capital 'B') signifies an ongoing, dynamic condition rather than a fixed state of existence. Recognising the distinction between 'being' and 'Being' underscores how identity is not simply possessed but continuously enacted within social worlds. My hope is that by escorting you through the experiences I shared with Afrikaners in their social world, I can make inroads to a philosophy of Afrikaner Being.

Chapter epilogues: Recipes

While I cannot 'write taste', I have also appended a recipe, generally relevant to the discussion, following each ethnographic chapter. I originally considered relegating these to the appendix section of this thesis, that sad holding place for 'optional' further reading. The thing is – and I am going to be bossy here – they're *not* optional. By picking up this thesis, you have joined me in an exploration of the braai in food, nostalgia, history, identity and sensory affect, and above all, the taste and gastronomic joy associated with that affect are central to these. To not taste the braai is like learning a language without ever opening your mouth;¹⁰ it just does not go far enough. Sensory matter, including taste, is a vital component of this study and so I implore readers create, at the very least, one or more of the dishes.

¹⁰ Or, in the case of sign language, moving your hands.

A 'guesstimated' genealogy of the braai

The theory is that the first braais happened when meat was accidentally dropped into fires, later removed and then eaten. The early humans found that the cooked meat not only tasted better than raw meat but could also be chewed more easily. The rest is history, as they started dropping meat on and into fires on a regular basis. (Braai, 2016)

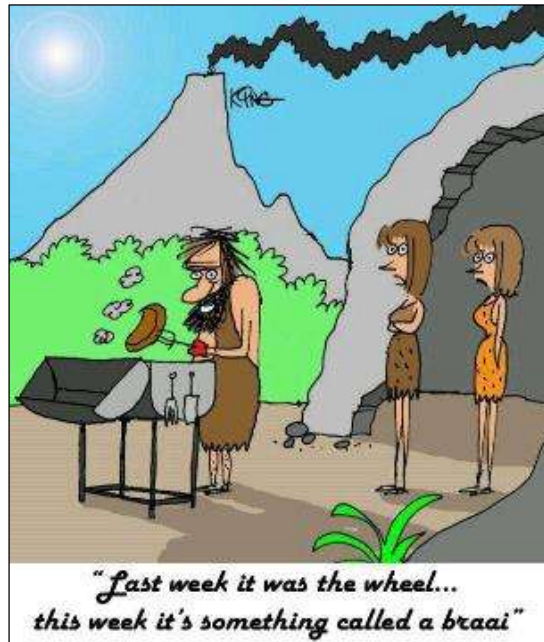


Figure 2: "Last week it was the wheel..." (BraaiBoy, 2014)

Contrary to the above, which is a fairly prevalent narrative (evidenced in *figure 2*'s meme), the braai did *not* begin with ancient man. This is reductionist at its essence and recounts the taming of fire by humanity and subsequent technological development but fails to recognise the socio-cultural overtones that are specific to the 'braai', as opposed to barbecue. It would be more apt to describe this as the discovery and development of the *technology* of cooking. No, the braai's inception, itself a cultural phenomenon, while greatly impacted by this primordial history, likely begins much later.

Unfortunately, however, there is almost no specific 'genesis story', neither historical nor recounted folklore, on the development of the braai in South Africa and its subsequent and widespread adoption by Afrikaners. Here, I give an account of what is *most likely* to have occurred, deduced from related history and logic and consistent with the culinary and cultural practices of other settler societies. It should be made clear, however, that the language used in

this section reflects that of the historical figures and sources discussed. This language emerges from colonial perspectives that often represented the land as empty or underutilised, obscuring existing Indigenous presence and sovereignty. Such perspectives also tended to minimise or overlook the violent impacts of settler expansion, displacement and dispossession on Indigenous peoples.

Although writing specifically on *British* history, Wilson and Lee (2012, p.114) explain that the 18th century home's architecture, and the life lived in it, were organised around the stone hearth structure. Having arrived from Europe almost 200 years prior, Afrikaners in South Africa would have most likely cooked in the same way. However, moving inland during *die Groot Trek*,¹¹ the *Trekboers*¹² and *Voortrekkers*¹³ would have had to devise alternative ways of nourishing themselves, since hauling giant stone structures for cooking would seem impractical and generally unwise to attempt. It is logical to consider that cooking on hot coals from an open fire would have seemed a reasonable choice, given the many benefits that open fire would have offered in the South African wilderness, such as light, warmth and the illusion of protection from wildlife.¹⁴

There currently exist but two publicly available first-person accounts of the trek, referred to above. The most notable, however, has been translated into English by W.G.A. Mears, *The Diary of Erasmus Smit: Minister to the Voortrekkers* (Smit & Mears, 1972; see also figure three, below). Initially collated into edited form by H.F. Schoon in 1896, it recounts the life of Erasmus Smit, a Dutch-born reverend who accompanied a band of voortrekkers with his wife's family in the 1830s. However, in his wisdom, Schoon:

omitted everything that appeared to [him] to be of little importance to the public. So [he has] for example... passed over many religious services, christenings, and marriages, and other such things in order that the book should not become too monotonous. (Smit & Mears, 1972, p.x)

¹¹ [di ɣrʊət træk]; 'the Great Trek'.

¹² ['træk.bu:r]; literally 'trekking farmers'.

¹³ ['fʊər.træk.ɜrs]; 'pioneers'; literally, 'fore trekkers' or 'those who trek first'.

¹⁴ Lions, for example, won't actually avoid a campfire (Eveleth, 2013) but I suspect many people would feel better in the presence of fire, nonetheless.



Figure 3: Photograph of Erasmus Smit, c.1850, photographer unidentified. From The Diary of Erasmus Smit: Minister to the Voortrekkers (frontispiece), by E. Smit, 1972, C. Struik. Original held in the uMsunduzi Museum Collection.

This is unfortunate as much of life that is significant to historical anthropology happens in the regular monotony of one's existence. The diary makes no mention of just *how* the voortrekkers cooked. In fact, there is very little mention of food at all, and I suspect much of this was edited out as being "of little importance". That said, we can get a fairly good idea of the diet upon which the voortrekkers subsisted during their trek. Mention is made of hunting parties, including the unfortunate incident where Izak van Niekerk was thwacked by a lion and forever after known as Izak Leeuwenbout, or 'Isaac Lion-rump' (Smit & Mears, 1972, p.21). From these accounts, we learn that the staple food of the voortrekkers was wild game, including hippopotamus (Smit & Mears, 1972, p.59). They also likely had access to corn, millet and pumpkin, given the climate and produce transportability, but it appears that little else was eaten. With the exception of hippopotamus, this list of ingredients (that is, meat and potentially grains) is remarkably similar to those prevalent at the modern-day braai, on which I elaborate in Chapter Five.

The other first-person account that exists is in Dutch,¹⁵ a language I have no knowledge of. However, Afrikaans being a daughter language of 16th century Dutch, I did cast my eye over

¹⁵ It should also be noted that a translation into Afrikaans has been made by Jackie Grobler in 2013, however I was unable to obtain a copy of this version.

Dagboek van Louis Trigardt (1836-8) (Trigardt & Preller, 1917) with some minor success.¹⁶ While I am not the most reliable translator, the journal appears to corroborate Smit's account of the Voortrekkers being a largely carnivorous bunch, with the addition of bartered grains.

Given the great amount of meat that was consumed by nomadic Afrikaners, and the lack of cooking apparatus, logic dictates that Voortrekker cooking changed from roasted in an oven or fried on the stove to cooked over hot coals outside. Further, during the five-year period of movement from 1835 to 1840, approximately 12,000 to 14,000 people moved toward the interior of South Africa. They tended to move in smaller groups, but these groups met and interacted with each other as they migrated. I speculate that, upon meeting a new group, they likely congregated around the fire during evenings when there was no other work to be done, and in the fading light recounted news, events and amusing tales from their own voyages. This may offer a rationale for the origin of the social aspect of the braai, which continues into the modern era.

Braaidag: The braai in modern South Africa

The contemporary braai, although resembling its predecessor in some features, has expanded to encompass the South African nation (as will be made clear throughout the thesis, particularly Chapter Six), particularly since the fall of apartheid in the 1990s. One key reason for this expansion is that braai gatherings now carry an inclusive, “rainbow nation” ethos – celebrated by multiple ethnicities as a shared, primordial tradition that unites communities. So much so, a national public holiday has arisen known as *Braaidag*,¹⁷ or ‘Braai Day’, as depicted by the advertisement in *figure four*.

¹⁶ Spoken Dutch and its grammatical structures are unintelligible to me, however many of Afrikaans' words are derived from Dutch, and with knowledge of the common spelling changes, correct meaning can often be inferred. I did confirm my suspicions using DeepL, a fairly reliable online translation website.

¹⁷ ['bra:i.dax]



Figure 4: “Join the revolution” (Braai.com, 2011a)

Braaidag is co-celebrated as *Erfenisdag*,¹⁸ or Heritage Day, and both terms remain in use. In contemporary public discourse, the label ‘Braaidag’ is associated especially with the campaign led by Jan Scannell (see figure 4, right, alongside Desmond Tutu, left), who built a television career under the pseudonym ‘Jan Braai’. His purpose in doing so was to unite South Africans of all ethnicities in a broadly common practice and to ‘contribute to strengthening South Africa as a nation’ (Braai.com, 2011b). The late archbishop emeritus Desmond Tutu also joined the campaign as patron.

While social-national observance of *Braaidag* highlights the braai’s broad appeal and potential for future unity in post-apartheid South Africa, the following chapters show how such national narratives intersect with more localised experiences for Afrikaner migrants in New Zealand. To guide the reader through these nuances, the next section outlines the thesis’ structure, detailing how each chapter contributes to our understanding of identity and social practice playing out at the braai environment.

Thesis chapter outline

What follows is a description of the chapters in this thesis, outlined chronologically, from the end of this chapter, I start with a review of the current body of literature that inform this thesis.

Chapter 2 *Theory and literature review*

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for the study by reviewing broad theories of identity and ethnicity before narrowing to Afrikaner identity in the diaspora. It begins with foundational concepts (such as Barth’s concept of ethnic boundaries and Taylor’s (mis)recognition) and then engages key themes including migration and diaspora theory,

¹⁸ [ˈɛr.fənəs.dəɪ]

gender dynamics, cultural memory and nostalgia, materiality and culinary practice. Through examining these areas of scholarship, the chapter positions the braai as a key site of cultural performance and identity formation.

Chapter 3 *Methodology*

This chapter explains *how* I conducted the study, discussing the qualitative, ethnographic approach adopted in this project, including participant observation, Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) interviews, and the unique constraints brought about by COVID-19. The chapter explains how data was collected and analysed and examines ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 *Of form and fire: The materiality of braai*

An ethnographic chapter, this examines the physical forms, material resources and tools used at many braai events and the impact that that materiality has on the perception of the braai and those present. This chapter illuminates how such material elements are imbued with symbolic meaning, reflecting themes of class, ingenuity and tradition. It also resolves the question, ‘what exactly *is* a braai?’

Chapter 5 *In living memory: History and the construction of the conscious Self through food*

This chapter primarily discusses the inflection of nostalgia at the braai, exploring how memories of home shape the performance of the braai, and delves into how the braai became an important space for migrant Afrikaner cultural practice in New Zealand. It delves into stories of nostalgia, belonging and how participants negotiate authenticity in new geographic contexts. Rather than treating food as purely symbolic of identity, the chapter emphasises how cooking and sharing meals create a social dynamic that weaves past personal recollections into present collective storytelling.

Chapter 6 *The braai as a gendered space: On screen and by the fire*

As will become evident, the braai breaks down social barriers in some ways but reinforces other types of segregation, particularly that of gender roles. This chapter examines this in more depth, exploring the ways in which Afrikaner masculinity is formed and reinforced around braai fire and how these impact upon the formation of Afrikaner identity itself. It situates braai as an unfolding performance of social norms, highlighting how media portrayals and real-life practice can both coincide and contend.

Chapter 7 *Talking to ghosts: Positioning discourse and perceptions of the Self in the Other*

Finally, this chapter focuses more directly on the dialogical duality between ethnic and individual identities, exploring the interpersonal relationships that form at the braai and how the processes that aid in this formation play out socially and culturally. This is examined particularly through Afrikaner speech, with conversation being such a highly prevalent activity at braai events. It underlines how conversation at the braai bridges the past and present, forging a community consciousness in which identities are tested and affirmed. Blending elements from earlier chapters, it synthesises ethnographic data, paving the way for the Conclusion chapter.

Chapter 8 *Conclusion*

The concluding chapter brings all the previous ethnographic chapters together, weaving them into a greater understanding of how cultural and ethnic identity is formed through social practice, both for Afrikaner migrants living in New Zealand and generally. It draws together the thesis' major findings, reflecting on how Afrikaner identity in New Zealand is both preserved and transformed through the braai and that, while identity remains significant, the braai's social, material and symbolic elements are equally crucial in sustaining cultural life in the diaspora, suggesting that important communal gatherings hold transformative potential for migrants.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The concept of identity has long been a central concern in anthropology, but its expression within diasporic contexts reveals particular tensions between continuity and transformation. For Afrikaners living outside of South Africa, identity is not merely inherited; it is reworked in relation to memory, place, performance and social recognition. These elements intersect in complex ways as individuals navigate a post-apartheid legacy that remains deeply entwined with public narratives and personal meaning. Migration displaces people from the material and symbolic landscapes of home, often catalysing renewed attention to cultural practices that anchor a sense of self – yet these practices are always under revision, shaped by new settings, social fields and moral imaginaries.

This chapter explores how diasporic Afrikaner identity is negotiated in New Zealand, with particular attention to the role of embodied practice, gender performance, foodways, memory and materiality. Moving beyond static or essentialist understandings of ethnicity, the analysis draws from key anthropological frameworks – such as Barth’s boundary theory, Taylor’s recognition and authenticity, and more recent literature on diaspora, performativity and sensory ethnography – to trace how identity is enacted and contested in everyday life. The braai emerges as a particularly generative site through which Afrikaners remake cultural meaning, navigate belonging and engage the past on their own terms. Through these embodied and affective practices, we see Afrikaner identity not as fixed but as a living process, forged at the intersection of history, emotion and social interaction.

Identity

Since the mid-20th century, social researchers have come to better understand identity from an ethnic perspective. Previously, ethnicity was predominantly thought to be made up of ‘cultural contents’ – the shared language, history and practices of a people group – as Fredrik Barth (1969) put it in the introduction to his edited volume. During the early 20th century, ethnicity was used as a practical alternative to racial divisions, and was distinguished by grouping people who shared a common culture, language, history and so forth (Banton, 2015). Barth (1969) argued against this saying that it is not the contents of culture which denotes one’s ethnic grouping, but the boundary between one’s wider cultural ‘family’ and that of the Other. Thus, ethnic identities (and their demarcated boundaries) are created not

only from what *we are*, but also out of contrast to what *we are not*. That is, how the Other's etic identity is different from our emic identity. In short, ethnicity is a dialogical matter, without the Other it does not exist. This understanding gives a more porous, fluid and malleable perception of ethnicity and has been particularly helpful in describing diasporas, as such communities are more disposed to critique previously uncontested ethnic boundaries.

Barth's theory of ethnic boundaries designates who *we* think we are, but does not consider who *they* think we are? Charles Taylor (1994), influenced by Hegel, offers important work here in explaining the Other's impact on our identity. Diverting slightly from scholars such as Joane Nagel (1994) who suggests that identity is fully constructed in dialogue with the Other, Taylor indicates that our own idea of ourselves is our *identity* and the Other either *recognises* or *misrecognises* that identity. Linking this to Nagel, this recognition or misrecognition can subsequently have great impact on the identity we ourselves hold, and as a consequence may partly shape it. Taylor goes on to explain the intrinsic need we have to be accurately recognised, indicating that (mis)recognition of how the Other defines us can have important effects on one's identity. Indeed, Taylor¹⁹ suggests that this inherent need people have to be recognised is a source of nationalist movements. This agrees with the dominant narrative on Afrikaner political history in relation to the English, further discussed throughout the present chapter.

For Taylor, identity and recognition are the answer to the question of humanity in post-modernity and why Western society looks the way that it does today. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, Western democratic society has broken down its sense of honour, a specific 'award', and essentially replaced it with dignity, available to all (i.e. *human* dignity). The idea of honour, such as Barth's sense of ethnic groups, arises out of difference from one another. That is, for one to be honoured, others must not be honoured (or lose their honour, but not necessarily) for if all were honoured with the same accolade, the accolade loses its prestige. Therefore, honour's modern-day replacement – dignity – is void of honour's distinctive appeal and thus more is craved. Here, the relative destratification of society and intensified values of equality has led to a heightened need for identity and recognition – the

¹⁹ I acknowledge the irony in using Taylor's ideas in relation to Afrikaners, given their historical role within apartheid, yet argue that these ideas remain applicable to groups negotiating identity and recognition in the aftermath of structural dominance. Indeed, his ideas on universalism is precisely what qualifies the neat fit of his theories here. In using his own words, Afrikaners have "*universal human potential*, a capacity that all humans share. This potential, rather than anything a person may have made of it, is what ensures that each person deserves respect" (1994, p.41; emphasis in original). Further discussion on apartheid and Afrikaner identity research appears in other sections of this chapter.

craved ‘more’ – in those same societies. Secondly, Taylor draws from Trilling’s (1971) development of Rousseau’s²⁰ idea of *authenticity*, as related to an innate moral sensibility. Here, Taylor, through his academic forebears, argues that people have an innate need to live their lives in accordance with their moral sensibilities. That is, to live ‘authentically’. For diasporic Afrikaners, this pursuit of authenticity may clash with global perceptions of Afrikaner identity, especially its association with apartheid, and create tension between their lived reality and the ways they are seen by others.

Diaspora Identity and Belonging

Migration invariably necessitates a renegotiation of self-understanding. For Afrikaners in the diaspora, questions of belonging and identity are magnified by their complicated political history and relative cultural homogeneity. As Jagtenberg (2019) highlights in her Adelaide-based ethnography, Afrikaner migrants frequently reinterpret home and community through an emotional lens of felt belonging, which shapes their sense of diasporic identity. In her study, the braai is not simply a culinary tradition but a ritualised practice that provides familiarity, relational connection and a form of everyday belonging.

Diasporic identity, as explored by Castles (2002), is often layered, with migrants navigating old identities in new settings. This multi-positionality is echoed in Brettell and Sargent’s (2006) work on identity and citizenship, where migrant populations continue to reproduce and adapt ethnic practices rather than assimilate wholesale into dominant host cultures. Wiley and Deaux (2011) further suggest the concept of multiple identities being contextually enacted, noting that individuals often draw on historically grounded identity markers to reconstruct themselves in migration. Wessels (2016) and Barkhuizen (2013) similarly affirm the role of the braai as a core site of Afrikaner community in diaspora, although neither elaborates on the dynamics of the event. The current study addresses this gap by exploring how memory, place and materiality intertwine in constructing a diasporic identity.

Migration of Afrikaners to New Zealand

As globalisation continues to affect ethnic group identities through increased contact with the Other (Ariely, 2019; Jensen et al., 2011), studies on ethnic identity, and more specifically

²⁰ Taylor’s writing also brings in considerable discussion from Herder, Hegel and Kant.

those in diasporic settings, are becoming more important. Afrikaners have a long history and wide geography of migration around the world. Since the early 1900s, groups have settled throughout Africa (as far north as Kenya), southern parts of the United States as well as Central and South America in what du Toit (2003) calls “the first Boer (Afrikaner) diaspora” (2003, p.28). More recently however, the tendency has been for South Africans to choose Britain, continental Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the latter two being the largest recipient in migrant numbers and the largest recipient per capita of host population, respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2016). In broad terms, research on this more recent wave of emigration tends to describe departure as multi-causal rather than singular, with commonly cited ‘push’ factors including concerns about violent crime and personal safety, economic uncertainty, and the anticipated prospects of children and family futures (van Rooyen, 2000; Visser, 2007; Bain, 2005; Bornman, 2005). In this sense, migration is regularly narrated in relation to risk, whether that risk is framed in physical terms (security), economic terms (employment and mobility) or moral terms (the ability to imagine a stable future). The popularity of Australia and New Zealand is often explained, at least partly, through ‘pull’ factors such as perceived safety, lifestyle aspirations and the practical accessibility of English-speaking settler societies. At the same time, as McKenzie and Gressier (2017) suggest in the Australian context, the appeal of these destinations may also be shaped by racial politics and the persistence of epistemologies of whiteness, which can inform how migrants imagine belonging and social order after leaving South Africa.

While these broader explanations cannot account for individual decision-making in any simple way, they provide a useful contextual backdrop for the participant narratives discussed later in this chapter and throughout the thesis. Despite globalisation’s homogenising tendencies, some groups do retain strong cultural distinctiveness even in small numbers (du Toit, 2003; Giliomee, 2003; see also Finn Gregory, 2015). However, researchers are finding migrant populations regularly contest traditional boundaries and construct a variety of iterations of their identities (Castles, 2002).

Traditionally, migration of people has mainly consisted of “permanent settler migration, temporary labour migration and refugee movement” (Castles, 2002, p.1151). Many Afrikaners arriving in New Zealand fall into multiple categories, but in the present study they are discussed primarily as settlers and labour migrants. As Castles explains, migration flows in recent years fall primarily under the category of skilled labour, contributing to what is often described as ‘brain drain’ in countries such as South Africa. However, with the aim of

permanent settlement, many migrants initially enter through temporary labour pathways before securing longer-term residence. This thesis therefore focuses on how migrants themselves narrate their movement, particularly in relation to safety, opportunity and the future of their families.

Once migrants reach their destination country the expectation is a degree of assimilation with the host society, however not all migrants follow this pattern. This has led to diasporic communities that continue promoting (and re-evaluating) their cultural practice and ethnic boundaries. What may result is discord between historically resident peoples and migrant populations and their diasporas, as discussed by Brettell and Sargent (2006) in their introductory article on diaspora identity and citizenship. Although in New Zealand, we see little of this rejection of (primarily white) South Africans, there is considerable indication that New Zealanders prefer either the assimilation of migrant populations into the country's expected social norms or fewer migrants altogether (Butcher et al., 2006) but also that increased contact (such as in Auckland) can decrease feelings of animosity between peoples (Johnston et al., 2010).

However migrants are received by their host society, they are likely to reconstruct their ethnic identity in relation to the new social field in which they now reside. This may manifest not only in reconstructed identities but also multiple identities, each operating differently in different situations and for different purposes (S. Wiley & Deaux, 2011). Identity in migration has offered further insight into the constructivist position on ethnic identity, showing the fluidity with which identities may be broken down, rebuilt and constructed on top of each other by different individuals. Such as discussed by Wiley and Deaux (2011), many immigrant populations relate their newly contested identities back to traditionally understood ways of being. Likewise, I have found that Afrikaners do the same, thereby making previously understood identities of continuing importance in their study (Finlayson, 2019).

South African Identity

South Africa is home to many ethnicities, evident in their eleven official languages.²¹ This makes Afrikaner identity just one of many, and a minority at that with only 5.24% of the total population identifying as ‘white’²² and ‘Afrikaans-speaking’ (this classification is further described in the ‘Terminology’ section below) (Statistics South Africa, 2012). As mentioned earlier, anthropologists have found that identity is far more fluid and affected by outside forces than previously understood (Brettell & Sargent, 2006). Identity is now thought to be constructed largely through interactions and encounters with other identities (Barth, 1969; Castles, 2002). This is particularly true of Afrikaners, indeed of all South Africans, due to their regular contact with the many ethnicities in South Africa. As we have come to better understand the impact that any one identity may have on others it encounters, it is important to inquire briefly into the process through which these identities encounter and interact with each other in their homeland.

Aside from the arrival of the Dutch in the 17th century,²³ the fall of apartheid and move into democracy is arguably the most significant socio-political event in South Africa’s history. Asking the major ethnic groups how their identities were affected by this event, Bornman (2010) carried out longitudinal²⁴ research on identities in South Africa with studies conducted in 1994, 1998 and 2001. Each of the studies used a 5-point scale for participants to indicate the significance of each of the identity preferences. The available options in the studies were split into three classifications, national (i.e. ‘South African’, ‘Rainbow Nation’ etc.), sub-

²¹ I use language as a primary ethnic marker in census data due to the South African government’s oversimplification of “population groups”, which are limited to ‘black-African’, ‘coloured’, ‘Indian/Asian’, ‘white’ and ‘other’. This places English-speaking white South Africans and Afrikaners in the same population group which, as I discuss in the ‘Diaspora’ section below, is not at all appropriate and I suspect the same may be true for the Zulu, Xhosa etc. population groups (cf. Bornman (2010). That said, Finchilescu and Tredoux (2010) suggest that differences between Bantu groups under the black African categorisation were over-emphasised in a divisive, divide-and-conquer tactic by nationalist politics. Further to this, although there are only eleven official languages, there are many unofficial languages spoken in South Africa. German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu are specifically mentioned in the South African Constitution, though not ‘official’ languages (South African Minister for Justice and Constitutional Development, 1996).

²² This thesis follows the convention in keeping with governmental source material and related research on the topic. Their use should not be taken as a reification of outdated racial classifications. Further, I have opted to decapitalise their use in some small, if insignificant, nod in the direction of their potential future erasure. Grammatically, this is accurate and shows that, as we now study ‘ethnicity’ and not its predecessor ‘race’, these outward designators are descriptive (i.e. the adjective) of ethnicity rather than ascribing (i.e. the proper noun) inherent biological characteristics.

²³ The Portuguese were the first Europeans to discover the Cape in the 15th century, originally naming it *Cabo das Tormentas* (literally, ‘Cape of Storms’). At the time, the Portuguese had less to do with colonising the region and were instead focused on an alternative route to the Silk Road in order to trade with the East.

²⁴ The study was, in fact, three separate studies that were closely related in subject matter, codified and summarised by Bornman (2010) in her article’s findings.

national (i.e. ethnicity, such as 'Afrikaner' etc.) and supra-national (i.e. 'African', 'Western'). The three studies show a shift by all groups, with the greatest change beginning in the Mbeki²⁵ era, from 1999 to 2008. For example, black Africans began to identify more supra-nationally ('African') than before, while Afrikaans-speaking whites appeared to move comparatively inward, identifying less with national and supra-national identities and more ethnically. Bornman suggests that the cause was the state's emphasis on Africanisation of South Africa which has left some feeling ambivalent and may have caused further division across all groups due to this supra-national focus. This ambivalence extends not only to whites but coloureds too (Adhikari, 2004). In Bornman's (2010) first study, conducted the year of the first democratic elections, black Africans identified more with their linguistic designations than in the following studies, where their association with the nation state grew. Overall, coloureds appeared to identify little with any particular classification in any of the studies and simply stipulated that they are 'South African', though with much less fervour than did black Africans. This correlates with Adhikari's²⁶ research suggesting coloureds have remained in a "perennial predicament of marginality" (Adhikari, 2004, p.168), reflected in a common narrative that coloureds were 'too black during apartheid but too white during democracy.'

Finally, both Afrikaners and English-speaking whites identified the least with their racial classification ('white') than any other group, with English-speakers focused most on their supranational categorisation ('Western') and Afrikaners attributing the greatest importance to their ethnic classification than any other group, as well as giving the lowest importance to nation-building classifications, such as the 'Rainbow Nation' idea or as 'South African'. Bornman suggests that the reason for this is that Afrikaners have promoted their ethnicity to the detriment of their nationality and that their racial classification ('white') is an extension, that is inclusive, of their ethnicity. However, in that conclusion, Bornman appears to be assuming that people strive for 'simplicity' when defining their identity when perhaps the only appropriate description for identity today is 'complex'.

²⁵ Thabo Mbeki was the second president of South Africa, after Nelson Mandela.

²⁶ Adhikari's studies in the area of coloured identity offer a mirror image of Afrikaner identity, in the post-apartheid era. Although coloured identity remained relatively 'stable' (that is resistant to change) in comparison to Afrikaners during the lead up to democracy (Steyn, 2003), the discovery of a new ethnic self, post-apartheid has led to various splinter identities within the macro coloured demographic and exhibit many of the same dissatisfactions resulting from the new political dispensation (Adhikari, 2004).

It is possible that whiteness is downplayed in Bornman's (2010) research due to the little effort required to maintain this as part of their ethnicity. That is, as far as research is concerned, Afrikaner whiteness appears not so much as an issue in question as an assumption (Boersema, 2013; Vanderhaeghen, 2018; Vestergaard, 2000). Afrikaners have fought, physically and philosophically, for many facets of their identity and these have developed into descriptive aspects recurring in the dominant discourse. For example, being an Afrikaner is often characterised as 'not British' due their mutual struggle for power in the Cape and the interior. This conflict ended in 1902 with Afrikaners reluctantly laying down arms after Lord Kitchener's 'scorched earth' policy²⁷ and the death of more than 26,000 women and children in concentration camps during what is now known as the Second Boer War (Giliomee, 2003, p.256). Afrikaners have never forgotten the atrocities that their people endured during the Boer Wars and thus the narrative is repeated and reinforced for new generations.

Returning to the discussion of Afrikaner whiteness there are many instances where Afrikaners distinguish themselves from 'them' (black Africans, most often referring to the black African government or the ANC²⁸). However, the reflection is seldom on Afrikaners being white²⁹ per se but on simply being ethnically Afrikaner or 'different' from black Africans, either racially, ethnically or politically. Again, the issue appears to be taken for granted socially, but also academically. As Jagtenberg (2019) found in her Adelaide-based study, however they may be founded, Afrikaner beliefs and *felt* reality construct their lived reality. At the three points when Bornman's (2010) studies took place, the idea of 'whiteness' was unproblematic and offered few uncomfortable challenges to Afrikaners that would have impacted upon that felt reality.

²⁷ Kitchener's policy meant the burning of Afrikaner homes and farms, destroying crops and livestock. This prevented Afrikaner guerrilla fighters (mostly the farmers themselves, hence the name Boer War) from restocking food and other supplies during warfare.

²⁸ African National Congress, the dominant political party in South Africa since 1994.

²⁹ References to being white in current research are often linked to being beneficiaries of apartheid and can often be taken to mean more specifically being Afrikaner. Jagtenberg's participant offers an example here: "As a *white* person I felt like an outsider, because everything you're going to do in the future will be a struggle, because of, obviously of *apartheid*" (2019, p.136; emphasis added). English-speaking South Africans undeniably benefitted from apartheid but are often excluded from the discussion of perpetration as Afrikaners are.

Whiteness and Apartheid's Uncomfortable Legacy

Moving from the broader canvas of South African identity, it is difficult to escape how apartheid's legal order sedimented whiteness into institutions and everyday life, and how those residues have been re-worked rather than erased. Critical race analyses of the transition stress that, even in the era of the Rainbow Nation, whiteness often remains an 'invisible centre' from which racialised others are positioned, and that contemporary debates are better read as adaptations of racial hierarchies rather than their disappearance (Blaser & van der Westhuizen, 2012, pp. 382–385). In this frame, Afrikaner identity is not a relic but an active site of renegotiation, where efforts to distance present practice from apartheid's overt racialism can co-exist with the reproduction of status, security and cultural authority within new terms of belonging (Blaser & van der Westhuizen, 2012, pp. 383–386).

A key mechanism in this renegotiation is what Steyn terms "white talk": discursive strategies that seek to rehabilitate a "disgraced" whiteness by translating racial entitlement into ostensibly race-neutral languages of culture, language, merit or personal safety (Steyn, 2004, pp. 162–164, 168). This is not simply denial; rather, it reflects attempts to re-inscribe Afrikaner mythologies of belonging while presenting them as compatible with a democratic, multicultural order. Where earlier republican projects explicitly folded apartheid into programmes of Afrikaner survival against English dominance, post-apartheid variants tend to naturalise whiteness within ethnic belonging so that it appears unmarked and normative, even as it continues to organise advantage (Steyn, 2004, pp.162–164).

Media analyses demonstrate how such processes operate in practice. Examining Afrikaans press coverage of racial incidents, Wasserman shows how racism is frequently individualised and reframed as aberrant behaviour, thereby obscuring structural legacies of apartheid and colonialism and sidestepping deeper complicity (Wasserman, 2010, p.20). Reporting on the "Reitz Four" case at the University of the Free State, for instance, often centred on the students' intentions or freedom of expression, or on assertions that "we're not like that," rather than on histories of institutional racism and power (Wasserman, 2010, pp.23–24). Such reframing facilitates a politics of reputational repair for Afrikaans and Afrikaners without necessitating the more difficult structural reckonings implied by a democratic ethos.

Critical scholarship on Afrikaner identity more broadly has likewise demonstrated how whiteness, land, faith and race have been historically co-constituted, and how these formations continue to shape post-apartheid anxieties and moral narratives (Verwey &

Quayle, 2012; Teppo, 2022; Pilosof, 2012). Work by McDermott Hughes (2010) and Rutherford (2016) illustrates how white minority identities in southern Africa frequently oscillate between claims of vulnerability and practices of exclusion, while McIntosh's (2016) analysis of settler denial highlights how everyday belonging may coexist with forms of historical disavowal. Together, these studies underscore the enduring significance of whiteness as both a structural position and a lived moral condition in postcolonial contexts.

At the same time, post-apartheid realignments have encouraged Afrikaners to relocate identity work into apparently apolitical arenas such as consumer culture, aesthetics and lifestyle. This shift is not trivial; it reflects responses to grief and status anxiety in which ethnic whiteness under strain is re-expressed through classed forms of choice and taste, even as formal nationalism wanes (Blaser, 2012, pp.1–4, 6–8). Beyond South Africa, similar repertoires travel with migrants. McKenzie and Gressier (2017) describe a “white nation fantasy” among white South African migrants that claims cosmopolitan distance from apartheid while reproducing many of its hierarchical assumptions elsewhere, suggesting how easily these modes of belonging mutate across diasporic settings.

These insights are crucial for understanding the historical and structural conditions from which Afrikaner diasporic subjectivities emerge. However, Ives (2017, p.2-4) notes that commodity analyses often overlook the sensuous and material qualities through which objects generate attachment and value, and she deliberately brings smell, taste and ecological specificity back into view alongside racialised histories of land and labour. Earlier ethnographic work, such as Russell and Russell's (1979) study of Afrikaners in the Kalahari, similarly demonstrates that Afrikaner social worlds have long been shaped by pragmatic adaptation, relational negotiation and moral economies that exceed straightforward racial explanation.

In the New Zealand context, participants in this study did not articulate the braai primarily as a site of racial reproduction or political nostalgia. Rather, it emerged as a space of memory, hospitality, gendered competence and relational continuity. This does not negate the historical realities of apartheid or whiteness, nor does it deny their potential sedimentation within everyday practice. Instead, it reflects an empirically grounded analytic emphasis on the meanings and concerns that participants themselves foregrounded in relation to the braai, consistent with anthropological commitments to emic interpretation and proportional analysis.

‘Boer’, ‘Afrikaner’, ‘Afrikaans’, ‘African’

Before discussing ‘Afrikaners’, it is important to unpack what it means to be an Afrikaner and its related identity terms. On the surface, the four identities that make up this section’s title appear to relate to the same people, or perhaps to the different aspects that make up those people: heritage, culture, language and geography. ‘Boer’,³⁰ literally meaning ‘farmer’, has been used to describe Dutch or Afrikaans-speaking whites in the southern tip since before the Boer Wars.³¹ Today, although the Afrikaans word for ‘farmer’ is indeed *boer*, the term also³² possesses a cultural significance that may be applied to non-farming Afrikaans people.

So, what is the difference? Taken collectively, many researchers (Boersema, 2013; Hagen, 2013; Holtzhausen, 2017; Vanderhaeghen, 2018; Verwey, 2008; Vestergaard, 2001) imply a sliding scale in terminology between ‘Afrikaner’ and ‘Boer’: The more traditionally conservative one’s worldview is, the more likely they are to self-identify as Boer, while distancing oneself from this traditionalism means rejecting the term ‘Boer’ in preference for ‘Afrikaner’. Kotze (2013), refers to the *contemporary* group of self-identified Boers as ‘pseudo-Boers’, claiming the qualities of the people that embodied the term have deviated from its historical origins. He suggests that it now designates the embodiment of 20th century (negative) values, such as “extinct cultural atavisms or a combination of newfangled racism and religious fanaticism” (Kotze, 2013, p.109). In an attempt at retaining “historic-cultural-linguistic continuity”, du Toit (2003, pp.15-6) hyphenates the two terms (“Boer-Afrikaner”) while clarifying that it nonetheless still excludes some who may self-identify as an ‘Afrikaner’, while simultaneously insinuating that Afrikaners are the group more inclined to leave South Africa. Vanderhaeghen (2018), however, indicates that the term ‘Afrikaner’ has become contentious as well, with residual nationalist connotations meaning some preferring the apparently more neutral descriptor, ‘Afrikaans’.

This seems to imply that the scale pivots on political worldview – conservative, perhaps pro-secessionist, Afrikaans-speakers may adopt the term ‘Boer’, while those who happily entered the New South Africa take on ‘Afrikaner’ and the most liberal taking ‘Afrikaans’ for example, see the footnote on p.92 of Vestergaard (2000). However, both my previous 2017

³⁰ [bu:r]

³¹ Previously, the same group of people had been referred to as ‘Burghers’ but none of these terms had ethno-racial connotations until the early mid-1800’s. Other identifying terms used around the same time were ‘Christian’ or ‘Dutchman’ (Allen, 2014; Boersema, 2013; Bosch, 2011; de Reuck, 1996; Harrison, 1981; Oliver, 2019).

³² The definition that the speaker intends is always made clear in context.

study of Afrikaners in New Zealand and Jagtenberg's (2019) research in Australia indicate that even the most liberal of Afrikaans-speakers may continue to self-identify as 'Afrikaners'. Beyond this, however, there is little understanding of how or why the term 'Afrikaans' is becoming used, having previously only been a very broad term used for Afrikaans-speakers (including coloureds, who can claim neither 'Boer' nor 'Afrikaner' identity yet speak Afrikaans as a mother-tongue).

Finally, another term which Blaser (2012) cites among some Afrikaans-speaking whites is '[white] African'. Although the related idea of a 'white tribe'³³ is not unheard of, beyond its allegorical use, there is little in the way of a conclusive definition for this term. Blaser, however, offers that for a white person to be called 'African' in democratic South Africa implies a developed "appreciation for black people" (2012, p.11). What these varied definitions indicate is that, although Afrikaner identity is formally *depoliticised*, it is most certainly still rooted in the political, if not a 'new' individualised, post-modern version of it.

Afrikaner Identity in the Diaspora

Since before the 1990s, Afrikaners, indeed white South Africans, have been leaving South Africa en masse, so much so that the movement has been dubbed the 'White Exodus', 'White Flight', South Africa's 'Brain Drain'³⁴ (Visser, 2007) and the 'New Great Trek', referring to the voortrekker movement of the mid-1830s (van Rooyen, 2000).

Despite this large number of Afrikaner emigrants leaving South Africa over the past few decades, there are comparatively few studies on the various diaspora populations around the world. Yet some elements of Afrikaner migratory experience are conspicuously consistent. Primarily, Afrikaners are described as strongly family-oriented and describe their migration in relation to family, most notably for the benefit of their children's future (Finlayson, 2019; Jagtenberg, 2019; van Rooyen, 2000). Generally, the issue is related to two push factors, framed in terms of risk: the risk that migrants' children may not obtain employment in South Africa, and the risk that their children may become victims of violent crime. Participants noted their own brushes with these issues, for example describing employment loss in terms

³³ This term was popularised by a BBC television series in the 1950's (Oliver, 2019, p.4) but has since been picked up by Afrikaners and regularly features in research narrative, among other sources (Crapanzano, 1985, p.86).

³⁴ Many of these leaving South Africa are well-educated and highly skilled workers.

of affirmative action or recounting personal experiences of violent crime. Such accounts are presented as participant narratives rather than as descriptions or analyses of the structures of power. In the case of affirmative action, these perceptions may not fully reflect either the redistributive intent or the wider structural context of post-apartheid policies aimed at redressing historically entrenched inequalities. They nevertheless register sincerely felt experiences of change, loss and repositioning. In the case of violent crime, the fears participants describe should likewise be understood within post-apartheid discourses of insecurity shaped by enduring structural inequality and histories of racialised violence (Steyn, 2001), rather than as descriptions of present conditions. That said, the decision to move was primarily for the future of their children, not themselves (Bornman, 2005; Duxfield, 2013; Jagtenberg, 2019; Pernice et al., 2009; Pietersen, 2000). It is therefore unsurprising to find the majority of Afrikaner migrants have dependent children upon migrating.

Given the perceived nature of Afrikaners' departure from South Africa, it might be expected that the movement is explained as a vehement political reaction. However, like the braai, this does not appear to have been academically investigated. du Toit (2003) does make some reference to the issue saying:

Given the outspoken opposition to President de Klerk who 'handed South Africa to the Blacks', to majority rule, and the vociferous propaganda for a white state, it is strange that almost exactly 50% of the *émigrés* identified themselves either as not politically active or as supporting one of the first three political parties. The implication is that reasons, other than purely political, lead to the decision to leave South Africa. (2003, p.40; emphasis in original)

Since the latest wave of migration began in the 1980s,³⁵ with a steady increase during the 1990s following the advent of democracy, it might be assumed that Afrikaners were leaving in silent protest against the changing political situation. However, du Toit's interpretation requires more direct critical scrutiny. The apparent 50/50 split in political affiliation does not demonstrate that migration was non-political. Rather, it highlights the limits of treating formal party identification as the sole index of political motivation. Self-identification as 'not politically active' does not imply an absence of political belief, particularly within a context in which migration, race, crime, labour and future opportunity are all politically charged.

³⁵ That is, with the 'Soweto uprising' of the mid-1970's, protesting the enforcement of Afrikaans as a teaching medium in black African schools, and the events surrounding the death of Steve Biko, largely thought to be the beginning of the end of Afrikaner nationalism.

Read this way, the factors cited by migrants remain political even when they are not articulated in explicitly partisan terms.

This suggests that what is at stake is not the absence of political motivation, but the manner in which political concerns are framed and expressed. The assumption of politically motivated migration does, nonetheless, have historical basis. As discussed earlier, Afrikaners moved from the Cape to South Africa's interior in (political) protest against English rule, and then again, many exited South Africa altogether after the end of the Second Boer War, having found little of their possessions left to return to (Giliomee, 2003). However, history alone is not sufficient to infer modern practice, and so this remains an aspect of Afrikaner migration that requires careful and contextually grounded interpretation.

Although the actual effect on Afrikaners has been debated, Jagtenberg (2019) shows that fear of violent crime is deeply felt and often linked by participants to personal experience. Afrikaner migrants regularly cite violent crime and the fear of falling victim to it in South Africa as a major factor in choosing to migrate. These felt concerns are not treated here as evidence that migration occurred through direct political compulsion. Rather, they are analysed as participant narratives through which safety, stability, future uncertainty and responsibility for children are made meaningful. It is important, however, that these narratives are not detached from broader post-apartheid conditions of insecurity, structural inequality and racialised violence. Violent crime in South Africa disproportionately affects the poor, black Africans and coloured South Africans (Silber & Geffen, 2009), none of which describes the majority of Afrikaner migrants, and this imbalance is important to acknowledge. What matters for the present analysis is how participants narrate perceived threat and future uncertainty when explaining migration, and how those narratives shape diasporic self-understanding in New Zealand.

The Afrikaans language factoring in Afrikaner identity appears in all research to varying degrees. Although it often features as being important to Afrikaner migrants, there is also report of an appreciation developing only after post-migration settlement when the process of attrition has already set in (Barkhuizen & Knoch, 2005). Further research shows some have little concern for Afrikaans at all (Hatoss et al., 2011) and of the language being important but less so than other matters, such as assimilation with the host country (Finlayson, 2019).

Afrikaner Binaries and Change

As demonstrated, Afrikaner identity has, for a long time, been a contentious issue. A major dispute known as the *Broedertwis* ('brother feud'), began between the *verkrampes* (ultra-conservative Afrikaners) and the *verligtes* (the 'enlightened', or liberal Afrikaners) regarding State policy during apartheid. The *verligtes* argued against segregation and the intertwining nature of apartheid policy with Afrikaner identity, referring to South Africa in multi-cultural terms (Giliomee, 1992). *Verkrampes*, on the other hand, wanted a continuation of the status quo and apartheid policy. Since democracy, a polar shift has occurred, with similarly opposing viewpoints remaining, yet the capacity for dominance now lies mainly with the *verligtes*, and the *verkrampes* often being ridiculed.

Similar binary identities within the Afrikaner ethnic group are alluded to some degree throughout contemporary research, although the terminology used is inconsistent.

Vestergaard (2001), for example, refers to Afrikaners who resist and embrace change in terms of an orthodox-heterodox divide. Bourdieu's idea can be applied here to mean that 'orthodox' Afrikaners faithfully adhere to traditional ways of being Afrikaner whereas the 'heterodox' take on the rules of competing identities, challenging the orthodox (Deer, 2012). Blaser (2012) seemingly agrees with this assessment, but he takes a more 'individual' vs. 'group mentality' narrative. Korf and Malan (2002), takes this further, placing self-esteem (how one feels about their ethnic identity personally) at one end of the scale and, at the other, ethnic pride (how one feels their ethnic identity is represented publicly). Using Hroch (1996) and Leerssen's (2006) idea that nationalism is presupposed by two forms of activism, Kriel (2010) attributes the rise of Afrikaner nationalism first to the cultural (phase A) and then the political (phase B). One possible derivation from Kriel's research is that Afrikaners today may choose which elements of nationalism are important to them. That is, orthodox Afrikaners may hang on to Kriel's activism Phases A and B, while heterodox Afrikaners choose to move with democracy, meaning Phase B is left behind, while perhaps clinging to Phase A. Taking into account the history of Afrikaners in the Cape (i.e. the 'Dutch' versus 'Afrikaans' discourse, prior to the official recognition of Afrikaans as a language), it is evident that an internal binary has been a longstanding matter of discourse, and has indeed become part of the navigation of being an Afrikaner.

Kajsa Norman (2016) addresses the persistence of certain Afrikaner tropes, particularly the phrase ‘’n Boer maak ’n plan’,³⁶ as a form of performative masculinity (further explored in Chapter Six). Through her informant Willem, Norman demonstrates how economic self-sufficiency is entwined with gendered expectations and ethnic identity. This idiom, as she argues, is deeply coded within Afrikaner cultural consciousness as both a source of pride and a burden of performance. Her ethnography underscores the ways in which such identity scripts are sustained even as the social and economic contexts shift.

In her review of mainly historical sources, Oliver’s (2019) theological essay offers potential insight into how these binaries might have occurred, saying that Afrikaners (or Boers, as discussed in the ‘Terminology’ section above) have cultivated a two-part pattern of ‘holiness’ and ‘obstinacy’, where Oliver deems holiness to mean that which is considered Calvinistically ‘good’. While these appear to be out of sync with one another, the 200-year long ‘wilderness experience’ of Afrikaners in the interior of South Africa meant they had only themselves and God to rely on. Oliver explains that this has had repercussions in the form of both internal and external conflicts, resulting in various religious sects within the Dutch Reformed tradition³⁷ and guerrilla combat against the British Empire and continues to “bear the ever-present toxic seeds of schism” (Oliver, 2019, p.6). Although the article could well be critiqued for several blanket statements regarding Afrikaner behaviour, the emphasis of the ‘myth’, or as Lincoln calls it, “ideology in narrative form” (2006, p.242), among Afrikaners may mean Oliver’s assertions hold some truth.

Returning to modernity, as one could imagine, most of the literature around Afrikaner identity has thus far been centred around apartheid policy. Soon after the democratic handover, Vestergaard (2001) conducted research indicating that Afrikaner identity was already undergoing change within the first four years. The breakdown of the main structural force – nationalism – that held the community together sparked a divide in the practice of Afrikaner identity. Yet, despite this divide all Afrikaner identities were *defined* by apartheid. That is, however one felt about apartheid, one’s identity was determined in relation to it; the acceptance or dissention thereof. Agreeing with this, Alberts’s (2012) doctoral thesis suggests an existential crises has occurred since democracy, while Blaser’s (2012) research takes a

³⁶ “A Boer makes a plan”. This phrase is analogous to the ‘number 8 wire’ tradition in New Zealand, denoting an attitude that whatever the job is, an Afrikaner can make it work with their wits and whatever they have available.

³⁷ While this is not unusual, she explains that the creation of these sects was less about religious viewpoint and more about opinion and control (Holtzhausen, 2017, p.92).

more positive view of Afrikaner identity, he nonetheless suggests the structural forces that bolstered Afrikaner ethnicity during the 20th century continue to play a part in its performance today, as individuals move to distance themselves from it.

Gender, Embodiment and Masculine Performance

Gender, as a key axis of identity formation, has come to be understood by anthropologists as both a socially constructed and performatively enacted phenomenon. Judith Butler's (1990) foundational theory of gender performativity contends that gender is not a stable identity but is constituted through repeated actions, stylised behaviours and embodied practices. This theoretical framing has had a lasting impact on ethnographic approaches to masculinity, particularly in relation to ritualised or performative spaces where gender norms are enacted, challenged or negotiated.

In the context of white South African and Afrikaner communities, the intersection of masculinity, ethnicity and postcolonial identity has received increasing attention. Scholars such as Norman (2016) and Vestergaard (2001) have examined how Afrikaner masculinity has historically been coded through tropes of stoicism, technical ingenuity and rugged independence. Norman's (2016) ethnographic work specifically foregrounds the phrase, 'n Boer maak 'n plan' (see the above section), as a condensed symbol of Afrikaner masculine performance, one that encodes resilience, problem-solving and authority into everyday interactions. This aligns with Kriel (2010), who identifies pride and self-sufficiency as public-facing aspects of Afrikaner masculine identity, particularly within diaspora.

The embodiment of gender – how physical action and placement in social settings contribute to the construction of gender identity – has also become a significant concern within anthropology and sociology. Csordas (1990) introduced the concept of 'embodiment' as a methodological orientation, encouraging scholars to attend to the body as both subject and object of culture. This has been particularly influential in studies of food preparation, craft and other embodied practices through which gender is not just represented but enacted through gesture, material engagement and affective labour (Pink, 2015; Sutton, 2001).

Importantly, gendered embodiment must be situated within the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa and settler diaspora. Scholars such as Blaser (2012) and Hagen (2013) argue that whiteness and masculinity among Afrikaners have become increasingly

charged, simultaneously nostalgic and reactive. In diasporic contexts, traditional gender roles are not simply transplanted but can often be reinforced or recalibrated in response to perceived cultural dislocation, social comparison or class repositioning.

Braai practice, as a cultural site structured around fire, meat, tools and hosting, intersects with this literature in important ways. While specific studies of masculinity in relation to braai practice remain limited, parallel ethnographies of communal cooking, male-dominated outdoor rituals and domestic technologies as gendered symbols Sutton (2001) and Douglas (1972) provide useful comparative insight. These works highlight how gendered identities are not only sustained through ideology but materially co-produced through spatial arrangements, culinary labour and performative hospitality.

Together, these works provide a rich backdrop for understanding how Afrikaner masculinity may be expressed, sustained or contested in the diasporic context through practices like the braai. While this thesis draws on participant narratives to analyse the particularities of gendered performance, it builds upon a substantial body of scholarship that views gender – in particular, masculinity – as an ongoing process of embodied, situational and culturally mediated action.

Materiality and Sensory Practice

Materiality has become a central concern in contemporary anthropology, shifting attention from purely symbolic interpretation to the affective, agentic and relational capacities of objects. Recent work argues that ‘things’ do not simply mirror social structures; rather, they actively shape, mediate and assist in producing human experience (Appadurai, 1996; Classen, 1997). In this view, material items are constructive elements in identity, memory and social life, not merely passive backdrops.

Within this practice-oriented turn, Ortner (2006) reminds us that ingrained bodily habits and material engagements are mutually shaping, each continuously forming the other. For diasporic communities these routines take on added significance, they do more than reproduce the everyday, they actively reassert belonging, continuity and cultural distinctiveness in new settings. Through such practices the material world becomes a medium for what Appadurai calls the “production of locality” (1996, p.178), while Sutton (2001) shows how mundane artefacts (for example, cooking tools, domestic spaces and clothing)

gain affective resonance and symbolic value as they ground migrant lives in embodied memory.

This dynamic is especially evident in domestic and food-related practices. Sutton demonstrates that the tasting, smelling and handling food, roots memory and identity in material experience; the smell of freshly baked bread or the taste of garlic-laden skordalia lets Kalymnian migrants inhabit past and present simultaneously. Such sensory engagements, Stoller (1989) argues, are fundamental to how meaning is lived and reproduced. This is echoed by Sarah Pink (2015), who advocates for a sensory-ethnographic approach that treats bodily and affective experience as core data, not peripheral detail.

Material practices also mark social distinctions. Appadurai (1996) notes that circulating objects carry hierarchies of value, while Douglas (1972) and Classen (1997) show how household routines and sensory codes reinforce status differences in everyday life. In migrant contexts, these distinctions can communicate cultural pride or aspirations for social mobility as domestic spaces, cooking techniques and consumer goods are selectively displayed and re-worked within new social fields.

Finally, researchers have demonstrated that fire, tools and cooking technologies are deeply gendered and symbolically charged. Douglas' (1972) analysis of domestic routines as miniature rituals reveals how they reproduce social order, and Classen's (1997) sensory perspective underlines the sociopolitical dimensions of everyday material engagements, reminding us that what is cooked, who cooks it and with which implements, are never culturally neutral.

Culinary Praxis and Foodways

Anthropology's study of food has evolved from a focus on dietary practices to a more nuanced exploration of how culinary practices shape and reflect cultural identity, memory and social relations. Lévi-Strauss (1966) modelled cooking as a three-stage transformation of raw nature into cultured substance, showing that each stage encodes a cultural distinction. Douglas (1972) extended this insight to the household, analysing meals as ritual frameworks that organise social hierarchy. Together these works established food as a primary medium through which meaning is generated and community reproduced.

Building on these structural insights, later scholarship treats culinary praxis as an embodied form of cultural production. Appadurai (1996) traces how cuisines mutate as they move through global commodity flows, weaving questions of labour, value and power into everyday cooking. Complementing this political-economic view, Sutton (2001) foregrounds the sensory and affective register, showing how taste, smell and texture act as bridges between past and present, enabling migrants to preserve familiar traditions even as they adapt to new environments. Together these studies reveal that food's material circulation and its sensorial resonance work in tandem to sustain and transform cultural identity.

In diasporic communities, such as Afrikaners in New Zealand, culinary praxis acquires additional layers of complexity. As migrants negotiate tensions between cultural authenticity and adaptation, cooking becomes a matter of cultural translation. Drawing on Appadurai (1996), who traces how cuisines mutate as they circulate globally, and Brah (2005), whose work on diaspora highlights a cultural melange, we can see that migrant kitchens keep emblematic flavours and techniques while simultaneously folding in ingredients and utensils from host societies. This ongoing negotiation underscores the fluid, ever-evolving facet of culinary identity and practice.

Furthermore, the ritual and social functions of communal meals have been well documented in ethnographic research. Anthropologists such as Douglas (1972) and Sutton (2001) illustrate how shared foodways operate as a form of social cohesion and collective memory. In these settings, the preparation and consumption of food are imbued with an intersubjective quality, reinforcing bonds between community members and affirming a collective sense of belonging.

Taken together, the scholarship underscores that culinary praxis and foodways are far more than techniques of nourishment. Rather, they represent an interplay of tradition, innovation and sociality. For diasporic communities, where questions of identity and belonging are continually negotiated, food becomes a medium through which history, memory and cultural aspiration are articulated.

Memory and Diasporic Nostalgia

Memory has long been recognised as a central process through which individuals and communities construct identity, especially in the context of migration and displacement.

Anthropologists now treat remembering not as simple recall but as a social practice shaped by narrative, materiality and embodiment (Bloch, 1998; Lambek, 2016). Within diaspora studies, memory is entangled with questions of home, belonging and the reconstruction of the past in the present.

Building on this view, Bloch (1998) shows how embodied routines and ritual actions work as living archives, while Lambek (2016) frames remembering as a moral practice through which people actively negotiate responsibility and continuity. Such views are crucial for migrant communities, where physical and social dislocation often severs ties to home, placing greater emphasis on performative, bodily modes of remembering.

The role of nostalgia has likewise been re-evaluated. Rather than casting nostalgia as merely escapist, Boym (2001) distinguishes between ‘restorative nostalgia’, which seeks to reconstruct a coherent past, and ‘reflective nostalgia’, which accepts ambiguity and fragmentation. This dual framing allows for a more nuanced understanding of how diasporic subjects engage the past; not necessarily to return to it, but to negotiate present identities through selective acts of remembering.

In anthropological studies of migration, memory is frequently interwoven with material culture and foodways. Sutton (2001) demonstrates how taste, smell and texture become sensory conduits of memory for Greek migrants, linking the act of eating to layered recollections of family, homeland and identity. Sensory-ethnography works, such as Classen (1997) and Stoller (1989), likewise underscore how everyday objects, gestures and atmospheres activate remembrance beyond spoken narrative, helping migrants re-create a sense of cultural continuity in unfamiliar settings.

Diasporic nostalgia also functions collectively, shaping shared social imaginaries. Brah (2005) frames diaspora as a ‘homing desire’ rather than a literal return, suggesting that longing is as much for relational coherence – of Self, language and kinship – as for a specific place. In this sense, nostalgia centres less on factual memory than on an imagined cultural wholeness that remains emotionally powerful even if it never fully existed. These aspects of nostalgia are more fully teased out in Chapter Five.

Memory and nostalgia are thus not passive remnants of the past but active processes through which diasporic identities are constituted, contested and maintained. Whether expressed through embodied routine, sensory experience or shared narrative, they remain central to the ways migrant communities locate themselves in space, time and history.

Performing Spaces: Church and Braai

Perhaps one of the most dominant characteristics of Afrikaner identity, migrated and not, is that they hold deeply embedded Christian Protestant religious beliefs and values (Blaser, 2007; Crapanzano, 1985; du Toit, 2003; Finlayson, 2019; Hagen, 2013; Jagtenberg, 2019; Kotze, 2013; Steyn, 2004; Vanderhaeghen, 2018). While not all Afrikaners identify as members of the Dutch Reformed Church, or even Christian, the tendency is for their identities as Afrikaners to be founded in a *deeply rooted* Calvinist tradition, particularly in terms of morality and values (Finlayson, 2019). This is due to the strong Christian emphasis under the apartheid school system (Thompson, 1985). As an Afrikaner schooled in Christian dogma, Hagen (2013) goes so far as to define Afrikaners in her thesis as “white Afrikaans-speaking Christian South African” (p.18), however she is careful to remind readers that this takes a particularly religiously exclusive view, it is nonetheless an emic one.

This attachment to Calvinism manifests in various ways via pop culture and results in forms of exclusion when taken too far. In 2006, a member of the anti-establishment rock band *Fokofpolisiekar*³⁸ wrote “F~k G~d”³⁹ on the wallet of a fan⁴⁰ asking for an autograph. This caused an uproar from Afrikaans Christian leaders in the media and almost ejected the band from the *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees*,⁴¹ until they publicly apologised. Ironically the band invoked Christian ethic in their apology, asking the public for forgiveness and appealing to the popular Christian maxim, ‘what would Jesus do?’⁴²

Contrasting the prevalent association with Christianity, the most striking omission from current research on Afrikaner identity is its connection with the braai,⁴³ despite regular mention of this in relation to the performance of Afrikaner being. To date, there is no

³⁸ The name of the band signifies their political message, translated it means “fuck off police car”. The name itself has caused outcry (Feldman, 2002).

³⁹ I have elected to not offer a translation as doing so would deeply offend both the beliefs of my participants, indeed my own. In any case, Afrikaans and English being closely related languages, it is quite obvious.

⁴⁰ There have been conflicting media reports on the incident indicating that the wallet was owned either by Bobby van Jaarsveld (a popular mainstream Afrikaans singer, actor and presenter) himself, his brother or his friend.

⁴¹ Klein Karoo National Arts Festival or KKNK, an annual Afrikaans-language arts festival in Oudtshoorn, South Africa.

⁴² Given the band’s modus operandi, it is likely this was meant to be taken as tongue-in-cheek.

⁴³ Very simply, ‘braai’ means wood-fired barbecue. Charcoal is generally accepted but debate rages over whether a gas barbecue may constitute a braai. The word can be used as a verb or noun.

research that I am aware of.⁴⁴ The braai is very often recalled in research as being an important space for performing Afrikaner identity, or is at least, described as a principal site at which research is conducted (Barkhuizen, 2013; Cain et al., 2015; de Gelder, 2004; du Toit, 2003; Hagen, 2013; Inkeri, 2019; Jagtenberg, 2019; Philipp & Ho, 2010; Verwey, 2008; R. G. Wasserman, 2016; Wessels, 2016). Despite this, little is said about its importance beyond being “a place for people to come together, to be in community with each other” (Cain et al., 2015, p.7), “perhaps the most uniting cultural affair in South Africa” (Inkeri, 2019, p.136) and a place that “makes [Afrikaner migrants] feel at home. It is like bringing a piece of home to the place where you are now” (Philipp & Ho, 2010, p.92). These are notably meaningful statements that require further research.

Performing Bodies: Grief, or Consumerism?

In line with the commentary on Afrikaner binaries, two primary themes have emerged from Afrikaner identity studies, post-nationalism: ‘Grief, threat and loss’ and an ‘individual-focused, neoliberal consumer culture’. Vanderhaeghen’s (2018) recent work shows a growing sense of grief and loss portrayed in the Afrikaans media, particularly around political issues. This sense of grief in some form is further supported by research findings of other authors on Afrikaner identity (Bain, 2005; Boersema, 2013; Jagtenberg, 2019; Steyn, 2001; M. van der Waal, 2015; Winbush & Selby, 2015). Together, the picture offered by these researchers is a confusing one of community-directed shame yet merged with a sense of cultural pride, giving a strong example of the inherent complexity of identity in a post-modern, globalised world.

To a point, Jagtenberg’s (2019) research on Afrikaner loss of belonging agrees with this discourse of grief but goes one step further, saying that the full picture lies in talking with the people directly and imagining their plight as our own. This approach is, of course, the cornerstone of anthropology yet lacking in Afrikaner studies. She argues that, to date, most researchers, such as those cited above, “generally critically investigate white South Africans’ reactions to the end of apartheid, but without extending their analysis to a deeper psychological level and without compassion or self-reflection” (Jagtenberg, 2019, p.21).

The issue of Afrikaners under threat is not new. Korf and Malan (2002) conducted a study in social psychology shortly after the democratic handover, where the respondents indicated two

⁴⁴ Aside from a brief article on the chemical composition of braai smoke (Venter et al., 2015) and the relationship between the braai and violence during the apartheid years (Feldman, 2002).

forms of perceived threat. The first concerned continuity as an ethnic group, and the second, that identifying as an Afrikaner would no longer be a source of pride but rather contribute to low self-esteem. Generally, those who believed that Afrikaners might not continue as a distinctive group tended to express more positive attitudes toward the sociopolitical changes. In contrast, those who experienced the post-apartheid context as a threat to their well-being and collective self-esteem, particularly due to negative public perceptions of Afrikaners, were more likely to maintain a strong sense of ethnic distinctiveness, even at the expense of their personal comfort or affirmation. Korf and Malan (2002) go on to say that due to their history of relatively high self-esteem (i.e. from their political control as a group), the feeling of low self-esteem is particularly foreign to the respondents' generation and so taken as a more deeply felt threat.

On coping with this grief narrative, Jagtenberg (2019) explains, that in order for the grief to be present in their narrative, Afrikaners must first believe the threat exists. This may seem obvious, yet with few exceptions there is little acknowledgement of it. To date, much research (for example, Baines, 2013; Crapanzano, 1985; Davies, 2007; McKenzie & Gressier, 2017; Steyn, 2004; C. S. van der Waal & Robins, 2011) on the topic of Afrikaner identity takes an outward, etic view of their identity, investigating how Afrikaners 'should' be researched yet identity is made up of more than the Other's view, especially in today's world. What is under-represented in current research, are analyses with emic, community-focused methodologies, such as the present study. Rather than solely focusing on Afrikaners' misinterpretation of potential threat, Jagtenberg (2019) sees their grief, however it may have been established, as their *reality* out of which their actions and identity are constructed.

Turning to alternative outlets for identity performance, researchers indicate that Afrikaners are eschewing their nationalist roots by turning to a seemingly apolitical consumer culture (Blaser, 2012; Blaser & van der Westhuizen, 2012; Boersema, 2012; Carol-Dekker, 2011; Davies, 2012; Sonnekus, 2016; Vanderhaeghen, 2018; Wasserman, 2010). This consumerism is planted in post-modern, middle-class individualism, yet somewhat contradictorily rooted in nationalist-policy, where Afrikaner families gained the economic power they use in distancing themselves from that same nationalist sentiment today (Blaser & van der Westhuizen, 2012). In particular, Wasserman (2010) explains that this form of identification also allows Afrikaans language and culture to avoid its often feared extinction by becoming a commodity, distancing itself from its traditional stance as an ethno-racial marker.

This turn to consumerism, Blaser (2012) explains, is in effect also a reaction to the aforementioned grief as Afrikaners' ethnic whiteness is in a state of distress⁴⁵ and so they are turning to other, more socially acceptable, forms of identity performance. Neoliberalism, although a cause for the demise of nationalism⁴⁶ and traditional Afrikaner identity practice, also gave rise to a primary form of its salvation in the form of individualist-directed cultural consumerism. Afrikaner historian Hermann Giliomee (2010) agrees with this discourse, attributing individualism and cosmopolitanism among Afrikaners to an emulation of the lifestyle of English-speaking whites. In this context, although racial inequalities remain structurally central, class has also become an increasingly visible way in which post-apartheid inequality is experienced and expressed, rather than replacing race as a socio-political issue (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010; Seekings & Nattrass, 2005).

Jagtenberg's (2019) Afrikaner participants in Australia indicated that a sister-form of individualism, which the researcher refers to as "inward migration" (from Bornman's "inwaatse immigrasie" (2005, p.390)), has resulted in a breakdown in South African society with some reporting that they "almost didn't like South Africans anymore" (Jagtenberg, 2019, p.106). Bornman (2005) characterises this inward migration as a withdrawal from socio-political life and the focus on individuality and explains that this is a first step to physical migration. Upon talking about security awareness, Jagtenberg recounts that many realised that, as a result of migration, their newly acquired freedom from security issues has caused their personalities to change positively. Participants became calmer and friendlier, further supporting that heightened security issues have, if only in part, caused individualism and inward migration among Afrikaners in South African society.

Jagtenberg (2019) also found that the loss of wealth associated with migration,⁴⁷ and the degradation in the standard of lifestyle that they were used to, meant that participants suffered a loss of self-esteem, and in some cases adversely affected their mental health, further supporting the importance of class and consumerism for Afrikaners in a South African context. She concludes with the stark contrasts that her participants made between

⁴⁵ See also Charl Alberts' (2012) and Mads Vestergaard's (2000) theses on Afrikaner identity in distress during the post-apartheid era.

⁴⁶ As Afrikaners became wealthier, they entered the global economy. The ruling Afrikaner National Party of the 1980s was unable, or unwilling, to restructure apartheid economic policy, meaning increasing distance was made between state and economic capital (Davies, 2012).

⁴⁷ Roughly 10% of the participants in Jagtenberg's study gained employment to the same professional level as what they had in South Africa, all of which securing these positions before leaving. The remainder took lower positions with less pay. Participants took an average of two years to find any suitable employment.

Australians and Afrikaner migrants living in Australia are symptomatic of a narrative of victimhood and may point to a deep-set inferiority complex held in the Afrikaner cultural psyche, nurtured throughout a history of conflict.

Conclusion: Future Directions for Afrikaner Research

Overall, although Afrikaner diaspora studies have different viewpoints and investigative intents, they are remarkably similar in findings, regarding descriptive cultural representations and migratory stories. However, with the exception of Jagtenberg's (2019) Adelaide-based research, what they fail to produce is a detailed account of the Afrikaner migrant experience and the impact that this undoubtedly traumatic experience has on their being and self-understanding, without imposing potentially distorting ideological biases. In particular, the emic and everyday dimensions of Afrikaner cultural life – how memory, food, material practice and gendered performance shape identity – have been largely overlooked or under-theorised. In order to better understand Afrikaners and their place in an increasingly democratic and globalised world, researchers need to move toward Afrikaners' understanding of themselves in a more subjective, empathetic way. Thus far the vast majority of research, diasporic and otherwise, is framed in terms of an intrinsic relationship with apartheid ideology. Some previous research indicates that this may not be an accurate depiction of Afrikaners in the diaspora (Finlayson, 2019; Jagtenberg, 2019) or in South Africa (Blaser, 2006, 2012).

At this point, I'll return to Taylor's (1994) recognition and authenticity, indicating that a misunderstanding by the Other of how we see ourselves can have severely damaging effects on our own identity. He explains this with particular force:

[n]onrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being ... misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need.
(p.25-6)

It should be noted that Taylor's ideas are generally applied to oppressed minorities, such as women in patriarchal societies and blacks in white-dominated societies, rather than to groups

whose historical dominance continues to shape their position in the present. The case of Afrikaners is clearly dissimilar, yet the implications and potential harm remain the same.

Since nationalism was intrinsically tied to Afrikaner identity (Alberts, 2012; Vestergaard, 2001), living in accordance with their authenticity (the innate desire to live out one's inner moral 'voice') meant that others' authenticity was repressed, for example, in controlled separation of other ethnicities. This idea is now objectionable to post-modern society. Since the breakdown of apartheid ideology, it appears Afrikaners have therefore been, and continue to, navigate their own sense of authenticity in a more socially (and morally, in regards to the self) acceptable way. Even if all senses of racism are done away with, Afrikaners remains tied to their morally reprehensible past, significantly impacting how Afrikaners think about and live out their authenticity. Thus, Taylor's ideas are important for understanding the identity of Afrikaners, offering the dual nature of Afrikaner desire while retaining the dialogical nature that we understand identity as being today (and simultaneously answering how apartheid might have occurred to begin with). Afrikaners have both a deeply felt need to retain their moral sense of authenticity yet they also require recognition from the wider global community. However, both of these are regularly called into question in the post-modern age.

Additionally, this chapter has shown that Afrikaner identity is enacted through practice, such as tending the braai, through memory and sensory engagement, through the enactment of meaningful roles. These are not merely expressions of nostalgia but creative acts of identity-making, negotiation and transformation.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods and methodology for the study. Here, I describe preparation for entering the field, the field sites, the participants directly involved in the study through interviews, as well as the wider community with respect to fieldwork. I detail the primary methods used for data collection, participant observation supported by a particular form of interview, based on the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM). Finally, I explain my process for analysis of data and ethical considerations.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the original design of this study aimed to investigate Afrikaner identity by comparing pre- and post-migration identity practices between South Africa and New Zealand. However, the global spread of COVID-19 disrupted this plan. Without direct access to a South African point of reference, I pivoted the study to rely entirely on participants' recollections of their past lives through interview material, rather than allowing for a direct, external comparison between community experiences before and after migration. While participant narratives remain a crucial perspective, the broader comparative framework had to be abandoned, shifting the study's methodological approach.

This unexpected change necessitated a reorientation of the research focus, centring more heavily on the New Zealand-based Afrikaner community and their identity practices in their adopted homeland. Thus, the study evolved into an in-depth examination of the braai as a key site for the expression and maintenance of Afrikaner identity in migration. While this shift removed the possibility of direct, on-the-ground comparisons with South Africa, it allowed for a richer, more focused exploration of the braai's social and cultural significance among Afrikaners in New Zealand.

Preparation for Fieldwork

During preparations prior to entering the field, I focused on Afrikaans language acquisition. I identified early that I would need to be relatively fluent in my understanding of the language, as I would be in a community of primary Afrikaans-speaking individuals. I already had a good command of the language but was not able to follow all conversations as naturally as I

would have liked to, meaning relationship-building would be more difficult than it could be with improved language skills. To enhance my understanding, I immersed my home life in Afrikaans as much as possible for a month, changing the operating language of my phone, laptop and as many apps as possible into Afrikaans. I subscribed to Showmax,⁴⁸ a South African Netflix-style television and movie service, watching only Afrikaans-language programming. I read Deon Meyer novels, while simultaneously listening to the audiobook version, and spoke primarily in Afrikaans with my partner. I also signed up to an online Afrikaans grammar course for high schoolers (eatafrikaans.co.za). These linguistic preparations meant I was able to engage with the community more confident that I would have a good understanding of what was said.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, my partner was a native Afrikaans-speaker and so has an understanding of the language and cultural nuance that I do not, despite my years-long association with the community. This association, however, positioned me in an ambiguous space – neither fully an insider nor entirely an outsider to the community. My linguistic preparations and prior social connections facilitated access and rapport, yet my presence and the nature of my research undoubtedly shaped participants’ interactions with me. A fuller discussion of my positionality, including reflections on how participants perceived my role and how my dual positioning influenced the data, is provided in Chapter Seven as it is directly relevant to that chapter’s exploration of the Other.

Given these dynamics, I leaned on some of my partner’s understanding of Afrikaans conversations I had recorded or remembered from participant observation. To assure participant privacy, my partner agreed to sign a confidentiality form (see Appendix Two) as a cultural and linguistic advisor for the study.

The Community

Two social field sites were identified as important in the performance of Afrikaner identity: the church and the *braai*. As discussed in the Literature Review, both are important for Afrikaans culture and social interaction. With this in mind, and despite this project being about identity maintenance through the *braai*, I chose to attend church services, attending an Afrikaans church community in the Northland region of New Zealand. This formed the

⁴⁸ As of 1 December 2023, this service ceased being available to all countries outside of the African continent.

primary environment through which individual participants were sought, and it formed the base for the community within which I could participate, creating relationships with people in the community through these church services, small groups and other community events (such as the *potjie*⁴⁹ *braai* described in Chapter Five).

The Afrikaans Church

I had visited the church once before, prior to COVID-19. I had originally intended to conduct research further south at two Auckland City-based Afrikaans churches. However, as it was closer to my home in the Northland region, I attended a Sunday service at the Northland church to test my fluency in theological Afrikaans.⁵⁰ During the pandemic, as lockdowns restricting non-essential movement between the Northland and Auckland regions became commonplace, I elected to conduct fieldwork entirely with the Afrikaans church community in Northland. I contacted the *dominee*,⁵¹ and after his discussion with the church board, I was granted permission to join the community and introduce myself and the project before a Sunday service. The *dominee* explained to me that, while Afrikaners are primarily linked to the Calvinist Protestant church, known as the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*⁵² ('Dutch Reformed Church', or NGK), he has a Baptist background, and his congregants come from a variety of Christian denominations. Thus, the church is 'non-denominational', though does adhere to a formalised creed and is certainly broadly Protestant in theology.

As the church community is relatively small and among relatively few options in terms of Afrikaans-language churches in the region, I have elected not to name the community nor differentiate between participant narratives, apart from describing gender, age and/or marital status where appropriate or necessary. This provides greater ambiguity between individual stories, thus granting as much anonymity as possible. As such, there is little I will say here about the church community and this study's participant pool. While it will be possible to

⁴⁹ ['po:i.ki]; 'little pot'; a cast-iron pot, usually with three legs built-in. Also the braai event where it is used. This is more deeply explained in Chapter Five.

⁵⁰ Most theological terms are remarkably similar to English and so I was assured that I would sufficiently comprehend sermons and what I expected would be the resulting post-service conversation.

⁵¹ ['do.mə.ni]; The title of the pastor of one of the three 'Sister' churches (see footnote #, below), however other Afrikaans denominations which would officially have a *pastoor* ['pas.to:r] use *dominee* too.

⁵² Sister organisations come under the names *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* ('Dutch Reformed Church', or NHK) and *Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* ('Reformed Churches in South Africa', or GKSA), however the NGK is the largest and most referred to in general conversation about the Reformed church organisations in South Africa. They are somewhat similar in doctrine to the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, yet more conservative (Finlayson, 2019).

identify the community, leaving it unnamed and without *specific* location, offers reasonable deniability with respect to identification.

As part of the church field site, I also attended a weekly *omgee groep*⁵³ run by the church but hosted in congregant homes. These groups were smaller, more relaxed and more conversational than church service events. They were designed to study a portion of the sermon's theme, or some other theological subject chosen by that week's host. However, they more often than not centred around bonding discussion, such as shared migration stories of attendees.

I was originally invited to attend a group by the *dominee*, who also attended the group. It turned out to be the single most fortuitous decision for becoming embedded into the community that I could have made. Attending these group sessions meant that I was able to become more familiar with individual members of the community, have informal chats, and eventually, even become friends with some of them. I found that once I had become more acquainted with members of the group, I was introduced, both intentionally and by social happenstance, to other members of the community.

The hall where the congregation met on Sundays was a community centre rented for that day only and so required some setup before services. Approximately 70 chairs were arranged on Sunday mornings with about half of these seating adult congregants. When the children arrived back from their separate services, these are filled up, from about two-thirds to almost full. As per the 2018 Census the year prior to fieldwork, Whangārei district had approximately 728 Afrikaans-speakers (Stats NZ, 2018b). The church I attended therefore gave access to around 10% of the Afrikaans-speaking community in the area.

After gaining access to the wider church community, I started attending Sunday services with my partner and children. We also stayed after the services for coffee and to chat with members of the church, often until the majority of congregants had left. Services were about an hour long, divided into around 20 minutes of singing praise and worship, 30 to 35 minutes for the *dominee*'s sermon and the remainder for church notices. Most congregants had left the church after 30 minutes or so of post-service chatting. At the first service I attended, the *dominee* invited me to introduce myself and the project at the opening of the service, when he normally announced community-relevant notices. I took this opportunity to distribute

⁵³ ['om.χɪə χrup]; “care groups”; a Bible study or cell group organised by a church.

Participant Information Sheets (see Appendix Three). I invited anyone who was interested or wanted to know more about the project to come and speak with me after services or contact me via the details on the information sheet. As individuals became interested in participating in the project, I asked for their contact details and offered them a Participant Consent Form (see Appendix Four) to look over. If I did not hear from them after about one week, I contacted them again to ask if they were still interested in participating. Prior to the first interviews, I ensured that each participant had signed the Consent Form.

Interview Participants

The form of interview method employed, as discussed below, is very in-depth, takes multiple sessions and extended session times, so it was important to limit the number of formal interview participants. At the beginning of the study, I had ten interview participants. Apart from two of these, every participant was married. Although not all spouses took an active role in participating in their spouse's interviews, some did attend, and added to, these interview narratives. Of the two unmarried participants, one was widowed, with the other in their early 20s and not in any relationship. Including active participant spouses, there were originally 15 participants and participant spouses. However, after the first set of interviews, some dropped out and I had seven participants for the final session of interviews (ten including active spouses), after the participant observation phase was completed.

With the exception of two couples, each participant was a regular attendee of the church's services. Of these, both identified as Christian, but one couple did not attend services at all and another attended an English-speaking, non-denominational church. Both of these couples dropped out after completing the first round of interview sessions, however they agreed to allow me to continue to use the data I already had from their interview narratives.

The length of time participants had been in New Zealand at the beginning of the study ranged from nine months to over a decade. I had originally intended for participants to have been in New Zealand for at least two years; however, on commencement it was clear that some of my most enthusiastic candidates for participation would have been in New Zealand for less time than that, including my primary interlocutor (the *dominee*). Thus, I decided to waive this, admittedly arbitrary, criterion.

I interviewed participants for the first round of interviews at the beginning of the nine-month period of fieldwork. The final interview was conducted toward the end of this period. During the time in-between, in addition to the participant observation that I elaborate on below, I asked participants to host a braai, inviting myself and whomever else they would like, making it as ‘typical’ a braai for them as possible. In total, I attended six participant braais during fieldwork. These were also supported by other non-fieldwork specific braais throughout the fifteen years of my personal association with the community.

Biographic Narrative Interview

The method of interview I used, Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM), was initially developed by Gabriele Rosenthal and Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal, who created it via linguistic methods for their post-World War II research (Wengraf, 2001). This has since been further developed and formalised by contemporary sociologists into a well-established method in the social sciences today. One of the more prominent of these sociologists is Tom Wengraf, whose discussion of the BNIM method I have adapted for the present study.

BNIM, as explained by Wengraf (Wengraf, 2001), is a method whereby the researcher returns for multiple (usually two) interview-parts, broken into three sub-sessions. The first interview sub-session begins with the interviewer asking a single macro-biographic question related to the research question, called a ‘Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative’ (SQUIN). Depending on the purposes of the study, this can be as broad as “tell me your life story” or reduced to a certain time period or event. Due to the aspects concerning migration, particularly in regards to emigrating from South Africa,⁵⁴ I elected no such timeline, but allowed the participant to identify an appropriate time to begin their narrative. As participants were already well-briefed on the study’s aim, via the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix Three) and discussion with me, I saw this as sufficiently reducing the amount of potentially ‘extraneous’ rhetoric while still allowing them the freedom to recount as they feel led.

While the participant told their story, I wrote notes while audio recording, being careful not to interrupt the flow of the story with related questions. The interviewer, using this method, is

⁵⁴ Because of the wide variety of factors that make up the decision to leave South Africa, the thought process toward migration may begin years before departure. One Australian study noted as many as 27 identifiably separable broad factors in the decision to migrate (Wasserman, 2016).

supposed to resist all urges to enter into a conversational style of interview, including prompts to do so by the participant. The idea here is to tip the balance of power in the direction of the participant, although Wengraf notes that silence can also be a form of exerting power, in this instance he is concerned with “a simple model of the *overt* use of power” (Wengraf, 2001). During the exercise of this form of interview, I combatted this ‘silence as power’ factor by simply explaining to participants what my role would be during interviews, as well as adopting relaxed posture, body movements⁵⁵ and informal conversational rhetoric. This, in conjunction with an already established relationship with participants, appears to have been successful in putting participants at ease.

Following this, a second sub-session took place, usually between 10 and 20 minutes after the first sub-session. During this time, I scanned my notes from the first sub-session, formulating questions from them. These questions, called Particular Incident Narratives (PIN), were designed to elicit a more detailed account of what was said in the first sub-session. Once ready for sub-session two, the interviewer asks questions specifically in the order that the subject arose during the first sub-session’s narrative. The reason for this, Wengraf (2001) says, is that “[t]he more free the behaviour was from external constraint, the more completely the internal dynamic could be expressed, and the more intelligible to the researcher that internal dynamic would then become”. However, I felt divided at this point, as this line of thought is contrary to Henri Bergson’s⁵⁶ idea that *durée* (‘duration’, time as consciousness) is not sequentially ordered, as per a *spatial* or physical understanding of time, but is intrinsically connected and melded into other concepts and memories of time.⁵⁷ That is, Bergson’s concept of time is dependent on the *mind* rather than the order of the physical world. Acknowledging Bergson’s *durée* led me to relax this rule slightly, allowing return visits to previous PINs as they arise, *based on the participant’s direction thereof*. However, from previous experience (Finlayson, 2019), the freedom from ‘external constraint’ suggested by Wengraf was indeed helpful in reducing interference from outside influences. It was also logical to order questions sequentially, as finding themes and arranging questions accordingly while a participant is waiting may have been taken as inconsiderate of the participant’s time.

⁵⁵ This generally consisted of not crossing my arms or legs, which I have a tendency to do when relaxed, yet has sometimes be mistakenly construed as conveying a sense of superiority or other negative feelings towards others.

⁵⁶ Bergson’s *durée*, and its related concepts of qualitative and quantitative multiplicities and homogenous and heterogenous time, are discussed throughout his many writings but most notably in *Time and Free Will* (Bergson, 1913), which introduces the concept, and *Matter and Memory* (Bergson, 1911).

⁵⁷ See Steven Caton’s (2014) essay for an extensive discussion on Henri Bergson’s *durée* being used for ethnographic purposes.

The overall discussion followed the order of my notes, based on the participant's initial narrative, but moved back and forth as related issues arose.

The third and final sub-session took place once all participants' first sub-session, second sub-session and hosted braai, described in the section below, had been completed. This final interview was more like a traditional question-and-answer, semi-formal but conversational style of interview; however, during the time between interviews, I analysed all initial interview data for themes and constructed questions based on this data.

For the purpose of the study, I generally relaxed what could arguably be critiqued as a fairly rigid method,⁵⁸ thus making the method more comfortable to participant and researcher. On first approaching the BNIM, I came to realise that the reason for its fixed form is that its primary aim is to render 'precise' data. Although this is a commendable aim, people are not mechanical but highly varied and fluid, and often just need enough freedom and comfort to express their views. Any attempt at enforced precision could be adversely construed as awkward and thus potentially render the method's desired precision *imprecise*. As such, rather than precision, I focused on achieving deep narrative to render a greater quality of understanding.

With respect to BNIM interviews, I took a stance between the informal and the formal, relaxing the highly-structured interview style to be more conversational and natural. This, combined with participant observation, textual analysis and some statistical data, set Afrikaner participants as the focal point, rather than apartheid or another theme, offering an entryway to understanding their subjective experience.

All interviews were audio-recorded, allowing me to focus on taking notes and not worry too much when I zoned out on the odd occasion.⁵⁹ I uploaded the resulting .mp3 file into Otter.io, which automatically transcribed the audio into text, with some manual editing afterward. Unfortunately, many of my participants had strong accents that were not automatically transcribable and so I used otranscribe.com to type them manually. These combined methods offered the fastest form of transcription while still enabling me to listen to interview material multiple times, allowing me to adequately process participant narratives.

⁵⁸ For a more common representation of BNIM being used in social science, see Carina Meares' (2007). sociological study on South African migrants in New Zealand.

⁵⁹ One interview lasted four hours excluding break times, due to the detail offered by the participant. The downside of BNIM's method is that it also leaves the timing up to the participant. In future studies, I would be clear about an absolute end time as I don't feel the added detail was helpful in this case.

I chose this method of interview for two primary reasons. First, I am very aware that I, like everyone, have biases that often operate incognito. This interview method gives almost complete control of the subject matter to participants, removing much of the interviewer's predetermined foci. Being a study in subjectivity and identity construction, it was important to me that I reduce my preconceptions – positive or negative – about how members of the community identify themselves. The method gave me confidence in the focus that the study took. Second, I have significant issues with social anxiety, and was unsure of my ability to listen, process the information I heard, construct a new question based on that information and speak it eloquently enough to be properly understood, without leading the answer, all in the same moment. Thus, in addition to the heavy pressure I felt regarding accurately representing the community I would eventually write about, I did not feel confident in my ability to interview without the structure that BNIM provided. I, therefore, chose this method both for the community's assurance that I would represent *their* views but also for my own security that anxiety would not disable me from conducting the study.

Participant Observation

I aimed to investigate Afrikaner identity intersubjectively which ideally requires one live the experience of Afrikaners. This is facilitated by participant observation, a method commonly attributed to Malinowski's seminal work in the Trobriand Islands during the second decade of the 20th century and which has since become the mainstay of anthropological research (Malinowski, 2014).

Participant observation, like the social setting it enters into, is an informal and varied method and so its form will differ between studies. Generally, though, the method involves the researcher entering into a community and, to varying degrees, becoming part of it, thereby achieving something approaching an insider's understanding. Observing and participating alongside community members in this way, within their social field, allows researchers to understand specific issues in their wider social context, in some ways, embodying participants' way of life.⁶⁰ This contextualisation is vital in assisting the formation of the 'right' questions to further enhance understanding about those whom the researcher is

⁶⁰ I noted a small, linguistic example of this where my New Zealand English accent began to morph noticeably, with my usual 'ee' [i:] and 'oo' [u] vowel sounds becoming slightly elongated, and more consistent with an Afrikaans pronunciation of South African English. This pronunciation shift was an involuntary result of a constant, protracted integration with the Afrikaans-speaking community.

studying. Simply put, “participant observation is a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) go on to offer three benefits of participant observation in social research: It encourages further research questions that may otherwise remain unasked and enhances the quality of data obtained and its subsequent interpretation. Regarding the latter, however, as Unger’s (2005) article on Charles Taylor’s philosophy and intersubjectivity as applied to Mennonite scholarship shows, one might better understand the people they are studying but the researcher’s personal prejudices and histories will always be loaded into the data’s final interpretation. This is a matter that cannot be avoided, however with careful consideration and constant awareness of the issue, the researcher’s bias can be minimised, and in many cases made transparent.

I conducted participant observation for this study by entering the aforementioned Afrikaans church environment, with permission from the church’s *dominee* who discussed it with his board of trustees. I attended as many church services as I could and involved myself in the church as much as possible, without actually becoming a full member of the congregation. I arrived early to help set up the chairs, I stayed behind to chat to lingering congregants, attended church events, smaller weekly study groups, hosted them in my own home, and met socially with friends that I and my family had made through attending services.

More formally, those who chose to engage as active interview participants were asked to host a braai of their own, with me in attendance, as well as other guests. I requested that hosts arrange the braai in as typical a manner as possible and that I be included, where possible, in any organisation (for example, setting up the table, lighting the braai, tossing the salad etc.). These participants would also be interviewed, as detailed in the above section.

I found that taking photographs at these fieldwork braais was often impractical and disruptive to the social atmosphere. The presence of a camera or phone noticeably altered participants’ behaviour, making interactions feel less natural. Furthermore, due to ethical considerations and the need to protect participant anonymity, I opted not to take extensive photos of individuals or their private spaces. As a result, the images presented in Chapter Four do not consist solely of photos taken during fieldwork but also include manufacturer stock images where necessary to illustrate key aspects of the braai setup and equipment while maintaining participant privacy.

A range of types of braais were held, some in participants' homes, others at a community event on public grounds. Some were small affairs, with just the participant couple and my family, or larger gatherings with two or three other families or larger still, consisting of much of the Afrikaans community. The equipment also varied greatly, which I describe in Chapter Four. This variety in size, place and equipment added nuance to the study, despite the smaller number of participants, allowing me to tease out the similar features across different 'versions' of the braai.

Working with the data

Once ethnographic data had been collected, I organised and analysed it without adhering to a specifically formal method, although in a manner resembling thematic analysis. As I was listening to interview audio multiple times, as well as being there in person, and experiencing participant observation first-hand, I was able to consider much of the data for an extended period of time. As a qualitative study, the analysis of fieldwork data revolved around identifying and examining coherent themes across participant narrative and experiences.

Additionally, some themes arose where interview narratives were consistent but where common experience regularly diverged from, which I also considered as significant. These ideas were noted as they arose and then come back to regularly, as they continued to emerge in the field, making additional note of any parallels or refutation of narrative in previous research. These notes formed the basis of the final set of questions posed to interviewees, as explained in the above section on BNIM.

Ethical considerations

The project was reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, receiving a Full Application approval (Application NOR 20/10). The research itself did not involve complex ethical issues; however, prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, I had originally intended to travel to Southern Africa for part of the fieldwork component of the study. One primary ethical consideration was to ensure my own safety during fieldwork in

Southern Africa. The area has statistically high levels of violent contact crime⁶¹, although as (De Kock et al., 2015) note, it is significantly less than the mid-1990s, but it remains high when compared globally. Applying for a Full Application, as opposed to Low Risk, meant I was sure to have thought through the details of my (eventually cancelled) travel and research plans. I could also generally give participants further security regarding their involvement in the study.

Another primary ethical consideration for the study in its final form was related to the potentially disturbing content of participant narrative. Indeed, many of my interviews resembled psychological therapy sessions with some participants admitting they felt 'lighter', thanking me for my time, saying: "[The interview] was very therapeutic for me. It helped me a lot to talk and to grieve and to get it off. So, you must send me the bill [laughs]. It was a good counselling session". I alleviated the issue of potentially re-experiencing trauma by reminding participants regularly of their right to withdraw from the interview, study or individual question at any given time. One participant divulged sensitive information, asking for it to be considered 'off the record'. In each case, I inquired as to how participants felt after all interviews had been completed, and no participant indicated that they suffered in any way.

Conclusion

As a qualitative, ethnographic study, this project used fairly standard processes to render social data, primarily participant observation supported by an interview method. Although this interview method is not commonly used in anthropological studies, it has significant advantages over other studies, both for participant control and researcher anxiety. Using these two methods for the Afrikaner community in Northland, New Zealand gave a nuanced profile of the community, showing both accord and inconsistency in the current body of Afrikaner research as well as socially, through popular Afrikaner narrative.

⁶¹ As explained, it should be noted that violent crime in South Africa disproportionately affects non-white South Africans, specifically black Africans in homicide and coloured South Africans in rape statistics (Silber & Geffen, 2009).

Chapter 4: Vignette prologue

Red fissure hypnosis

Nestled in the sagging canvas of a director's chair, I pinch the stem of a wine glass as if to say I care whether the liquid changes temperature. To be honest, I don't even know what I'm drinking apart from red, not too dry. I tell myself how damn pretentious I look and let the glass bowl slip into my cupped hand, mimicking the seat's fabric cradling my rear.

The courtyard feels large with just the three of us; me, the host and his friend. Oh, and the Newfoundland too – a beautiful creature, beloved by his owners, and as large as any one of us. He's lazing in front of the glass door, blocking any clandestine mixing between us and the women inside. My host has the fire started now and the smoke from the charcoal fire moves slowly out of the braai towards me. With barely an evening breeze, rather than rising up or floating down, it moves across the courtyard, enveloping the host and concealing the pavement between us. The cloud is inflating now, becoming more and more opaque until the fire is finally settled. Eventually the fire breathes in sufficient oxygen, thereby yielding less smoke and so the cloud dissipates. The dog's wandered off by then, giving me permission to refill my glass, but that can wait for now.

The Winter air's slightly chilly. I like being outside in this temperature; cold cheeks and huddling myself in a jacket. I'm wearing my favourite; a navy peacoat that's getting too small for the tail end of food-oriented fieldwork. I probably shouldn't have and I know I'll regret it tomorrow when it smells like stale, beefy smoke. Leave the smell in your clothes for too long and it ends up reeking like an unemptied ashtray, blended with a confusing mix of woody cologne and savouriness, hinting at dinner. Even covered up, it gets in your hair and on your skin, waking you in the morning with the regret of a shower not taken. It's hard to imagine how the smell of braai-fire can turn so vengeful. Like a drunken all-nighter, the wonderful scent of now matures into tomorrow's stench. 'Ugh', I think, 'dry-cleaning's so expensive here.'

Inhaling the present, I return from my thoughts. The courtyard's enclosed by their home with three sets of glass doors surrounding it and the hills in front. We're facing the East so the sun appears to set earlier here than down the road, as it descends below the house behind us. I stare up towards the horizon only a few kilometres away. The host's home is set in front of the hills just outside the city. A wall of black rises up in front of us, with a long crest lined in dark green suddenly meeting neon from the city lights behind it. Safe from the grind of tar

seal, concrete and wasted income, on this side of the hills we're treated to a view of the yellow-green glow from the city's lights, just emanating from behind the hill, as if held at dusk. It's weirdly beautiful.

My host, a late-middle-aged man, asks me how my research is going. He's intelligent and moves with an intentional calm; the kind of person self-important upstarts try to imitate, though he doesn't come across as such. I try to say that my research is going okay. Somehow, I slip – I was never very good at lying – and reveal that I don't know where I'm going with it yet. He then asks how much longer I have left of my studies, unintentionally reminding me there's plenty of time and to enjoy the moment. I let my back return to the chair and listen as my host talks about his fears for the future of world politics. Our views don't align precisely, but he's well-studied and supports his argument. It's a nice change from the haphazard conversations I try to avoid but are so prevalent. This is an interesting discussion and I haven't been forced to feign interest in sport or weather reports. I'm comfortable here.

We've all moved closer to the fire, standing around its periphery and our talk turns into social commentary, comparing America to New Zealand, always related back to South Africa. We're worried. Our host more than I, but then I have 20 years' or so worth of mistakes to make before I can obtain his wisdom. As cuts of meat are moved around the grill the fire warms my face. Each piece is sizzling now with a pop every now and then, as a speck of fat bursts out of place into the charcoal below. Upon landing in the embers, there's more sizzling but it's different now, more intense. The embers win out against the drop, seasoning the air and moving onto the next one.

I look over towards the hostess with some of the guests through the window. She's finished prepping the table and is sitting with my partner and another guest I haven't met. Their conversation is animated with wine glass-laden hands flying out in front of them, only just careful enough not to spill anything. With the classical music and double-glazing between us, I can't make out what the hostess is saying but the other two are listening intently, duplicating each other's body language. In unison, heads move up and mouths open slightly, appearing to release a surprised, 'Oh'. Next is the same head movement but coming down again with lips sealed, 'Mm'. Suddenly breaking formation, the friend jumps in and the hostess joins my partner, who's now turned to face the new speaker and the performance carries on.

About a year later, I remember the braai this vignette is based on; the conversation, the food, the good company. But I also remember the hypnotic red fissures from under and around charcoal embers. I remember the blackening landscape and orchestral music, the violin obstructed by the braai's sizzle, then the harp. The smell, first appearing with a cloud of smoke but lingering long after it dissipated, was a potent charge on the senses, not just permeating my body and clothes but also my experience.

Thinking back, I've had similar conversations with this host that were just as enjoyable and yet comparably forgettable. The food at his braai was great but not spectacular: lamb chops, green salad and cornmeal *pap*,⁶² standard braai fare really. The wine was good but then student life doesn't exactly afford one a taste for quality. Something *else* happened in-between the parts of this whole. Intertwined with sensory stimuli, the experience was altered and embedded within my memory, to be built upon by the next experience and the one that follows. Propped by olfaction, this braai – typical in every way apart from the classical music – became part of *my* history.

⁶² [pap]; 'porridge', a common braai-side dish served with a ratatouille-like sauce. Similar to American 'grits'.

Chapter 4: Of form and fire: The materiality of braai

Introduction

The braai is often referred to by Afrikaners as personally, culturally and socially very important for them, and this is transferred from South Africa upon migration. But what exactly *is* a braai? It may seem like a simple question and even I, until my previous Master's research project, had described it as 'proximal to the barbecue but with a distinct Afrikaner-South African flavour'. Yet, the concept I had imagined going into fieldwork, that I had developed over years of association with the community, quickly revealed itself as insufficient. The problem was that I had centred my internalised definition around the braai's *objectivity*. That is, what a braai looks like from the outside, both vessel and event, but I soon found that this is not the definitive pillar I thought it was. Through participant observation and interviews, further questions were raised about the meaning of the braai, particularly regarding this objective definition: Is the braai the same as a barbecue, only styled in a way that is attractive to South Africans? What physical form can the vessel take? Is the highly contentious gas-braai⁶³ still a 'braai' that just happens to use gas? Or is it a barbecue used by an Afrikaner? What is the key difference between a gas-braai and charcoal or wood-fired? And finally, if the physicality of the vessel can be determined, is a braai event still a braai even if there are no South Africans present? That is, does the *form* dictate the event? Always latent musings in some form or another, these questions surfaced more clearly during fieldwork via conversation in the field and participant-led interviews.

Out of all questions during interviews, those related to determining 'what a braai is' were the most difficult for participants to answer. When discussing the technicalities and specifics of the braai, they stuttered the most, used more verbal tics ("umm", "ahh", "hmm") and contradicted their own suggested responses more than in any other question regarding Afrikaner Being and sociality.⁶⁴ Each time specific material components of the braai were mentioned, they were followed by an opposing conjunction of some kind ('but...', 'although...' etc.). For example, one participant confirmed a common narrative on the

⁶³ As will be clear by the end of this thesis, a braai vessel that uses gas as fuel is a controversial issue in Afrikaner culture and so, to acknowledge both sides of this ongoing social debate, I have elected to hyphenate the term, 'gas-braai'. The more relaxed, 'braai', falls on one side of the debate and the purist, 'barbecue', on the other.

⁶⁴ I have adopted the term 'sociality' from Nicholas J. Long (2015, p.859), who explains it as the "ongoing, dynamic, and constitutive matrix of relations within which persons are forever in a state of becoming". It recognises the multiplicity of ways in which individuals, and therefore groups of individuals, come into being. It includes facets of capacity, cognition, perception, imagination, motivation and desire and can include not only human-human relations but also that of non-human and material relationality.

absolute need to braai over wood-fired coals, “...but we’ve become lazy so we also often use gas”. During participant observation, this variable came into play and I did experience a gas-braai on one occasion. Additionally, to allay any confusion, this event was confirmed as ‘a braai’ by its host and not just a foreign adaptation of the concept, known as ‘a barbecue’. Another participant, who used wood at his braai event, owned a gas-braai which he also referred to as ‘a braai’.

In light of these apparent contradictions, to demonstrate what ‘braai’ means in relation to Afrikaner identity, I first give a sense of its objective form, including that which a braai potentially *is not*. To that end, I will explain the various forms that braai vessels and related materials typically take as well as some notable social impact that these have on the event. These social impacts, though most relevant to this chapter’s narrative, will be important to pick up on in later chapters too. I follow this with an explanation of what a braai is, formulating the definition specifically through the analysis of a key functional component of its material culture. This analysis is discussed through various intersecting philosophies, notably those from Roland Barthes (1977), Jacques Derrida (1981) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012) with reference made to Anne Salmond’s (2014) discussion of Māori thought, as related to nature.

In the pages that follow, I also move beyond merely descriptive accounts of braai vessels and fuels to a more philosophical reading of the braai’s elemental core – the flame. Here I argue that the fire itself, as both object and agent, discloses the deeper dynamics of communal memory and longing that will be unpacked in Chapter Five’s treatment of nostalgia. By attending to how the flame gestures toward past gatherings even as it animates the present moment, we can better grasp how Afrikaner identity is continuously forged at the edge of the embers.

Materiality

The vessel

The braai vessel upon which hosts build their fires is a very important, personal choice. Depending on how unusual the vessel is, it was often the ice breaker for fireside conversation. Even if guests had attended a braai at the hosts’ home previously, the conversation is rehashed, either starting from scratch for new company or picking up where the last conversation left off. An example of the latter came from one host who had

previously said he wanted to try cooking pizza on his braai and the guest asked if he had tried it yet, the conversation ran on from this into others, first about braai-related matters and then other subjects. Given its importance, practically and socially speaking, there are many different varieties of braai vessel, from as simple as the squashed ball-shaped Weber braai to the much more extravagant NZD6000⁶⁵ Kamado Joe ceramic ‘egg’ braai, and a custom-built stainless-steel structure⁶⁶. The latter bespoke braai was so large that it occupied the entirety of the host’s courtyard, leaving room only for an outdoor lounge suite positioned against the back and a side wall stacked top to bottom with bags of charcoal.



Figure 5: The Kamado Joe (Kamado Joe NZ, 2025)

Regarding the images shown in this section, as explained in the Methodology, I felt awkward taking photos during fieldwork as whipping out a phone noticeably stifled the social atmosphere. For this reason, images of actual braais I attended are fairly limited and even more so when participant anonymity is taken into consideration. To preserve anonymity but still give the most detailed explanation here, I have included stock images from the manufacturer, rather than those taken on the day.

⁶⁵ Approximately USD4100 at the time of writing.

⁶⁶ I am also aware of built-in braais and permanent outdoor cooking structures common in South African domestic architecture; however, these were not encountered during fieldwork. This may reflect participants’ housing conditions in New Zealand, where most were renting rather than owning property.

The 'Bespoke' and 'Kamado Joe'

I did not measure the Bespoke (*figure 6*), but I estimate the whole structure would have been approximately four metres in diameter. The cooking area spanned about three metres, with a central, removable funnel to build the fire and grill plates under which the charcoal is spread wherever they are needed. The circumference was lined with a metre-wide teppanyaki-style bar table around its edge, designed with hinges to lower for easier access to the cooking surface. It was obviously designed with a clear social objective, but perhaps not one which first impressions give. At first glance, it seemed that an attempt had been made to be the Jones' that everyone else must keep up with. Yet, through interviews and informal, braai-side conversation, it is clear that these hosts are not bothered much by what others think of them but have an incredibly strong commitment to family and meaningful relationships. Over the course of multiple conversations, they reiterated that their primary focus is cultivating social enjoyment together with family and close friends.



Figure 6: The Bespoke (author's own)

This braai, with all the effort and expense that went into its creation, was designed to bring *relationships* into focus, rather than the hosts' wealth. Its design also places the fire in the middle of the conversation, perhaps echoing the historical narrative through which braai practice itself was created: the Great Trek. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the modern social braai practice first developed when Voortrekker and Trekboer groups would meet in the wilderness of South Africa after moving from the Cape, sitting around the fire and sharing stories of their own trek experiences. The Bespoke's design fosters a kind of re-

enactment of this narrative, where those who trekked to the hosts' home can swap tales of life in the concrete wilderness of New Zealand, and their journey to it, seated at a bar around a central flame.

Another braai vessel option I saw during fieldwork is the *Kamado Joe* (figure 5). Becoming more popular over recent years, the bright red, egg-shape is used as a braai by one participant in the study, as well as a few other braaiers⁶⁷ in the wider community that I am acquainted with. This braai is designed to cook in a variety of ways, including as a pizza and roasting oven, a smoker and is configurable to heat different sides of the grills to different temperatures. The vessel itself is red glazed ceramic and comes with an astonishingly long list of features and innovations. The Kamado Joe was hard to miss from across the kitchen-dining area of one of my host's home, with its cobbled red crest peering out from the bottom of a courtyard window. Based on traditional cooking appliances of Japan and Korea (Kwang-on, 2017), its culturally displaced 'egg' shape makes it just as ostentatious as the Bespoke but without its interactivity and associated bulk.

The host who used this braai was accused by another participant couple as 'showing off' and referencing social competition, a theme somewhat aligned with South African class consciousness, discussed in Chapter Seven. In an interview, the couple made a quip at this host's expense, suggesting that he owns that braai for the express purpose of winning a kind of social competition:

Wife [to husband]: I have a question; do you find sometimes that it's also a way for men to show off? How well equipped they are for a braai?

Husband: You get that type of person. Like [the Kamado Joe braai], he's always got the best and the latest. He's got the thing that looks like a rock.⁶⁸ But I've never been competitive in that sense.

Wife: Yeah, some people are a bit different in that sense.

Husband: I'm more inclined to comfort. You know, I don't want to sit and struggle in the smoke and wind to get a fire going and things like that. That's why I like the Weber [discussed below]: it's the perfect middle road for me.

⁶⁷ A term used by participants to denote the person actively tending the braai grill.

⁶⁸ This refers to the rough, indented surface on the Kamado Joe braai.

The Kamado Joe braai event was outwardly very similar to others but had a slightly stifled atmosphere hindering the usually relaxed feel of these events. An example here can be found in the body language of myself and other guests at the event. I noticed that I had involuntarily kept my hands under the table, fingers locked together as if I were a naughty child whose deed had not yet been discovered. Realising this, I looked to other participants' movements as well. Body language was generally more muted than at other braais. Guests' hands mostly remained out of view and the event as a whole was more stationary compared with others, with most guests remaining seated throughout the evening. While sitting, backs were kept more upright than at other braais, where guests tended to lounge in seats, often at as much as 45-degree angles. It felt more formal, yet unintentionally so. Guests seemed as if they had not known the hosts very well, but apart from myself, all those present had had a years-long relationship. This braai remained enjoyable and once talk about the braai had ended, the conversation turned to some of the most interesting I had during fieldwork.

However, over the years, this muted behaviour is something I have noticed at other braais with 'flashy' equipment, where the braai vessel itself dominates the event. At these events, equipment and socialisation reverse roles in their perceived importance, and interaction changes from a relaxed environment to a more purposeful and considered mode of being. The Kamado Joe is an expensive piece of equipment, something that is obvious given its design and the high-quality materials used to construct it. Spending significantly on a piece of equipment like a braai vessel, sends a message that the braaier who owns and uses it, is serious about braai practice, places high value on it and, as suggested by participants, may view it competitively. That same message is conveyed with the Bespoke. Someone who invests money and effort to design and construct the braai, emphasises the value they place on it.

Yet, the response from the community between these, the two most ostentatious braais, is quite different. The owner of the Bespoke was highly praised and I was told he would offer a "top" braai experience. The difference here lies in the Afrikaner 'ingenuity'. The Bespoke braai, though very well-crafted, is obviously homebuilt and appeared to take more effort and thought in enhancing the social atmosphere. Such actions align with the 'n Boer maak 'n plan',⁶⁹ innovative attitude that is highly valued in Afrikaner narrative. Norman (2016) wrote

⁶⁹ "A Boer makes a plan". This phrase is analogous to the 'number 8 wire' tradition in New Zealand, denoting an attitude that whatever the job is, an Afrikaner can make it work with their wits and whatever they have

about the phrase in her ethnography on post-nationalist Afrikanerdom, *Bridge of Blood River*, and through her informant Willem, relates the phrase directly to the performance of Afrikaner masculinity and in turn, tying this to economic status:

For Willem, dawdling about... is out of the question. He once had to borrow money from his parents and felt his masculinity take a blow for it. As an Afrikaner you are expected to manage your life at all times, to make the hard decisions. '’n Boer maak ’n plan, a Boer makes a plan – that encapsulates so much. You solve the problem,' says Willem. (p.221)

In comparison with the Bespoke's ingenuity, the Kamado Joe required significant financial resources, likely more than the Bespoke, but certainly less ingenuity. Further, the Bespoke is downplayed in its relatively simple design and unadorned metal and wood aesthetic; incredible though it is, few would call it aesthetically 'beautiful'. The shape, texture, materials and colour of the Kamado Joe, however, make it a functional *objet d'art*. These two vessels stand-out equally, but for very different reasons. The contrasting reactions were not directed at the braais themselves, but the *perceived* intent of the owners who bought or made them. Whether or not the Kamado Joe was purchased to 'show off' (I did not ask), is irrelevant, the displaced cultural aesthetic of the Kamado Joe correlated with a perception of *values*.

Among South African migrants in New Zealand, there is a latent, inwardly directed scepticism and negativity toward the usual class-consciousness experienced among the community in South Africa. Recent research on South African society indicates that, while racial inequality remains structurally significant, class has become an increasingly visible way in which inequality is experienced and discussed in the post-apartheid era (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010; Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). Correspondingly, an awareness of class-related matters, like what car one drives and where one lives, is often described in Afrikaner social research (Blaser, 2012; Sonnekus, 2014). Many Afrikaners, including participants in this study report hearing, or being subjected to, migrants vetting potential new friends with questions designed to determine the respondent's class position. Those who recalled these

available. Participants related this cultural mantra to the sanctions placed on South Africa by the international community during apartheid. Sanctions made resources harder to find and therefore enhanced the innovative attitude among Afrikaners, many of whom were farmers.

situations expressed irritation with South Africans, saying it reminded them they do not have to cling to South Africa in New Zealand.

Both participants, the owners of the Bespoke and the Kamado Joe, told me their employment history in South Africa and New Zealand and framed their current wealth in terms of hard work, sometimes taking a mental and physical toll. This work afforded them both a certain status in society, including within the migrant Afrikaner community. At the same time, this should not be read to mean that hard work alone straightforwardly explains wealth accumulation, as broader structural conditions also shape who is able to accumulate and display wealth. The different responses from the community regarding how they displayed that wealth demonstrate an underlying value in braai culture and the Afrikaner community: ‘ostentatious’ display is acceptable so long as it is perceived to arise from socially valued traits, especially labour performed in the service of social interaction and relationships.

The Weber and the Drum

The ball-shaped Weber-style (*figure 7*) of braai was the most common vessel across all braai events that I attended. This American-designed type of braai is made from porcelain-enamelled steel and has become iconic of the American brand since the 1950s. When asked about the reasons to braai with a Weber, participant responses centred on ease of use, its smaller size, cost effectiveness⁷⁰ and that they were generally more ‘practical’. One participant had two Weber braai vessels, with one being slightly smaller than the other. On the evening I joined him for a braai, he used the larger to cook the majority of the food and moved some of its coals to the smaller, where he roasted a rack of lamb at a different temperature, making an oven by closing the vessel with its domed lid. The participant said that racks of lamb were exceptional for them at a braai but he thought it would be an interesting venture to try.

⁷⁰ At the time of writing, an authentic ‘Weber® Original Kettle Premium 57 cm’ cost NZD519 (USD325).



Figure 7: The Weber (Weber.com, n.d.)

Another commonly used style is the Drum. I have been told that a homespun version of this style was very common in decades past, where an old oil drum was halved lengthways and hinged back together again. Steel legs would be added to the one half as well as small internal ledges upon which old grill-grates would rest (see *figure 8*). This homemade braai has been revered as a “regte⁷¹ braai” [real braai] by some Afrikaner braai purists that I have spoken



Figure 8: The home-made Drum (Smous, 2016)

with over the years. However, throughout fieldwork, the drum-style structures that I saw were manufactured, branded units (*figure 9*, back), though I have seen homemade ones being sold

⁷¹ [ˈrɛχ.tə]

online in New Zealand. The drum often had a secondary unit, as with the Weber. One participant who cooked on a drum-braai had welded legs to the crenelated internal drum of an old clothes dryer (*figure 9*, front, see also the next chapter's *figure 11*). He used this to burn his wood before adding the resulting charcoal to the main braai. This allowed him to refuel the braai without adding flame or smoke while braaiing meat, increasing the length of cooking time.



Figure 9: The bought Drum, back, with clothes dryer wood burner, front (author's own)

Weber vessels, being so common, subsequently tended to create the least amount of conversation, with the only conversation regarding it being when I asked why they chose this style.⁷² Drums created some discussion, sometimes being compared to the homemade oil drum I mentioned earlier, but discussions were short-lived. Whereas the Bespoke and the Kamado Joe would dominate five to ten minutes of fairly natural discussion. However, as with these two, the clothes dryer drum caused lengthy discussion regarding its creation, where the braaier sourced the materials, whether it was made by himself or not and how he uses it. The conversation was finished with approvingly nodded heads and a “Wow. Mooi man.”⁷³ [Wow. Nice one, man.]. Again, ingenuity and a ‘do-it-yourself’-ness is demonstrated as highly valued in a braai environment.

⁷² Not all units were Weber-branded but all braais with this shape were referred to as a Weber, whether the company had made it or not. I have owned one of these braais myself, made by South African braai and barbecue manufacturer, Cadac.

⁷³ [mo:i man]; a phrase expressing approval, similar to New Zealand’s “Good on ya.”

The Gas-braai (or the Not-a-Barbecue)

There was one other type of braai that featured during fieldwork, one that was fuelled by gas. This type of braai is very common in backyards across the West and will be recognisable to many, whether they personally own one or not. It is a large stainless-steel structure with a hooded lid and small preparation tables, about a foot wide, on either side of the grill. They often sit atop a cabinet that houses the gas bottle and tools and raises the cooking surface to comfortable grilling height. In addition to the gas-braai, the participant who had this also had a very small, round charcoal-fuelled braai that measured only about one foot in diameter and two in height. Given its small size, it was reserved only for a small evening meal for him and his wife or taken when travelling. It was not used during his braai event.

I was initially surprised to see a gas-braai vessel, since popular Afrikaner culture dictates that the only fuel which may *not* be used at a braai is gas. Surprisingly, this sentiment was even used by this same participant. During conversations with the participant, both during interviews and informally, he referred to gas-braais as ‘barbecues’ when speaking about the cooking apparatus. However, when I asked for clarification about the event he organised for fieldwork, he maintained that it was indeed “a braai” and that this is how he would normally braai in New Zealand. Thus, his ‘barbecue’ embodied the ‘braai’, contrary to the traditional cultural narrative and his own subsequent definition.

This vessel has many names in Afrikaner rhetoric, including ‘outdoor oven’, ‘Barbie queue’, ‘giant frying pan’, ‘braaibecue’ and ‘gas braai’, most often called a ‘barbecue’ in English. Many of these are usually designed to invoke a giggle, but the underlying idea is that there is something inherently wrong with a braai that is fuelled by gas, as I will further explore below and in the following chapters. In his interview, this participant jokingly said that there are few requirements for a “real South African braai” but one of them is that “you don’t do it on gas, that’s a barbecue... but, I mean, we’ve become lazy so we often use gas”. Shortly after this, his voice sobered and slowed, lowering in tone as he explained that meat was important, “Not Sizzlers.⁷⁴ Not [hamburger] patties... *meat*.”, repeating this for emphasis. To this participant, a wood-fired braai had some importance but there are more pressing matters and the type of *meat* had far greater significance. These sentiments were reiterated by another participant and his wife, who hesitated when I asked whether a New Zealander could braai, not wanting to

⁷⁴ A brand name of short, precooked sausages, sometimes with processed cheese at its centre, that are mainstay on many New Zealand fridge shelves, much to the disdain of Afrikaner migrants. I further discuss food in Chapter Five.

consider the braai an ethnically exclusionary activity. Again, he started by saying that there are no ‘rules’, nor should there be any, governing a braai but also that hamburger patties do not equate to a “successful” one, demonstrating the disparity between individuals and within individual narrative.

The fuel

These five different types of vessels discussed above, used one of three fuels to make the fire used for cooking. The final vessel I wrote about, the gas-braai, is mechanically inseparable from its fuel but for the others there are options: wood and charcoal, either natural lump or briquettes. There is a definite hierarchy here, based on various sources, including participant narrative, community stories of home and social media posts. In this hierarchy, wood is revered as the go-to fuel of traditional practice, either type of charcoal is acceptable, and while still used, gas comes with social disapproval.

However, the use of wood as fuel was relatively uncommon, at least compared with the amount of veneration it received. It was often referred to particularly while the host was lighting and then tending the braai. If hosts used charcoal, they would talk about the wood they used in South Africa or simply state that wood is better to cook with. As opposed to charcoal or gas, not only was braaiing with wood revered, the *type* of wood that is used was important too. Participants recounted that, in South Africa, there are a few varieties of wood that are prized primarily for their density and the smell of the smoke that it creates. Density, I was told, dictates the temperature of the fire. A very dense wood will also take longer to burn down, promoting the all-important social environment. The final quality is that wood has natural oils which, as it burns, perfume the atmosphere and flavour the smoke, which is imbued into the food. Favoured woods were *kameeldoring* (*vachellia erioloba*), *sekelbos* (*dichrostachys cinerea*) and *rooikrans*⁷⁵ (*acacia cyclops*), as they all burn hot and long. In New Zealand, the native pioneer shrub, manuka/tea tree (*leptospermum scoparium*), was said to be the best local alternative source. Even outside of the community, in the wider regional community, it is generally regarded as the best firewood for heating in New Zealand and for smoking meat or fish.

⁷⁵ [ka'miəl.duərn] camel thorn, [sɪə.kəl.bɒs] sicklebush and ['rɔi.krans] red-eyed wattle, respectively.

In practice, however, charcoal briquettes were used far more often than wood, and lump charcoal was never used in the braais I attended (though I have seen it at Afrikaner braais over the years). Briquettes are made from compacted biomass waste products (e.g., sawdust or waste charcoal), and a binder (e.g., maize starch). Due to the compaction process, briquettes have a high density and so burn longer at a lower temperature than traditional lump charcoal (Mwampamba et al., 2013). Using them on the braai is a fairly straightforward process – they light easily and the braaier just needs to wait until they turn grey before cooking. Participants said they chose briquettes over lump charcoal for the longer burn time and greater temperature control. Convenience in lighting and storage were also mentioned as benefits, however it lacks the flavouring from the oils in wood.

Overall, the choice of fuel seemed to be determined by a tension between convenience and nostalgia and perceived authenticity. Each participant greatly valued the braai, in whichever form it took, but the degree to which participants expended resources of money, time, intentional thought and effort in cultivating the braai experience was individualised. Hosts who used wood seemed to be recreating the braai as it was in South Africa, where wood is more easily sourced. This was clear in the way they talked about the wood while lighting it; nostalgic, comparative references to braais in South Africa were more prevalent, detailed and longer. Those who made clear that they valued a more *comfortable* social experience seemed to opt for briquettes, a fuel that is comparatively easier to store and light.

Having referenced braaiers who were seen to spend a lot of financial resources on the braai, a participant who uses briquettes on a Weber said:

[We] are not attracted to the idea of going through hell just to make a social evening work. We would rather do it on our own here, with two best friends, just the four of us. Keep it simple and nice and have good conversation.

Here, they explain their *primary* focus as socialising with a comfortable atmosphere. The material *functionality* of the braai was not important, rather it is a vehicle for facilitating a social environment. The Bespoke braai host, of whom I was told is “‘n braaibaas,⁷⁶ by hom kry jy die beste braai” [a braai-boss, you’ll get the best braai at his place], is another example. As explained, it was clear that his focus was on creating and maintaining social bonds. Although he went to great lengths to do this, the majority of his effort was concentrated

⁷⁶ [ˈbra:i.ba:s]; ‘braai-boss’, someone who braais very well.

outside of the braai event, for example, through the construction of his braai and a bulk purchase of briquettes. The braai events he held, though praised by the community, required less energy to host them. Compared with other braais, little effort was expended *during* the time of the event and so attention could be turned to socialising with guests. Other braai events included music, dishes arranged with obvious intent and other minor details of flair that are rarely commented on but often prevalent and added to the ‘specialness’ of the event. With the event being so minimalist, relationship-building through conversation could be its only focus.

Lighting the fire

By the time hosts are ready to start their braais, they will already have ensured that everything they need is at hand in the braai area. This includes long-handled tongs, whichever fuel they are using, their drink and sometimes an enclosed grill cage for easier turning. Along with charcoal, hosts will also have *blits*⁷⁷ firelighter blocks. These are small, white cubes of kerosene, gelled into a solid with urea formaldehyde resin which remove the need for tinder and kindling. Once lit, the blocks do not burn hot or long but enough to kindle whatever fuel is being used. At every braai I attended, hosts used firelighters to light their braai. Participants explained that these are a modern addition to the braai, and growing up, they would use scrunched up newspaper balls and kindling instead.

If the host is using charcoal, they will pour briquettes out of the bag into a mound in the centre of the braai vessel and wedge three to five firelighters into the sides. The firelighters are lit and allowed to burn with the lid kept off the braai. I have previously seen Afrikaners light a charcoal fire using firelighters to light kindling, which in turn lights the charcoal. Lighting sans kindling, though, is far more prevalent and the only method I saw during fieldwork. Once the briquettes start burning, the fire’s heat transfers leisurely from briquette to briquette with the mound gradually turning into a mass of leaden grey, flecks of orange and red escaping from its centre. Once this happens, the braai is technically ready for cooking. In Afrikaner practice, however, the charcoal’s gradation signals the need for additional briquettes, and in some cases, a second refuelling after that. The opinion of many in the community is that repeated refuelling means that the heat can be spread across the whole base of the braai vessel, heating the whole grill rack above it. In this case, more is

⁷⁷ [blots]; literally ‘lightening flash’. Derived from a popular South African brand name, ‘Blitz Firelighters’.

more. Top-ups also add *time* to the braai being ready giving hosts, as opposed to fuel and fire, the final word over when it is time to cook and therefore eat.

If wood is used, the process is slightly different. The logs chosen must be a dense hardwood with a fairly low moisture content, seven to ten centimetres in diameter and around 30 to 45cms long. The exact length is determined by braai size. Hosts use firelighters here too but place them huddled together in the middle of the vessel and light them first. Wood pieces are laid around and over the flame, creating a cubic structure of perpendicular wood pieces housing it. Two logs are placed in the base of the vessel either side of the firelighter. Another two pieces will be stacked on top of the first two, but perpendicular, creating the base for a roughly arranged cube. As if playing with Lincoln Logs, the third and fourth levels will follow the same perpendicular stacking pattern but another piece or two will be added in the middle, creating platforms. On paper, this sounds much more precise than in looks in practice. These ‘cubic structures’ rarely resemble a cube in the mathematic sense, due to the irregular shape of the wood. Once arranged, hosts will allow it to burn down a little, 20 to 30 minutes, and then generally add on more wood. I observed this same structural fire-building pattern in every case.

After about an hour, the wood will have mostly transformed into hot coals and hosts then demolish the already half-crumbled structure with long-handled tongs. The tongs used are generally the same ones used for handling the food while cooking but some will have two sets. Upon demolishing the structure, a balloon of smoke and glint quickly climbs out of the braai vessel. When I braai in this way, this part usually catches me off-guard, despite being the one initiating it, leaving me with tearing eyes and checking my clothes for drifted embers. Hosts I saw appeared unflinching, perhaps expecting the embers’ manifestation but barely moving from its path and not seeming to feel any aftereffects. No-one could tell me what they do differently, just that you get used to it, demonstrating Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) ‘lived body’, whereby the individual relates to the world by moving within it with tacit bodily motility (‘body schema’). This exemplifies the thrust of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, built upon Edmund Husserl’s (2012), in that everything has a horizontal element from a subjective perspective, including the body. Moving through the world allows the lived body to presuppose potential horizons with history building upon history, cohering into present, resulting in a world of potentiality. Without conscious thought, Afrikaners anticipate the smoke’s trajectory, the potential pain it inflicts and adjust minute features of their world, likely including their physical bodies to some degree, in order to avoid that anticipated pain.

Theorising the braai

From this account, the most standout characteristic evident from descriptive accounts is that the physicality of the braai is variable and based on *individual* preference. The form of braai vessel, tools and fuels can be adapted to suit one's values or resources. In fact, the most consistent feature was the use of firelighters. None of these objects, however, get quite so much attention as the gas-braai. Compared with its wood-fired counterpart, it carries with it a weight of social tension. As explained, traditional and widespread public narrative dictates that the only requirement for a braai is that it be fuelled by charcoal in any form, or preferably, wood. Yet, the participant who used gas confirmed that theirs was indeed a braai and another explained that, in addition to his charcoal braai, he had a second gas-braai and calls it a 'braai'. A third expressed exasperation that the conversation even exists, talking about *all* non-normative braai practices and antagonistic reaction to them, he explained that "...people who go 'no, no, no, no, no' argh... they actually piss me off. There shouldn't *be* any rules!" Scrolling through braai-focused groups on social media sees many South Africans, including Afrikaners, using a gas-braai and calling it a 'braai', even in English text. In the latter, however, there is often commentary asserting that a gas-braai is *not* a braai but almost as frequently those who support the gas-braai, saying these instances are braais. Often this is followed by a statement like 'everyone should just get over themselves'. This social, back-and-forth debate makes pinpointing a cohesive element to the braai's 'essence', phenomenologically speaking, difficult in relation to material culture.

When asked directly, participants in the study could not settle on an explanation as to what the braai meant to them or Afrikaners as a community whole. Deceptively complex, they got lost searching for *the* definition within the braai's plurality of significance, alternating between physical form and social significance ('braai', the equipment, 'braai', the event and 'braai', the action). One participant relied on pulling apart linguistic parameters, explaining that culturally it relies on one definition, but subjectively another, eventually saying that a braai is a braai simply "because *I'm* doing it". The problem here is that subjective understanding was born from a cultural one. Braai praxis, being so dependent on interaction, cannot exist in a subjective vacuum apart from the collective, necessitating that both be considered simultaneously. That lands us in the classic anthropological structure-agency debate. To examine this in relation to Afrikaner Being and braai practice, I take Derrida's

(1981) thoughts on binary relationship, *différance*, into consideration with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.⁷⁸ First, though, I examine the braai from a functional perspective.

Functionality: The object problem

As can be seen on social media debates and, to a degree, through participant narrative, the question of what a braai is, often gets directed toward physical form, that which I described earlier in the chapter. This makes for a clear-cut, axiomatic explanation but means that the braai is a barbecue and the barbecue a braai but what I experienced during fieldwork, perhaps benefiting from my status as the Other, indicated more than that. Additionally, this resulting definition is one that most participants could not agree to either, despite raising it as an option. To understand the braai vessel as a 'South African barbecue' is equivalent to physical reductionism, removes a quality of the braai that is integral to it, the subjective *human* experience of interacting with it.

In practice though, Afrikaners do describe objects used as braai vessels as 'barbecues' and conversely those traditionally thought of as barbecues (i.e., gas-fuelled 'outdoor kitchens') as '(gas) braais'. But that practice is broken down by the same people who use it. So, the question then becomes, if a braai vessel cannot be a barbecue but simultaneously can, how does one disentangle these words while continuing to give Afrikaners agency over the language used to determine their own cultural practice? The discussion appears even more intricate upon consideration of the vessel's *intended* purpose, from the designer's point of view.

While the Bespoke was built with braai events in mind, the Kamado Joe was designed and constructed by an American company, based on a Japanese appliance, and purchased for use in New Zealand. As far as I am aware, there was no braai event considered in the Kamado Joe's inception. However, both were made or purchased for use by end-users with the express intention of using them for *braai* events. Does intent of design or utilisation make any difference here? Examining this may indicate whether a gas-braai is a braai at all, or if it is a

⁷⁸ These two philosophies may seem at odds with one another, especially since much of Derrida's work was a rebuttal of Husserl and Heidegger, the forerunners to Merleau-Ponty. However, *différance* works well as a primer philosophy, bringing clarity before clouding it up again with phenomenological analysis. As Nicholas Royle (2003, p.76) quite rightly stated, "*différance* is the 'concept' of what makes concepts possible".

barbecue that is used and labelled as a braai by the *individual* Afrikaner using it (apart from the collective).

Roland Barthes (1977) wrote in his now famous essay, *The Death of the Author*, that the express intention of the creator of a work of writing loses its ownership over the discussion of what it means, upon being read by another. He suggests that, within the consciousness of the specific reader of that piece of writing, it becomes something else entirely as it interacts with the established, and ever-changing, subjectivity of the person reading it

...the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*. (Barthes, 1977, p.145, emphasis in original)

Since originally publishing the essay, Barthes' literary theory has been expanded to applications in other forms of art and social phenomena, as I do here.

Beth Preston (2013) discusses this similarly in her book examining object meaning through the relationship of designer intent and actual use. She explains that designer intent (its 'proper function') is but one factor in the hierarchy of object functionality and that end-user innovation must be factored into thought about that object. As with Barthes interpretation of an author's text, object design is not a solitary effort but one that comes about through social collaboration. She goes on to examine 'function' through the lens of novel creativity; both novel in the sense of serving a novel function or novel implementation, adapting an already present function in a novel way. It is possible to see both of these playing out in braai practice as well. Originally, the only cooking fuel option available was wood until briquettes were manufactured from sawdust waste for the general market in the mid-20th century. This is a form of novel function and is acceptable in Afrikaner braai culture. Applied to the Kamado Joe we can see novel implementation. Though not intended to be a braai when originally designed and built, it *becomes* a braai upon interacting with the cultural subjectivity of Afrikaners. It loses its status as 'barbecue' and is moved into the space of 'braai', transcending socio-cultural boundary lines, seemingly agreeing with Preston's (2013) insistence that "there do not seem to be any grounds for privileging designers' intentions over users' intentions". Thus, neither form nor functionality serve as critically meaningful representations of Afrikaner braai culture.

However, unlike Kamado-Joe's, gas-braais are often exempt from these kinds of interpretations and so the issue circles back to the beginning. Through fieldwork observations and interview material, I have witnessed the collective definition of the braai become entangled with individual subjectivities acting within a cultural framework. Conceptually, what a 'barbecue' is for one Afrikaner is, in practice, a 'braai' for another, simply because they intend it so, exemplified in the narrative of a participant who believes strongly that braais should be wood fired. Yet, when I asked why he refers to his secondary, gas braai as 'a braai', he explained that it is "because *I'm* using it". Additionally, during another interview, this participant said he had a gas-braai for when it rains, couching this in "getting old" and wanting something that is "just easier". However, as it rained during the braai I attended, using a wood braai in the presence of company (i.e., a 'braai event') appears to take precedence over ease of use. Finally, I was told by another participant the story of an acquaintance having hollowed-out a gas-braai, retrofitted for use with charcoal, much to the delight of his South African friends. Again, this demonstrates 'ingenuity' as highly valued, touched on earlier in the chapter, and a reduced emphasis on the vessel's physical form, since a gas-braai, used with other fuels, is a legitimate form of braai when not used with gas.

So, referring to my argument a few paragraphs back, if calling a 'braai' a 'barbecue' removes its specific subjective and experiential quality, thereby removing its unique braai-ness, then its meaning must necessarily be inherent to the subjectivity of the person experiencing it. The meaning of the braai vessel is given by the individual using that specific vessel at that time. It follows then that mere existence of the physical object that is the braai vessel does not in itself constitute a braai but rather the presence *and* associated perceptions of those individuals (i.e., within a collective) that interact with that object. The braai, vessel and event, is determined by the subjective, perceived realities of the those present. To reiterate my participant's earlier statement: A barbecue may constitute a braai if it is used as a braai, by a braaier. Although this definition was born from discussion that unwittingly enforced intentional, deliberated parameters in defining the braai, clearly the specific physical *form* of braai vessel is not a definitive issue of '*the* braai', at least not in terms of Afrikaner cultural Being.

I do not at all propose to discount these narratives out of hand, or to say that Afrikaners do not know themselves well enough to understand what is happening. But they appear to be highly *individualised* accounts that are not necessarily representative of a socially cohesive component that underlies braai praxis. Single, solitary, individual narrative is not enough to

describe a co-compared established truth against the collective. Here, I am conscious of Michael Jackson's (1983) words:

...the anthropologist who seeks to reduce bodily praxis to the terms of verbal discourse runs the risk of falsifying both... It is because actions speak louder and more ambiguously than words that they are more likely to lead us to common truths; not semantic truths, established by others at other times. (p.339)

What I am looking for in this examination of the braai is that invisible, oxygenic element that has kept it alive and burning at the heart of Afrikaner culture.

Feeling participant narrative

The problem is that I had proposed the question of what a braai is from the wrong angle. Instead of focusing on the objects and the impact they had on braai practice, I needed to focus on participants' emotional responses, working backwards to the source of that affect. What these verbal accounts did not adequately convey is the emotion with which Afrikaners remember specific braais they have attended or hosted with friends and family back home. On the topic of the braai, interview responses, as well as informal conversation (after church, at bible studies or around the braai), differed except in one major area: engagement of the senses. When participants were not forced to consider what the braai means as an abstract concept and becoming entangled with what it *should* be, they indicated what is important. In addition to social engagement (the topic of later chapters), participants recalled the nostalgic taste of familiar food, the smell of braai smoke and the sound of crackling wood being subdued by fire.

These descriptions relied heavily on sensation memory that required the fullness of the speaker's senses to experience the history, immersing the listener (that is, myself). In such accounts, one can not only *see* the braai, but *smell* it. You can see the sun setting on the horizon of the bushveld and hear participants' fathers, sisters, friends telling a joke or gossiping in the background, both to boisterous laughter. Transported to suburbia, tufts of white-grey cloud stream up from behind a neighbour's fence, the scent of smoke imbued with drops of melted fat recalls a specific cut that produced it. The familiar sound of *boerewors*⁷⁹ sizzling is recounted with men's hunting trips and women's recipes for making the sausage,

⁷⁹ ['bu.rə.vɔrs]; a coriander seed-flavoured beef sausage.

leaving with it the taste of coriander seed. Participants injected nostalgia into their narratives via affected bodily memory:

The real special braais [...] it's when you're out there somewhere in the big open South Africa, like in the Kalahari or in the bushveld or on the East coast overlooking the ocean or something like that, and you're sitting there with a crackling open fire. You drink in the natural beauty of South Africa. That is where the real nostalgia of the braai originated from. That is what was special to me.

Vignettes like these convey a similar force of passion and emotion that accompanies many Afrikaner braai accounts; stories about, around and of the braai. *The* most significant facet of material culture at the braai, in light of perception and experiential subjectivity, can be seen in the ways in which the two different forms of fire (that is, wood- and gas-fuelled) interact with the senses. Contrasting these narratives, though, gas-braai events, such as that mentioned earlier, were never described with such emotion.

Changing the way in which their narrative is used, it is clearer that the key variable factor here is the form of *fire*. Though still used from time-to-time in South Africa, a gas flame gives precision, ease-of-use and consistency. In terms of its physical, sensory properties, a gas-braai fire's colour is a fairly invariable yellow-orange, smoke output is little to none, and the flame's movement remains inorganically static, save for the odd quiver. The flame, visible only to the braai-er standing directly above it, conforms to the straightness of gas-supplying tubes. It initially has a distinctly synthetic smell (from added ethanethiol), and the radiated heat is contained to a relatively small area above the vessel. Finally, upon fuel cut-off, the fire dissipates immediately along with the majority of its heat output. All these qualities are inconsistent with a wood or charcoal braai, which has vacillating tones of red, orange and yellow and is eye-wateringly smoky if you get in its way. As if sentient, the smoke and scent move about in every conceivable direction and the slow-burn property of solid fuel means it continues to thrive even when more fuel is not added. The smell depends on varying factors such as wood species, oil content, how dry it is, the charcoal used, meats and fat content, though always emerges as an organic incense. Remembering braais in South Africa, a participant recalled the burning fat from the edge of a steak or chop, saying "it's all smoke and smells fill everything... the smell is very much a part of it. The wood smoke and

then the smell from the fat burning”. In Afrikaner culture, fire is not static. Central to a key cultural practice, a collective relationship with fire has been made.

Allegory may better help convey the relationship with the different forms of fire. Imagine for a moment, a child’s puppy and their electro-mechanical toy designed to look, sound and feel like a puppy. The living pet interacts, and though it can be tamed to obey certain requests when its needs are met, it is indeed *wilful* interaction. The pseudo-living mechanical toy, however, will do only what it is programmed to and when the end-user directs it to with little relationality needed. For a time, the toy puppy meets the child’s need as an entertaining distraction, educational even, but their relationship with the real, living puppy is sensuous and experiential. As they continue to interact with the pet, the child perceives reciprocal love on the animal’s part, creating a relationship in their own eyes. It may well be that the pet does not actually like the child at all⁸⁰ and that it is only performing in the way it thinks the child wants it to, in order to meet its survival needs (food, warmth, shelter etc.).

The key difference in this allegory is not the *form* of the object (flesh and fur versus metal and plastic) in the relationship but rather the mode of affect. In the child’s case, a discernible Other is realised in their mind, parts of which may be picked apart and examined by the same mind that realised it. That is, if asked why they like the pet more than the toy, they might respond ‘because it plays with me’ or maybe ‘it’s soft and gives me cuddles’ or some other performative function. But these are *not* why the child loves the pet, they are just expressions of a relationship that the child feels is real (whether it is ‘true’ or not is irrelevant for the present discussion). The child loves the pet more than the toy because the pet appears to reciprocate when the child interacts with it. These interactions build upon each other, creating a present state of mutual Being and assisting the child’s perception that a bilaterally amicable relationship exists.

In the case of Afrikaners, the affect from braai-related objects on their Being is much the same. The process is obscured as the senses are engaged as the primary source of affect. The different forms of braai flame respectively embody similar relational qualities and this impacts enormously on bodily affect and the social atmosphere. As the excitement of novelty wears thin, the child eventually becomes tired of the toy’s unflinching monotony, so too the gas-braai’s flame. A wood or charcoal fire takes on a role as preternatural guest at the braai,

⁸⁰ As Thomas Nagel (1974) demonstrated in his refutation of the physical reductionism of consciousness, there is no way to truly understand the conscious experience of a bat (or other animal, including human).

ever-present and interacting with others by engaging, ‘communicating’ perhaps with the wholeness of their senses. So, the two presumed separate worlds of subject and object appear as a condensing of sensory nebulae, one speck of experiential matter inseparable from the other and forming together with indiscernible dark matter into the subjective, perceptual consciousness. Each discernible and indiscernible moment of experience emanates from a cluster-singularity of the subject-object relationship, loaded with infinite possibility that aligns with the experiences that came before it. Bringing this back to Merleau-Ponty’s concept on sensations impacting consciousness:

In that originary layer of sensing that we discover on condition of genuinely coinciding with the perceptual act and of leaving behind the critical attitude, I live the unity of the subject and the inter-sensory unity of the thing, I do not conceive of them in the manner of reflective analysis and science. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p.248)

An Afrikaner subjective, Derridean argument (in spirit, at least) defines the two in binary; the gas flame as inanimate, synthetic and sterile, and its counterpart as capricious, elemental and relational. Derrida proposes that, within these binary relations, “both seized and entangled” (Derrida, 1981, p.4), one will always be held over the other in hierarchy. These characteristics are not objectively inherent within the fire, that is, a flame cannot be examined in a lab, dissected and its relationality removed for all to see. They are subjective qualities that are experienced by those around the fire and projected onto it as inherent. The object *is* because, in relation to the subject, it is *perceived* to be.

This perception assists in memories of braais-past, entangled with experiences-present being *felt*, further developing a relationality with fire and effectively sustaining it with nostalgia. The Afrikaner-subject and fire-object relationships builds upon itself much in the same way that a subject-subject relationship will and so the *meaning* of Afrikaner braai praxis centres on this sensory engagement with fire. During those moments, histories and relationships with other subjectivities are intertwined with the affective properties of fire and embedded in individual Afrikaner Being. Thus, the materiality of braai culture is indiscernible from the individual because the core social component is seen as functionally necessary. What is not considered is that the affective quality of fire – its sensory engagement – impacts upon individuals while in collective. The allegorical message may be subjectively different, but the delivery bears collective resemblance. When individual memory is created in this way, within

the social collective, and then reiterated again in collective settings creating additional individual memory, a social history is built with a strong focus directed toward the history's delivery method: the braai. Thus, the braai's fire is a mechanism for building, rebuilding and maintaining collective memory with wood, and by extension charcoal, being a more effective mechanism than gas.

The senses employed during the experience of fire at the braai effect Afrikaner Being in a way that is indiscernible; imperceptible through mere analysis and reflexivity. The sensation experienced goes far deeper, in part, *forming* their Being and reflecting all those experiences that came before it. These historical experiences of the object form the foundation upon which the present experience is perceived. Thus, the perceived present is a projected image of experiences both past *and* present. Without this vital historical affect, the perceived present that is the braai, cannot form within the consciousness of the subject. Should that historical affect present itself as a gas barbecue (i.e., as it would for a New Zealander), even if the New Zealander's *current* experience is a quintessential exemplar of an Afrikaner braai, the experience that is perceived will be so from the perspective of a 'barbecue' (i.e., not a 'braai'). The reverse is similarly true. If one has a history of braai experience, then a braai which features elements of what Afrikaners define as a barbecue would be perceived by that subject as a braai (if, perhaps, not a 'good' braai). In short, the cumulative braai-history of an individual's experiences is integral in the formation of the braai-present. However, the vital aspect of this history is the engagement of the braai fire's sensory affective attributes. It was clear that Afrikaners may build their braai events in many kinds of physical ways. However, when the sensory component of fire is ignored, the braai is considered by Afrikaners as underwhelming.

Othering fire

Thus, when Afrikaners who have braaied with wood or charcoal then move to gas, the relationship changes since both the physical and relational properties of the flame are entirely different. The flame's meaning is derived from the relationship between person-subject and flame-object. It may have qualities that are observable (the characteristics I mentioned earlier) but a description of the flame's 'Being' is incomplete without its person-subject relationship. The physical properties of the flame-object impact upon the senses of the person-subject and it is that impact that gives the flame its meaning. This sensory relationship develops over many braais, where the flame-object arrives as a welcome and necessary guest, however non-cognisant it may be. The gas braai's flame-object, taking an inanimate,

synthetic and sterile form and largely hidden by the material structure of the braai, has much less affective impact on the person-subject.

What, then, of those Afrikaners – my participants included – who insist that the gas-braai fulfils the meaning of ‘braai’? The misstep, I believe, was my own. By inquiring the way that I did, I created the conditions for a specific *category* of response. A category that I needed to know but also one that is not the focal interest of my research. Merleau-Ponty discerns between two forms of thought, remembering and perceiving, explains that the concept of perception is different from remembering:

To remember is not to bring back before the gaze of consciousness a self-subsistent picture of the past, it is to plunge into the horizon of the past and gradually to unfold tightly packed perspectives until the experiences that it summarizes are as if lived anew in their own temporal place. To perceive is not to remember. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p.23)

The category definition that I received initially was Afrikaner ‘remembering’, when I was inquiring as to how they ‘perceive’ the braai. Asking in the way I did, I was given a flattened perspective of three-dimensional practice. By categorising gas within the confines of the braai, Afrikaners thought about the concept empirically, via linguistic parameters. These are factual understandings and should be taken into account, but in the research of social practice, such objectivity can have an effect of partitioning the practice from the social.

But fire itself, which is technically a chemical reaction, is not typically considered an ‘object’ of material culture. Within this framework, handleable, tangible objects, such as those that were present at, or near, the fire pit, are considered, especially in archaeological remains (Berger, 2016). Such a view takes the focus off the fire itself as culturally important and see the objects that surrounds it. I suspect the apparent lack in considering fire as material culture is by way of its comparative instability. By nature, fire is intangible. Rather than a solid, fire presents itself as a mixture of gases, the result of oxidation transferring the fuel’s stored energy into heat and light. These are important features of the ‘processual object’ of fire that make it distinct from other material forms, and which demonstrate the need to think about it distinctly too.

Braai fire forever remains in an unchanging state; like water, the molecules of which have remained unchanged for however long they have existed, fire is always the same. True, it comes and goes, but this gives it unique qualities over water, earth and wind which exist,

empirically speaking, apart from humanity's existence. Fire is manipulated by people in such a way that there is a sense of control over it (until it gets 'out of control', reflecting the multiplicity of lifeworlds). Thus, that conjuring of the same fire, with the same multi-sensual properties and that embodies the ever-present guest at each braai, with each Afrikaner, in every time, throughout Afrikaner history, makes this subject of fuel an issue of transcendental importance for Afrikaner Being.

Thus, when Afrikaners argue that wood or charcoal are the only means by which an Afrikaner may braai, the assertion is not that the *physicality* of the braai is fundamentally altered in any way, or that the alternative cannot be called a braai at all. They are asserting that individual and collective Afrikaner history, a history so deeply entrenched in their social identity, is embodied within the same flame that can only arise in certain ways. In this way, the *flame* from a gas-braai cannot constitute a braai because the essence of the braai, the historical narrative of a person and a people, cannot be embodied by those 'sterile' gas-flame conditions. This is a transcendental, unconscious process and manifests out of Afrikaner Being upon being presented with the alternative technological 'advancement' – a threat to the erasure of an important connective piece of Afrikaner history, linking history and modernity upon the backdrop of a meal.

Agency of fire

My earlier reference to fire as the 'preternatural guest' was not as allegorical as it might seem on first reading. When taking into account Afrikaner conversational descriptions of fire, there is a considerable lack of indefinite article used.⁸¹ That is, fire is often referred to as '*the* fire', even outside of discussion relating to a particular braai or fire, as if to imply there is but *one* fire that has been with Afrikaners since their trek. Although this is not a universal practice, there is an underlying connotation in Afrikaner discourse suggesting an eternal dimension to fire.⁸² The fire's Being, then, builds upon itself, which is to say that its meaning in the present can in no way be independent from its history or from the history of those who interact with it, it both *is* and is *becoming* via those who interact with it. This form of interaction-reaction builds up over time, creating an overall way of being within the realm of that particular

⁸¹ English and Afrikaans have very similar distinctions between the use of grammatical articles or no article at all.

⁸² There may be some correlation here to accounts in the Bible, both in connection with acts of an eternal God and the environment of Hell.

cultural praxis. With respect to the braai, this has continued for two centuries with the migration of the Trekboers and Voortrekkers, keeping the past alive in the present. The habitual practice of the braai is thus an experience of historic memory. That is, a *performance* of memory, leading to a performance of community and ethnicity.

In many ways, braai fire does embody the agency of personhood, resulting in an *intersubjective* relationality between it and Afrikaner. Biologically it is not living but looking at fire in this way helps to better understand, both cognitively and emotionally, the phenomenological *relationship* between Afrikaners and fire. As a non-Afrikaner, the perception of fire as agency-less (thing-object) is very different from the perception I have of someone I interact with regularly, say, a friend or family member (person-subject). These people invoke a response in me that, upon interacting with them, alters my Being, both temporarily and fundamentally. My movements alter, my thinking is directed to that person, becoming altered by them and reducing my horizontal capacity to direct thoughts elsewhere and that interaction with them is added to *my* history, upon which other interactions with this person and other person-subjects may be built. This interactive affect resembles Afrikaners' response to braai fire, suggesting that, in addition to the first personal 'person-subject' and third personal 'thing-object', there exists a second-personal 'thing-subject'.

Imagining an elemental force as having agency is not as far-fetched as one might think (for example, Actor Network Theory described by Bruno Latour (1987), would likely not argue this idea). Setting legal philosophical precedent, the Whanganui River has been granted status as a "legal person"⁸³ [with the] rights, powers, duties and liabilities" of such (*Ruruku Whakatupua*, 2014). The legislation confirming this was ratified into New Zealand law in 2017. The River, Anne Salmond writes:

...was placed in a new relation with human beings... In the opening section [of the settlement document between Māori iwi (tribes) and the New Zealand government], the Whanganui River is described as the source of *ora* (life, health, and well-being), a living whole that runs from the mountains to the sea, made up of many tributaries and inextricably tied to its people, expressed in a saying

⁸³ The term 'legal person' is different from 'legal human'. In the *Ruruku Whakatupua* [the Deed of Settlement] for the Whanganui River, this word is defined as having the status of a company, including "an individual, a corporation sole, a body corporate, and an unincorporated body" (*Ruruku Whakatupua*, 2014, p.49).

often used by Whanganui people, “*Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au*” (“I am the River, the River is me”). (Salmond, 2014, p.286)

Traditionally seen as a commodity in Western thought – and the deed of settlement between iwi⁸⁴ and the government does stipulate the River may be used as such – its state of personhood in traditional *te Ao Māori* (the Māori worldview) has been ratified into Western New Zealand law.

Counterargument may contend that the decision to give the River agency was founded on traditional Māori belief that the River had agency before anyone commodified it, as the River is a component in *te Ao Tawhito* (reality in/of/about the ancient Māori world). But the River itself was not a ‘Being’ in and of itself, such as a deity. Rather, it was formed from the teardrop of Ranginui (Father Sky), who laid the tear at the feet of a lonely Ruapehu (the tallest mountain in New Zealand’s North Island).⁸⁵ The establishment of River personhood was a practical step in the direction of intersecting the (ancient) Māori world and the (contemporary) Western world (Salmond, 2014).

However, what is vital in the discussion is what the River means in *te Ao Māori*:

It was with huge sadness that we observed dead *tuna* [eels] and trout along the banks of our *awa tupua* [ancestral river]. The only thing that is in a state of growth is the algae and slime. Our river is stagnant and dying. The great river flows from the gathering of mountains to the sea. I am the river, the river is me. If I am the river and the river is me – then emphatically, I am dying. (Hawira, 2007)

Since “the river is me” applies to all Māori (and so the ‘the river is *us*’), adhering to a Eurocentric mode of thinking has led to not only environmental death but social death too. The Whanganui River means something to Māori that it does not in Western thought but by recognising the personhood of the River, a contemporary agreement between ancient and modern modes of thinking has been achieved.

The way in which the River is understood by Māori bears resemblance to fire in Afrikaner social practice. In Afrikaner history, there is no creation myth with which to connect fire but

⁸⁴ Typically translated as “tribe”, this refers to sub-ethnic groups of the Māori people in New Zealand.

⁸⁵ This account comes from David Young’s (1998, p.xi) *Woven by Water*, in a footnote of which he explains “There are many versions of the creation of the Whanganui River. This one has been agreed to by Whanganui iwi, Ngāti Tūwharetoa and Ngāti Maniapoto” (p.269).

in the same way that the Whanganui River connects modern Māori to each other and their ancestors, the fire connects Afrikaners. It stretches into their socio-cultural history while laying grasp on the present, bonding one individual to another and interconnecting every *one* with *everyone*. By recalling the sensory affect time after time, Afrikaners are reminded of the moments they experienced surrounded by the same stimuli, becoming layered over generations of adhering to the same practice. Fire may not be the source of life, as water is in *te Ao Māori*, but it is a source of Afrikaner *social* life. By altering the fundamental ways in which we conceptualise an ‘object’, we can come to a greater understanding of the way in which the Other conceptualises it and ultimately to a greater understanding of the Other’s Being.

Conclusion

For an outsider to braai praxis, when the braai, the Other’s social practice, is perceived through their specific subjectivity, it is clouded by empiricism – the natural attitude, as Husserl (1970) calls it – simply because the braai looks like a barbecue and that is our closest analogy. Both the braai and barbecue, like all objects that we perceive and experience, are *contextually* situated. Without that context, the meaning of the braai is lost and it is then perceived as a barbecue. Conversely, for Afrikaners, if a barbecue – the Kamado Joe, for example – were to be used in the context of a braai, then that barbecue may be perceived as a braai and not a barbecue. The Kamado Joe is an American barbecue via traditional Japanese design, but it can be moved from the culture in which it originated by the perception of Afrikaner braaiers. By way of perception, the object’s intent and physicality are no longer relevant. That same perception means that, what is required for a braai to *be* a braai is wholly experiential. If there is a core material culture that adds meaning to the practice, it is embodied within fire itself.

The specific experiential meaning of the braai is rooted in multi-sensory relationship with history, heritage, family and friendship. By braaiing in the modern era, Afrikaners reassert their culture, their history and their current, meaningful relationships (as discussed in Chapter Seven) as they re-enact the sensory matter of those relationships. This re-enactment is built, one on top of the other, forming a complex yet cohesive performance that continues today and is transferred from one space (South Africa) and time (the past) to another (New Zealand, the present).

Further, since Afrikaners are exposed to both braai and barbecue culture, by way of globalisation and migration to a 'barbecue' society like New Zealand, they have synthesised these two practices into a binary. In the tradition of Derrida (1981), the braai and barbecue are compared with one another and give each other meaning from the perception of Afrikaners, but the braai is elevated in status. The braai can no longer exist apart from the barbecue since its development and adoption, as the latter has helped to shape Afrikaner conceptualisation of the former. Thus, with respect to the allegorical 'married relationship' of braai and barbecue, they are separated (but not divorced) by *flame* and *form*. The common assertion that 'gas is not a braai' is true in the collective because it lacks both the sensory matter required to braai (flame) and is too definitive of the opposing force that helps define what a braai is not (form). When looking at braai praxis through the lens of Derrida and phenomenology, and changing the mode of thinking about these concepts, it becomes easier to see and understand the affinity with which Afrikaners regard the braai. By holding on to the braai, Afrikaners assert their collective and individual identity, transcending time and space, and rebelling against a moment in history when ethnic and cultural identity practice is arguably diminished in the West.

Recipe: Building a Braai Fire

This is less of a recipe per se, but nonetheless a necessary precursor to those that follow. This section explains how to make a fire, using any kind of braai equipment, with the exception of a gas braai of course (generally speaking, you just push the knob in and rotate). I should note, however, that despite the vast number of braais I have attended during and outside of fieldwork, this is *not* how I start a braai fire – or any fire, for that matter – but it is, by far, the most common method of braai fire building that I witnessed South Africans doing.⁸⁶

Ingredients

Wine, beer or other alcoholic beverage	A box of firelighters
A braai vessel (see preceding chapter)	Long-stemmed lighter (matches will suffice)
A bag of charcoal briquettes	Optional: Untreated hardwood, such as manuka

Method

Pour your drink of choice and place in easy-reaching distance from the braai. In the centre of your braai vessel, arrange your briquettes in a conical or pyramid shape and break off (or pop out of the blister-pack, depending on how they're packaged) three or four blocks of the firelighters. Wedge the firelighters into the base and sides of the briquette construction. Light the firelighters. The surrounding briquettes should slowly start to catch. Wait at least 30 minutes, more likely an hour, for the outside briquettes to turn a pale grey with flecks of red emanating from the interior of the structure. It should look like those photos of lava flowing down the Icelandic coastline, with a dark exterior and cracks of red forming as it moves. Once you've achieved the right colour profile, flatten the cone with your tongs and spread the hot briquettes across the base of the braai vessel. At this point, you can add more briquettes (and wait a further 30 to 60 minutes). Place the grill on top and wait ten or so minutes to heat before braaiing anything.

Be careful with this test, but you can tell you've met the right cooking temperature for red meat if you hold your hand about 30cms over the grill and only have to move it in about two

⁸⁶ I generally use the method I learned growing up with scrunched up newspaper and a little teepee built from kindling before destroying it all and dumping charcoal ontop.

to three seconds (four to five seconds for chicken). Any shorter and it's too hot. If it becomes too cool for cooking, you can add more briquettes around the edge of the fire and wait until they've heated before moving them into the centre.

Chapter 5: Vignette prologue

The Weird Sisters' braai

*Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and potjie bubble.
Oxen tail singe in oil,
carved pungent bulbs, embroiled.
Apple of earth, orange stake,
with ale, wine thyself slake.
Peach of wolf and Laurus leaf,
thyme and other green in sheaf,
any one thou mayest redouble,
like a bredie, boil and bubble.⁸⁷*

It was the first time I'd visited my partner's parents' home. They lived a too-far-to-walk distance just outside of a little town where there's nothing to do, which was just outside of Invercargill, a city where there's also nothing to do. Walking through the back door of their home, I noticed a little cast-iron pot with three legs placed in a corner. It looked very old worldly, and not at all thinking of storybook witch imagery, I asked if "the little cauldron is only used as a doorstep". My partner's brother, who was very much the caricature of a younger sibling, let out a throaty chortle from where he was sitting across the room.

Startled, I asked "What? What'd I say?"

Smirking through his obvious lie, he said "No, nothing. It's fine.", before looking down to camouflage his grin.

My partner looked over and explained that "It's not a cauldron or a doorstep, it's a *potjie*. It's used to cook a stew kind of dish, called *potjiekos*,⁸⁸ at a braai. Nothing to do with witches. Really."

⁸⁷ Based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, a dialogue from the characters known as 'the Weird Sisters'.

⁸⁸ [po:i.ki.kos]; literally 'potjie food'.

We braaied a lot on that trip, and subsequent ones, to the parents' home but it wasn't until many years later that I would be able to sample *potjiekos* let alone make it myself. I still get twinges of latent memory reminding me every now and then that 'it's not a cauldron'. So much of Afrikaner culture is focused on what something *isn't*: The braai *isn't* a barbecue. The lion *isn't* a common South African pet. Afrikaans *isn't* Dutch. The *potjie* *isn't* a tool for the dark art of magic.

It's a funny word, '*potjie*'. I kind of think it encapsulates the Afrikaans language in a single word: lots of diphthongs and the diminutive, 'kee' sound, at the end of everything making virtually every noun an adorable version of the original Dutch. Strung together, the language as a whole sounds like rolling waves on the open ocean look, with no shore on which to break. It's not just poy-kee, it's poy-kee. And then you find that a braai *potjie*, literally meaning 'little pot', is the same word used for those little plastic toilet training seats that parents are forced to hand-clean during their child's toddler years, and you're reminded of Afrikaners' historic penchant for economy.

Afrikaans is a fun language; like those who speak it.

Fifteen years later, the church where I'm doing fieldwork has invited my family to a *potjie* day. Jokingly, I asked which '*potjie*' it's for (the one before or after eating) and no-one gets it, having not had the same context of surprise that I did upon learning the language. Besides, *potjie* is serious stuff. We arrive at 9:30am on the day. The event had been organised to take place in a small, wooded area at the local golf club. Three fires are already lit for *potjie* braais, set up between the trunks of spreading pōhutukawa trees. Kids are climbing their way up, perching on overhanging branches and dangling their legs above their parents' heads. New groups of people arrive in a steady stream. Mostly they're members of the community, but also some curious golfers who stand 100 metres away and indiscreetly discuss what might be going on. Those who came for *potjiekos* are obvious; instead of trailing caddies and wearing pastel-coloured pants and neatly tucked-in shirts, Afrikaners are wheeling chilly bins⁸⁹ and dressed in jeans and puffer jackets, warding off the cool air. It's a fine day but there's a light breeze and the cover of the tree canopy overhead means it's chillier than I expected. I've organised to hang out with a participant friend as he makes one of the

⁸⁹ The New Zealand term for an insulated cooler box in which ice is placed to keep drinks cold.

community's *potjie* dishes. Thankfully, he's elected to start his braai on the edge of the trees, making our perch warmer than most.

By midday, the crowd has swelled, and the trees become temporarily urbanised with people, braai equipment, chairs, chilly bins and collapsible tables so densely packed that walking through is a treacherous journey. The kids manage better than most, zipping in and out of the tight corridors between a table's edge and the back of a neighbour's chair. They're busy now impaling marshmallows and wedges of dough to heat over the coals while the adults snack on chips, *biltong*,⁹⁰ *droëwors*,⁹¹ chicken drumsticks braaied next to *potjie* pots and a cloyingly sweet ginger slice. Everyone's stomachs are happily occupied, and crackling packets compete with the sounds of fire. The plastic is louder and more furious, but with time, the fire wins out and the packets are shoved into the nether regions of a bag to be discarded later. Such was the 'snack', I thought to ask my fellow Hobbits if this was second breakfast. Was Sauron's ring to emerge, perhaps, forged from one of these pots? But then I recall the last joke I told from decontextualised memory and decide against it.

Wafts of discernible scents lap at my nostrils every few minutes as braaiers caramelize onions in their pots before adding chunks of meat; the smell of beef comes from one direction, chicken from another and lamb from the furthest corner of the trees. The smell starts to dissipate as braaiers remove their meat to bowls and set them aside, replacing them with boxes of carrots, celery and parsnip pieces, cut at home, packaged and tumbled into the pot. Also removed, the cooks seem to be playing musical chairs with their ingredients. The meat returns, this time neatly arranged at the base of the pot, followed by the charred onion and a variety of liquids: water and whatever the cook is drinking, mostly beer but I think I saw wine go into the chicken *potjie*. The lid is closed and left for a short time before the seared vegetables and a box of potato cubes are tipped over the meat. The cook replaces the lid and tells me the most important part is to leave it alone, don't touch the lid and don't stir the pot. *At all*. He takes a clandestine peek every 30 minutes or so over the three to four hours of cooking time but observes the no stirring rule.

The crowd, mainly dominated by men and children at this point since many of the women moved inside earlier to prepare the meal's sides, had started moving into the adjacent golf club, bellies full of snacks and yet craving *potjie*. I'd heard a lot about it from the community.

⁹⁰ ['bəl.tən]; cured and dried meat flavoured with coriander seed.

⁹¹ ['drʊə.vɔrs]; literally 'dry sausage'.

Participants and new acquaintances fell over themselves trying to articulate just how much they adored *potjie*. I'd had it a couple of times and was impartial, but I'd become roused in the wave of excitement and somehow expected the not-a-cauldron to cast its magic over me. I sat to my first eager bite. It was... underwhelming.

Was it me? Am I eating it wrong? Like trying a traditionally prepared Chinese noodle dish but eating it with a fork and spoon instead of with chopsticks and upended bowl, it just tastes better that way. So, maybe it's the process? Looking around I see happy, chattering faces scoffing their meal. I lean over and ask my partner: Nope, this is it.

Chapter 5: In living memory: History and the construction of the Self through food

Introduction

Duane Jethro (2020, p.123-6) positions the braai in the category of ‘cuisine’. From my reading and research, I think this erroneously defines the braai in superficial terms of the food which is consumed during the event. Alternatively, I suggest that Jethro’s description relates only to one ‘property’ of the braai when it is, rather, a construction of the Self with elements of social cohesion through performance and the formation, and reinforcement, of ethnic identity leading up to and during the event. By correlation, if we take a hypothetical apple, it has the property of redness, but that redness is not intrinsic to the apple (i.e., a *green* apple is no less an apple). In the same way, the cuisine of the braai is a property of it and not the braai itself: The specific food present at a braai (e.g., lamb chops, beef steaks, potato salad, etc.) is as redness is to an apple. Like the materiality of the braai, there appears to be something else underlying the food-related descriptor of braai practice. The braai, at least anthropologically speaking, must be considered more a practice than it is a cuisine, since the latter excludes the necessary performativity of the braai, going beyond the ‘performance’ of just food preparation, at which said cuisine is consumed. Despite this, the reality is that these tangible elements – the food, fire and grill – are practically and consistently present at the braai and so should still be explored for a fuller understanding.

To fully grasp the braai as a social practice rather than just a culinary event, it is essential to examine the personal and communal histories that inform its meaning for Afrikaners. This chapter does this, delving into the personal and community history that the braai has among Afrikaners, and the vital importance that this history has on the present understanding and experience thereof. To better explain, I contrast Afrikaner experiences of the braai (that is, those who have lived the braai as social practice for the majority of their lives) against my own (an outsider whose experience is comparatively limited). These polarising experiences highlight key differences in understanding elements of the braai that are shared between braais and barbecues. That said, a key part of these histories and experiences is realised through nostalgia, a widely studied and somewhat contentious concept within philosophy and anthropology. For this reason, this chapter makes an in-depth examination of the concept of nostalgia to most appropriately deploy in later analysis. As a result, the chapter is more philosophical in content than the previous and remaining chapters, but this examination is vital in the thesis’ overall argument. That is, the braai is not an island but built upon the

history and personal experience of those present, and nostalgia is the emotional engine that drives the culture around it. Leading into this, however, I begin first by describing the foregrounding element of that nostalgia, sensory affect.

The food and flavour of the braai

Meat

There is always meat. Though not the defining element, as the quote from a gas-braaiing participant made clear in the previous chapter, meat is certainly important in the making of a braai.⁹² Within the category of meat there was a clear hierarchy. At the top were what was referred to as “proper” or “real” meat by most. Beef was champion in all its forms, as long as it was not tampered with in any way (with the exception of *boerewors*, mentioned below). The pre-cooked sausages that are so prevalent in New Zealand is an example of ‘tampered meat’, once referred to as “the bitter tragedy of Kiwi barbecues” by an old South African friend of mine. Steak that was marinated by a supermarket, and brought by a guest, had the braaier whisper a derogatory comment that was too fast for me to understand fully but caused a giggle among the other fireside men. Chops and steak were preferred cuts, but participants would choose one or the other. It was common to have steak and chops cooked and served at the same braai, since they are brought, *bring-en-braai*,⁹³ by guests as well as provided by the hosts. Yet, when speaking with participants during interviews, and guests informally, no-one included chops *and* steak simultaneously in their list of *braaivleis*⁹⁴ preferences. I confirmed this afterward, participants agreed though no-one considered it something consciously decided; it was one or the other in addition to other meats, such as *boerewors*.

Boerewors, a thick beef sausage flavoured with coriander seed and left unlinked in a coil shape, was the only permissible sausage and the only meat that had been pre-processed in any way. *Boerewors* was a very common sight and would usually create discussion around where the best *boerewors* in the area could be found. A popular supermarket chain in New Zealand, Pak ’n Save, was generally accepted to have the worst *boerewors* but participants were thankful that it was made available by their butchers, “...ten minste het hulle dit!” [...at least they have it!]. Name and shame complaints were made of smaller local butchers who started

⁹² I have heard of vegetarian braais, but they have an elusive, esoteric quality about them.

⁹³ [brən ɛn brɑ:i] ‘bring-and-braai’, a potluck braai event where both guests and host bring meat for all to eat together.

⁹⁴ [ˈbrɑ:ɪflɔɪs]; ‘braai meat’.

offering *boerewors*, only to remove it from their shelves shortly after. Yet these discussions always turned to those South African consumers who would not buy it, even just to support these butchers, thereby causing the uneconomical conditions for butchers to continue making it. Not uncommon was *homemade boerewors*, sometimes accompanied with discussion of the hunting exploits of the sausage maker or a story on how they acquired the meat and what happened during its processing.

If asked to bring a dish to a braai, I would elect to bring lamb. New Zealand is well-known for its high-quality lamb, but this was less a patriotic choice on my part than it was practical. Expecting to be asked to bring something to most braais, I bought a few legs of lamb on special at the supermarket and stored them in the freezer. Before events, I would butcher the lamb legs at home, skewer the resulting cubed meat and marinate it in a spice mix I have been using at home for many years (heavily edited from an old Israeli shawarma spice mix recipe). At the time, this seemed to me the cheapest way to provide a meat dish for a large crowd. Apart from the lamb rack, described as ‘exceptional’ in the previous chapter, the only other cut of lamb at braais were shoulder chops. My choice to butcher the meat at home was a point in my favour and I was asked why I chose to do this and how I did it. My response was that it was a good-but-cheap option and that I chose to skewer the hacked pieces only to hide my poor butchery skills. Further, although heavily flavoured meat at the braai is uncommon, blending my own spice mix was a point of interest in that I did it myself. Again, ingenuity in the braai environment is championed. Few guests verbalised that they actually liked the food I brought (I can think of only two people, one of which was myself), but most were interested in the work I put into it.

The price of meat in New Zealand was regularly spoken of as being extremely high and changed the way that hosts organised their braais. For larger guests lists, the only way to manage this was via a *bring-en-braai*, where all who attend are asked to bring a meat dish, for all to share, along with their preferred drink option. The host will prepare all other dishes, such as the starch and vegetable dishes. They will usually offer a meat option as well, and in such cases this tended to be *boerewors*.

With the exception of the youngest braaier, an early twenty-something year old, pork, fish and chicken were not considered ‘real meat’. Pork and fish were not completely excluded from the list of meat altogether, but chicken was jokingly referred to as “groente”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ [ˈχrun.tə] ‘vegetables’; literally ‘greens’ but referring to all colours of vegetables, as in English.

[vegetables], during fireside conversation on more than one occasion. Upon relaying how to braai, a participant referred to her husband in relation to this:

Everybody will bring the meat. Sadly, the days of [hosts] giving the meat... It's too expensive now, isn't it? You can't invite lots of people and say, 'Oh, well you know just come over, just bring your drinks'. So, [we]'ll do the braai and [my husband] will moan at anyone who brought chicken, 'Who brings chicken?!'

This narrative was, however, challenged by another participant who explained that there really are not any rules, and such rules are just for show:

If somebody was honest about it, right? The nicest thing about a braai, is there's no requirements for a braai. People will say "Oh, *I* braai my meat, because meat needs to *only* be done this way and that way, and *I* like mine this way and *I'm* a braai specialist. I'm *Jan Braai*!" As far as a braai is concerned, anything goes. You wanna braai chicken? You wanna braai fish? Whatever!

At this point, the participant puffed his chest and moves his shoulders up and outward, changing his voice to one that is deep and slow, obviously mocking the traditional Afrikaner male caricature, further described in the next chapter:

Now a lot of people go [voice tone deepens], "Ja, ek is 'n Afrikaner, as daar nie 'n groot stukkie steak op die braaivleisvuur is nie dan is dit nie 'n braai nie. As daar nie boerewors is nie, dan is dit nie 'n braai nie" [Yeah, I am an Afrikaner, if there isn't a big cut of steak on the braai fire, then it's not a braai. If there isn't *boerewors*, then it's not a braai.].

[voice normalises] The nice thing about a braai is, *anything* goes.

Such explanations were not uncommon in interviews but they never took place during braai-side discussion. The fire is where traditionalism and stereotypes are generally upheld, but often in a playful manner. For example, while I never saw pork or fish, chicken was more common and the braaier often quipped about saving it for the end when the side-dishes come out. This decision has a functional quality because the (often boneless) chicken generally cooks faster than other meats. However, such comments are made in a way that is intended to

poke fun at traditional expectations and not taken as an insult by whomever brought the chicken (sometimes the hosts themselves supplied it).

The overarching theme related to meat at the braai was that meat should be either beef or lamb (i.e., driving livestock), game (and preferably hunted by whomever brought it), unprocessed, unless *boerewors*, and again, preferably ‘processed’ by whoever brought it and generally low in added flavour (salt, pepper, coriander seed and braai smoke). Variations from these are acceptable but they tend to be pointed out as exceptional, perhaps regularly used at an intimate family braai but less so at a collective, ethnic braai. Correlations to the historical Trek are quite evident here, as accounts in extant diaries are replete with game-hunting expeditions and cattle and sheep are the most common animals they drove to the interior of South Africa. Fish, chicken and pigs are obviously not animals capable of being driven ahead of a caravan. The processing of meat into sausage is historically a form of preservation, undoubtedly an important feature of nomadic life. Finally, it is likely that flavour additives were low during the trek (at the time they would have been expensive too). However, this may also originate from a love for the taste of braai smoke, therefore avoiding overpowering it with other flavours.

Starch

Traditional Afrikaner cuisine is described as being very much dependent on the *vleis-en-rys*⁹⁶ principle. While this literally means “meat and rice”, it refers to the general idea of one’s diet consisting of some kind of meat and a starch, whether it be rice, cornmeal, potatoes or bread. This is very similar to the New Zealand idea of “meat and three veg” (which is not always numerically accurate) or “meat ’n potatoes”. Having grown up on a farm in rural New Zealand, I heard these phrases quite often and found little difference in its use and commentary among the Afrikaner community. It comes with an undercurrent of mild derision, connoting an unadventurous idea that seems to be enforced yet the boundaries of which can be tested. Often, however, the boundaries are left intact, and tradition wins over modernity with old favourites.

One such favourite is *pap-en-smoor*,⁹⁷ this is a cornmeal porridge (the ‘*pap*’) not unlike Southern American corn grits. *Pap* is always served with a light tomato sauce (the ‘*smoor*’),

⁹⁶ [flɔis ɛn rɔis]; ‘meat and rice’.

⁹⁷ [pap.ɛn.'smo:r]

similar to a stewed ratatouille of tomato and onion, rather than a ketchup-style sauce. Specific recipes vary but the basic method is to fry onions in a pan, pour over a can or two of chopped tomato, add salt, pepper, often a dash or two of Worcestershire sauce and whatever herb or spice you want and simmer to the desired thickness. In the more than ten years that I have associated with the Afrikaner community, including during fieldwork, this has always been one of the consistent features at the braai. It is more prevalent even than *boerewors*,⁹⁸ though there are alternative starch options as well, which I discuss shortly. For Afrikaners though, I suggest that the primary ingredient in *pap-en-smoor* is nostalgia (discussed in the following section), a flavouring that can only be added by the thousands that came before it, each plateful enhancing the flavour of the next.

I asked about the strong connection I saw with *pap-en-smoor*, noting the disparity between the simplicity of the dish and the importance that it has on the table. It was explained that *pap-en-smoor* is primarily a dish made by Afrikaners in the northeast of South Africa, including Johannesburg and Pretoria in the Gauteng region. Those in the Cape Town-Stellenbosch area of the southwest tended instead to make *braaibroodjies*.⁹⁹ These are simple sandwiches, most often made with plain, sliced white bread, onion rings, tomato and cheese.¹⁰⁰ As explained by one participant:

There's a difference in the food that [Northerners and Southerners] eat; the people up north [in Johannesburg] will typically eat maize, what we call *mieliepap*,¹⁰¹ that people in the south [in Cape Town] would rather, when they do a braai, they would do *braaibroodjies*, you know? Bread with onions, tomatoes and cheese or other something.

Often that 'other something' is *Mrs H.S. Balls's Chutney* ('Mrs. Balls'), a dried peach and apricot chutney, which is added to the sandwich as well. They are placed on the grill over hot coals and turned, until the cheese melts and bread toasted before being laid on a plate and served with the rest of the food as a side.

While this was a dish that I personally preferred over *pap-en-smoor*, they are finicky to make for a crowd larger than two small families. Further, most participants in the study were either

⁹⁸ A common dinner meal among Afrikaner families is "*pap en wors*", consisting of *pap-en-smoor* and a piece of *boerewors*, often served with a simple green salad.

⁹⁹ ['bra:i.broi.ki]

¹⁰⁰ There is as many iterations of this dish as there are sandwich fillings but this is by far the most common.

¹⁰¹ ['mi:.li:.pap]; full term for '*pap*'

originally from the northeast or spent a lot of time there, seemingly taking on local practice. The result was that some participants admitted they also liked *braaibroodjies* over *pap-en-smoor*, but practicality and wider community preference won over individual preference. *Braaibroodjies* were served at only one braai during fieldwork and the host was actually from the Northeast. I have, however, attended numerous braais prior to fieldwork where they were served and there was frequent discussion during fieldwork about the dish.

Braai hosts will never serve *pap-en-smoor* simultaneously with *braaibroodjies* and a debating ‘game’ is common, where the object is to determine what is better: *braaibroodjies* or *pap-en-smoor*. Such discussions never change anyone’s mind, rather further entrenching the side upon which participants already rested and acts more as a comedic to-and-fro than actual debate. That said, the sense of nostalgia, demonstrated through the emotional language, fervour and bodily gestures in its discussion, connected with *braaibroodjies* is considerably less pronounced in participant conversation than with *pap-en-smoor*. Traditional foods being so connected to history, looking back at the different Afrikaner histories in the two regions, their nostalgic affect becomes more pronounced.

The Northeast (Orange Free State and further North in *figure 10*, below) is informally considered the origin of traditional Afrikaner culture, since those who opposed the British moved toward this area in defiance. These are historically considered ‘true’ Afrikaners, evident in a manifesto published in an 1876 edition of *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*:

Maar daar is daarom drie soorte van Afrikaanders. [D]it moet ons in die oog hou. Daar is Afrikaanders met ENGELSE harte. En daar in Afrikaanders *met* HOLLANDSE harte. En dan is daar AFRIKAANDERS *met* AFRIKAANSE HARTE. Die laatste noem ons REGTE AFRIKAANDERS en die veral roep ons op om an ons kant te kom staan.

En wat gaat ons dan maak? ... Regte Afrikaanders, ons roep julle op om same met ons te erken dat die Afrikaanse taal ons moedertaal is wat onse Liewe Heere ver ons gege het; en om same met ons te staan ver ons taak deur dik en dun; en nie te rus nie voor dat ons taal in all opsigte algemeen erkend is as die volkstaal van ons land. (Die Afrikaanse Patriot, 15 January 1876, no.1, as cited in February, 2009, p.261; emphasis in original)

[Therefore, there are three types of Afrikaners. This must we bear in mind. There are Afrikaners with ENGLISH hearts. There are Afrikaners *with* DUTCH hearts. And, there are Afrikaners *with* AFRIKAANS hearts. The latter we call REAL AFRIKANERS and these, we ask to stand with us.

And what then are we going to do? ... Real Afrikaners, we appeal to you to recognise with us, that Afrikaans is our mother tongue given to us by our Lord. And, that they must stand by us through thick and thin; and not rest before our language is generally recognised in every respect as the language of our people and our land.]

Here, the article discusses how different groups of the Afrikaner population define their identity in relation to British rule, Cape liberal influences and republican independence. The group he calls “Regte Afrikaanders” (‘real Afrikaners’) are those who most firmly asserted a distinctive Afrikaner identity through not wanting to remain under British sovereignty or anglicising influences. In contrast, there were some families that remained in Cape Town, those who complied with the British and were generally thought of as cowards and traitors by those who moved northward. While the Anglo-Boer Wars have long been over, the idea that those who live in the Northeast are more traditional, and stereotypically Afrikaans, remains in Afrikaner narrative, if only implicitly. Those in the Cape are often referred to as more metropolitan and less traditionally focused. The idea of their being a ‘true Afrikaner’ is further reiterated as late as the 20th century, as Vestergaard (2000) demonstrates, when discussing the National Party positioning itself as the “true representatives of the Afrikaners” (p.53).

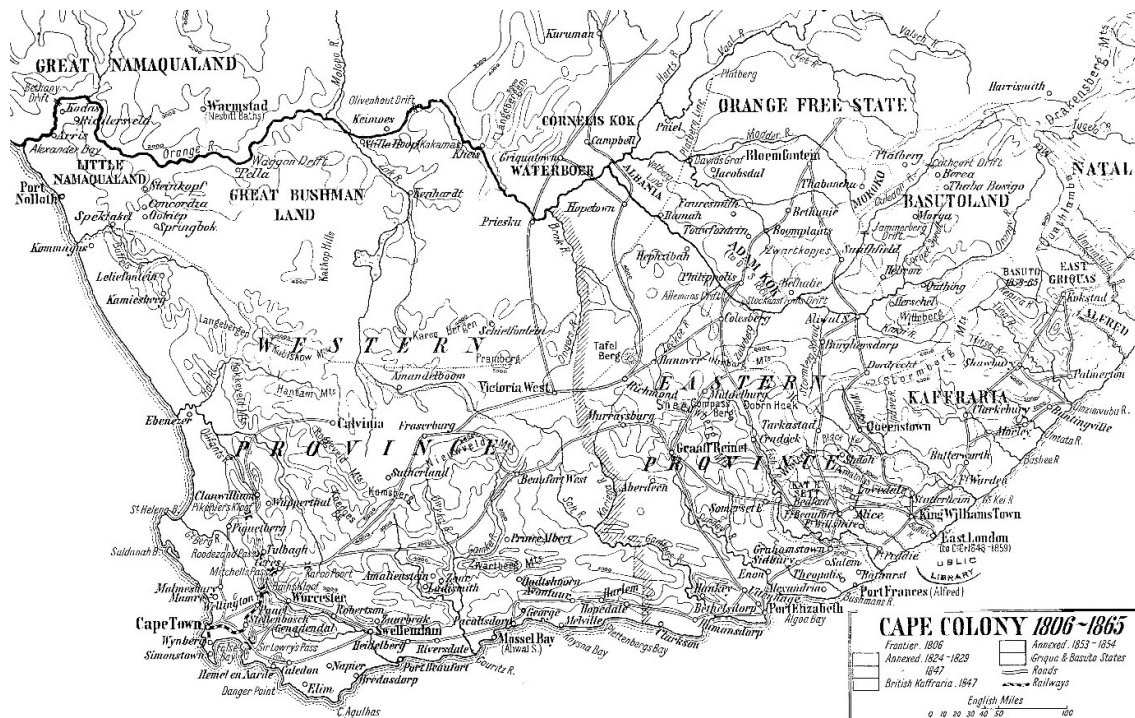


Figure 10: Historical map of South Africa (Walker, 1922, p.10)

Given the regional origins of *braaibroodjies* and *pap-en-smoor*, correlated with their respective cultures and narrative from the two areas, *pap-en-smoor* has a particular historical link that pulls at traditionalist ideals entrenched within Afrikaner culture in the northeast. *Braaibroodjies*. However, while certainly enjoyed by those who grew up with them, perhaps lack this history and the collective traditionalist mindset to support a similarly strong point of nostalgia. Thus, the stronger historical-cultural link associated with *pap-en-smoor* has allowed it to become the centrepiece on the table of Afrikaners in the diaspora. Through food, nostalgia plays out both collectively and individually, evident in research such as Jennifer Sweeney Tookes' (2015) account of the continuation of the Barbadian foodways of participants' grandparents to cement ethnic identity in the diaspora, both in public and private sphere. In the collective, *pap-en-smoor* hails back to group history yet within the individual, the dish performs a relationship link with those whom the Afrikaner migrant once shared that dish.

'Other' sides

As explained, there is *always* meat and a generous helping of starch. Vegetables, however, are underrepresented in terms of the size of the dish and variety. Non-starch-based vegetarian

options were fairly scarce at the braais I attended as part of my fieldwork. The leafy green salad is the exception though and the host's focus on health and wellbeing, and possibly economic standing, was evident in the degrees of effort and variety they put into this salad. While many hosts tossed a bag of leafy greens in a bowl with other chopped vegetables and put a pre-purchased bottle of dressing next to it, some added colourful flair to their salads. For example, one host crafted hers with meticulously placed calendula flower petals, pomegranate arils and sunflower seeds. Those who assertively applied the traditional *vleis-en-rys* (that is, 'meat and rice') narrative I mentioned earlier, unsurprisingly, expended less effort, money and time on the salad than those who did not.

I explained earlier that chicken is jokingly considered a vegetable, and in similar poultry-as-greens conversations, vegetables gain the position of "garnish". I do not recall any women making such remarks though and the disparity in self-served portion sizes across the two genders present was also noticeable. Women would adhere to a generously sized vegetable portions on their plate while men would seem to merely decorate their plates with a little green. And so, while the garnish quip is designed to generate a giggle or two, it comes with a measure of accuracy in the case of men. Of course, men eating fewer portions of fruits and vegetables than women is not an unusual phenomenon (Kiefer et al., 2005) and so might have been expected.

But why the *overall* general lack of vegetable options at braais? If we consider the history of the braai, the minimal presence of vegetables on the table, as I demonstrate below through extant firsthand journal accounts, is connected to historical events and culture, two vital wellsprings for modern practice. As the Voortrekkers made their way through the *veld*¹⁰² to the north-eastern parts of modern South Africa, there was little opportunity or resources to sow, tend and harvest a vegetable garden. Additionally, without access to adequate food storage and cooling facilities, most vegetables would not have fared well during the trip, with the exception of long-storing foods such as pumpkin, which featured to some degree in historical accounts and contemporary braai menus. Thus, continuing the practice of a carnivorous braai is not necessarily a matter of poor health choices, or traditional masculinity dominating the meal plan, but a connection to ancestors and a reproduction of historical narrative in the collective consciousness of Afrikaners. The reasonably consistent presence of

¹⁰² [felt]; 'open rural land'; literally, 'field'.

salad may be seen as the merging of the two temporal worlds of a historic Afrikaner trek and a nutritionally minded modernity.

The potjie

In addition to the classic braai described above, there are other forms of braais that differ from the standard model. One of these forms I attended as part of fieldwork, is the *potjie*¹⁰³ braai. A *potjie* is a cast iron, lidded pot with three legs within which *potjiekos* is made. Upon my first introduction to the implement (described in the vignette prologue for this chapter), I did not sense the significance of this dish. It was not until some years later that I would even try *potjiekos*, being highly prized but less often cooked. Yet when I finally did taste it for the first time, I still could not see the significance. For years I had heard of *potjie* as a kind of holy grail in the world of braai, “The best thing at a braai”. It did not matter what flavour it was, be it beef, lamb, chicken (which managed to retrieve its status as ‘meat’), *potjie* is loved by all. But whenever I tried it, all I tasted was ‘stew’. At the second *potjie*, again just stew. Then a third and a fourth. These were all good stews but not the gastronomic wonder I had come to understand it as. I was keen to experience one as part of this research, being my first during postgraduate study years.

As recounted earlier I attended a church community *potjie* event where around ten to fifteen braai fires were started, three of which were used to cook *potjiekos*, and the remainder for small pieces of meat to nibble on, marshmallows for the children or simply for the women to huddle around for warmth, some wearing their husbands’ jackets as they chatted to their friends. It was set up at the local golf course as a way to encourage a social atmosphere among congregants, as well as opening the church up to the wider Afrikaans community, many of whom attend English-speaking services instead. At this event, I asked how participants go about making their *potjiekos*. I was told that two braai vessels are used for the fire or one long one that can be separated in two. One (or one side) is used for making the fire and subsequent hot coals. These coals, when at the right temperature, are shuffled over to the second area, where the *potjie* stands (*figure 11*). This allows for slow, steady cooking over a long time, ensuring the bottom of the pot will not burn.

¹⁰³ [‘po:i.ki]; literally ‘little pot’



Figure 11: The beginnings of a potjie (author's own)

The *potjie* is placed over the coals and allowed to heat. Oil and sliced onion are added to the pot first and fried off. Usually, the pot has been allowed to overheat slightly, causing the oil to smoke and the onions to scorch quickly. The meat is added and browned. Some braaiers removed the browned meat and onion mixture before frying off the other chopped vegetables. Every *potjie* recipe had a large quantity of potato, most had carrots, but other vegetables seemed to vary considerably depending on taste and recipe. All ingredient components for the *potjie* had been washed, chopped or otherwise prepared at home, mostly by the cook's wife (the cook in every instance, being male). The seasoning was a mixture of the cook's favourite herbs. With every flavouring, they would add a generous amount, stop and then add a little more, as if however much was added, there should always be more. Finally, packeted soup mix (most often mushroom or onion) added for both flavour and thickening purposes was sprinkled over, followed by a small measure of water. How much this was supposed to be seemed unanswerable except for "not too much but do not let it go dry".

Finally, the lid goes on and is mostly left to sit by itself as one cook told me that a proper *potjie* is layered, with the meat and onions at the bottom, then the carrots, then the other vegetables. The potato layer should be last though to help seal the liquid in. Another *potjie* cook told me that it should be mixed, letting all the flavours mingle and cook together. Whatever their method, they agree on one important matter: "luister hoe dit prut" ['listen to

how it bubbles’]. This tells the cook if the *potjie* is cooking at the correct heat. A fast and loud bubble means it is too hot, while the pitch of the bubble informs how much water is left in the pot: the more bass the sound, the thicker the liquid.

As jy luister hoe die *potjie* prut, hoef jy nie die *potjie* oop te maak nie. Dis belangrik. Moenie die *potjie* se deksel oop maak nie. Los dit net. [“If you listen to how the *potjie* bubbles, you won’t have to open it. That’s important. Don’t open the *potjie*’s lid. Just leave it.”]

Cooks rarely left the fire, and in the few instances that they did (having officially appointed someone to look after their *potjie*), it was likely for a bathroom break since the process took about four hours. The church’s advertisement on Facebook, otherwise scant on information, said that they would begin at 10am and eat at 12:30pm. I arrived at 9:30 when fires were already lit and we did not eat until 2pm, though the food seemed to be ready before then.

While schedules were ignored, the remaining instructions were taken more seriously: “Bring iemand saam. Ons gaan kuier, eet, lekker lag” [“Bring someone with you. We are going to visit,¹⁰⁴ eat, have a good laugh.”]. There were a lot of people at this event, perhaps around one hundred, but certainly far more than usually attended the community’s church service on Sundays. The whole time, I could hear conversations from under the trees where we had settled; mostly they seemed to be conversations of friends catching up since the last time they saw each other, either long ago or just yesterday. Despite the many different voices, from afar they all blended into one, emulating the collective sound of birds chattering above them, albeit in a different pitch.

Talk continued from arrival, during cooking beside the fire and while eating, until departure at four o’clock that afternoon, with only a brief pause of silence while the pastor gave thanks. It was then that I realised what I had failed to understand at previous *potjie* events. It is not the herbs, spices, meat or vegetables that matter in a *potjie*, but *time*. Just as the *pap-en-smoor*’s primary flavour is nostalgia, the flavouring agent in *potjiekos* is time spent with loved ones. A stew cooks over hours, which is further lengthened by the time it takes to build, start and stoke the fire underneath it, giving perfect conditions for social bonding among those in the community. While I tasted a ‘not bad stew’, others tasted the result of relationships simmering for three to four hours in the company of those in their community,

¹⁰⁴ “Visit” has a broader meaning in South African English, expanded to mean “socialise” (sometimes used in this way in the United States and Canada).

those whom they enjoyed being with, not only sharing their meals but also their lives. This is what one participant was trying to tell me, while comparing New Zealand barbecue culture to his own braai culture, during an initial interview when he said:

...when I say to you, “ons moet braai” [we should/must braai], that doesn’t mean we have to ‘cook meat’. The thing is, you bring your [partner] and your kids and the kids are going to play together in the swimming pool and, you know? That’s what it is, a braai is an *occasion*. I don’t see [a barbecue] as really spending that *time together*.

Anticipating the past, remembering the future: An analysis of food and nostalgia’s inflection on the Self

For Afrikaners, *Potjie*’s rank somewhere between delicious and delicacy echoed that of *pap-en-smoor*. Participants spoke of these foods as if their taste were unique, complex creations of flavour that I, as an outsider, was just not able to access. As an anthropologist, I found this unsettling at the time and wondered if I were doing it wrong (whatever ‘it’ is) and so tried multiple times to condition my ethno-culinary palate to these flavours, mainly through repetition and force of will. I soon came to realise that the key to understanding these foods, and appreciating them in the way that Afrikaners do, was not at all a matter of enjoying their taste. I understand that flavour is subjective and that the misunderstanding may arise out of differences in taste preference. But if these foods are indeed only about their taste, then cooking a recipe designed as *potjiekos* inside a home, on a stove and without a fire should render the same affective joy, which it simply does not. While taste is inseparable from the socio-cultural processes involved in cooking and eating together, there is clearly more to it than its flavours.

Normally anthropologists, myself included, would take a view where the community’s perspective is favoured over our own (i.e., the ‘natives’ point of view). This is a just position to assume, and a cornerstone of anthropology, but taking the general principle of Derrida’s (1981) reversed binary into account, if the order is inverted and the Other’s sensation (that is, mine) is looked at more closely, it may reveal further detail. Thus, I pursued this idea rather than disregarding it outright as unanthropological. In doing so, I looked at dishes juxtaposed to these that are very similar but cause different reactions in those who eat them.

One such example of this is another form of Afrikaner cookery called *bredie*,¹⁰⁵ which is a stew cooked on a stovetop and resembles *potjiekos* in every way except the pot and fire. One recipe in particular – oxtail *potjie* – is beloved by most Afrikaners I’ve met and recipes for its *bredie* variant are virtually identical. Furthermore, since *potjiekos* is cooked in an enclosed pot, it cannot take on any of the braai’s smoky flavour and so the resulting taste is identical too (though there is much greater chance of burning *potjiekos* than a stovetop *bredie*). Initially, I thought it may be a gendered matter, since men will cook *potjie* but women *bredie*, yet reflecting on this further, I saw no difference between the two genders’ eagerness for *bredie* or *potjiekos*. It should be noted that although *bredie* is a dish that Afrikaners are fond of, it cannot compare to their adoration for *potjie*. The differing element between the two dishes came from elsewhere.

I once made a suggestion to a group of community members that cooking *potjiekos* on a stove might alleviate weather issues¹⁰⁶ which led members of the community to say that it would then “just be *bredie*”. Similarly, removing the cornmeal component from *pap-en-smoor* (which is cooked only with salted water so is relatively bland) and swapping it for some other low-in-flavour starch (for example, mashed potato, which has a similar texture though less viscid¹⁰⁷), would give comparable results in taste. Upon suggesting both of these substitutions, members of the community turned up their noses and made comments that alluded to such things as senselessly weird and proximally disgusting. I informally experimented with this idea and asked my partner to make *smoor* for our family according to the usual recipe, except using potato as a *stywe pap* replacement. I and my children (who know the dish well but in a less ethnically formulated capacity) found it very similar, almost identical in taste. My partner, however, said that the flavour was off somehow, not being able to pinpoint the exact change but saying that “the taste is just lacklustre”. As with the fire relating to materiality in the previous chapter, a concealed, intimated element underpins food at the braai. Gestalt theory seems to apply here in that the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts (Wagemans et al., 2012); something else underpins these foods which creates in Afrikaners a gastronomic joy.

¹⁰⁵ [ˈbrɪə.di]; a stew, very similar to *potjie*.

¹⁰⁶ *Potjie* is a cold weather dish (though not at all exclusively so) but New Zealand’s Winters are often too wintery and standing outside in wind and rain for hours is unpleasant, even in light of the rhetoric described in Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁷ There are two different ways of making *pap*, ‘*krummelpap*’ (crumb-*pap*, also known as ‘*putu pap*’) and *stywe pap* (stiff *pap*). *Krummelpap* is the most common variety though *stywe pap* is just as loved and also resembles mashed potato in texture.

In the last chapter, the high level of individualisation of braai materiality led to the understanding that the vessel itself was less critical to the braai event than I previously believed. What was found to be vital, however, is the sensory output of fire. The same theme arises in the food served, however with more strict parameters in place since recipe patterns (if not recipes themselves) are followed, adhering to a standard of what one can expect. This, then, steers the direction of analysis even more strongly than the last chapter's discussion. Because of this, although individualisation is acceptable, the majority consumption of specific foods in a social setting is more constant. Overlaying this food consistency upon the backdrop of Voortrekker and Trekboer history, tethered to ethnicity and identity, points one in the direction of a collective *nostalgia*.

Nostalgia

In the previous chapter, I outlined how the braai's flame itself stages memory and belonging through its elemental presence. Here, I turn to a philosophical exploration of nostalgia, treating it not as mere sentiment but as an active, embodied force – what might be called a flavour-agent – that seasons both body and community. This discussion shows how the embers' draw, examined Chapter Four, finds its corollary in taste, and why, beyond being a wistful after-glow, nostalgia becomes a generative agent of identity.

Beyond being some kind of esoteric emotion related to things of the past, what exactly is nostalgia? From the Greek *nostos* [return home] and *algos* [pain], it appears to refer to 'a pain felt upon desiring to return home' (implying that one does not have the capacity to do so), where 'home' can mean anything: space, time, experience etc. When researchers discuss nostalgia, a return to the word's historical roots often dominates the first part of the conversation and I shall follow suit here, as it does give some clues as to how best to employ it. An early recorded use of the concept (under the Greek *nóstimon*) is alluded to in Homer's *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus is held captive by the nymph Calypso who wanted him for her husband. Requesting to return home to his wife, he pleads with Calypso:

Look at my wise Penelope. She falls far short of you, your beauty, stature. She is mortal after all and you, you never age or die... Nevertheless I long – I pine, all my days – to travel home and see the dawn of my return [νόστιμον, *nóstimon*; homecoming]. (1996, p.159)

Later, in the late 17th century, medical student Johannes Hofer described ‘Helvetian Gauls’ (the French Swiss) in his dissertation, though not exclusively so, as being susceptible to a debilitating sickness “...which admits no remedy other than a return to the homeland” (Hofer & Kiser Anspach, 1934, p.382). Along with a reprint of Hofer’s dissertation, Theodore Zwinger adds another Swiss-based case study of this medicalised nostalgia, where soldiers stationed in the Belgian flatlands fell ill upon hearing a traditional cow milking song, *Kuhreihen*. The soldiers were taken ill, some died and others deserted the army. The Swiss called it *heimweh*¹⁰⁸ (‘homesickness’) but since Hofer was looking at the malady from a medical perspective (it had often proved fatal), he coined a Greek-derived term, ‘nostalgia’ (Fuentenebro de Diego & Valiente Ots, 2014). However, he also writes that,

If nosomanias or the name philopatridomania is more pleasing to anyone, in truth denoting a spirit perturbed against *holding fast to their native land* from any cause whatsoever (denoting) return, it will be entirely approved by me. Nostalgia, moreover, indeed as far as I am able to assume in the uncertainty of the thing, is sympathetic of *an afflicted imagination*. (Hofer & Kiser Anspach, 1934, p.381-2, emphasis added)

In offering medical options in nomenclature, Hofer neatly encapsulates the concept, rooting it precisely in the *mind*. Nostalgia, Hofer argues, is a physical affliction couched in perception.

Since then, much has been written about nostalgia, especially since the nineties, and a considerable amount written about the writing about nostalgia too. One such ‘nostalgian’, Jeff Malpas (2011), a philosopher currently based in Tasmania, consolidated the many ways in which researchers have defined the term. Drawing from Svetlana Boym’s (2001) ‘restorative’ versus ‘reflective’ nostalgias, Malpas also suggests that two forms of memory are used to describe nostalgia. One is of personal experience, where the individual yearns to return to a time and/or place that they have once experienced. The other, Malpas refers to as ‘mythophilia’, which he defines clearly:

[mythophilia is] a longing not for what is remembered, but for what is known only through its retelling, through story and myth. Such longing falls short of nostalgia precisely because of the mythical character of that which it desires and valorises – a past of which we ourselves have no experience and in which we

¹⁰⁸ From the German, cognate with ‘home woe’.

were never ourselves engaged. Such mythophilia is not nostalgic, even though it may share some features with nostalgia, and even though it may sometimes contribute to a nostalgic sensibility. (Malpas, 2011, p.89)

In principle, I agree with Malpas' distinctions however I think the totality he alludes to in divorcing nostalgia from mythophilia is impractical and argues that the imaginary has less hold over an individual than lived experience. The argument made is that, with mythophilia (or the 'restorative nostalgia' of (Boym, 2001)), the 'pain' or emotion is not felt as acutely as nostalgia proper. While this may be true in a very limited sense of nostalgia, the perceptions of an individual are often derived from interpretations rooted in the allegories, cultural myths and social norms of the collective of which the individual is a part. Malpas' description negates this collective understanding that makes up the Self (further discussed in Chapter Seven).

The transfer of the imaginary throughout communities, such as Afrikaners, including their history and therefore nostalgic affect, can hold just as firm a grasp on the person as a community-oriented myth. In this case, Malpas' 'mythophilia' *is* his nostalgia and the distinction becomes moot. It is already well-known that the mind remembers facts 'inaccurately', even in matters of first-person performativity (Thomas & Loftus, 2022), and as such, it is not a stretch to say that all experiences are imaginary in some form because what is remembered is merely an interpretation of a single viewpoint of reality.¹⁰⁹ Such critique of Malpas' distinction is not new and supported by other nostalgia theorists, such as Zoë Anne Laks (2023) in her article on nostalgia in media, suggesting that all nostalgia involves elements of fantasy and construction, making the distinction between 'real' nostalgia and 'mythophilia' unnecessary. Thus, whatever it is that the mind wants to return to cannot be, as Malpas (2011) suggests, an experience of fact, because all experiences are perceived or interpreted in some form or another. To make such a distinction requires the separation of real and non-real which is uneasy territory to wade into (for example, would one's *dreams* be considered a factual experience or imagined?).

The imaginary reality affecting individuals is present even in Hofer's (with Kiser Anspach, 1934) first dissertation on the affliction, where he describes French Swiss migrants to France. Benedict Anderson's (2006) classic work from the early eighties suggests that crossing ethno-

¹⁰⁹ This is not to suggest that I believe experiences are false in any way but rather that reality is less 'real', in the practical sense of the word, than it is often given credit for.

national borders amounts to more for an individual than movement. In the migrant's mind, they have departed more than just geographic area. They have left an imaginary socio-political entity where national history *is* one's personal history too, an imaginary history felt just as strongly as any 'real' history. If one is "ready to die for these inventions" (Anderson, 2006, p.141), I would think it adequate to say that they feel that imaginary strongly enough to also feel nostalgic for the history it tells. Mythophilia is just as important as the objective reality that one experiences (that is, Malpas' idea of nostalgia) because both have an equally determining hold over the actions, sensations and experiences of the individual within the collective and therefore the collective as a whole. I can understand the scholarly inclination to dissect and categorise these two facets of nostalgia, but practically speaking, the two are inseparable. My suggestion is that the imaginary *is* the lived experience and thus mythophilia, although not strictly nostalgia, feeds into nostalgia and indeed is the necessary environment in which nostalgia forms, in conjunction with a collective understanding of that imaginary.

Malpas' (2011) examination of the definition of nostalgia leaves certain cases outside of its field where the concept has previously been readily applied. As I have already alluded to, the problem is that the exclusion of such forms of nostalgia assumes that the memory that generated the nostalgia to begin with is intact. The reality is that an individual memory can vary as much as myth from the 'facts' of the scenario it recalls. So, diverting from Malpas' model of nostalgia, I propose that the key distinction is less about content and more about the process in which they are absorbed by the Self and that plurality of person, a community in any form, be it nation, family or friend, is the key to the nostalgia force. Furthermore, the distinction, I believe, can be found primarily in the subconscious recall of *memory*, thereby allowing greater fluidity in personal experience and the interplay between it and the collective myth and the experience of that myth.

My reasoning here is that one does not feel nostalgic for any one objective 'thing' from a scenario. Rather, one feels nostalgic for the sensations, moods, emotions, experiences that they felt at the time of interacting with or receiving that thing, or of another person or people doing so. That is, nostalgia is a direct cause of their perception of that abstraction added to currently perceived circumstances. Nostalgia is a longing for the realisation of the *memories* they have of a time and/or place not currently experienced. For example, Afrikaners are often written about as longing for a time that existed prior to the fall of apartheid in the 1990s, as if they wanted racial segregation and oppression to continue (Steyn, 2003, pp.242-4). Within

the present fieldwork, participants did not express a desire for the return of apartheid law and typically described it as morally wrong and socially damaging.

What Afrikaners long for in relation to pre-democratic South Africa is the sense of security and consistency that such a state gave them, as discussed in anthropologist Jagtenberg's (2019) doctoral thesis. This desire for security and consistency is a sentiment Afrikaners would like extended to all South Africans and helps show why nostalgia's causality needs to be examined without assuming that longing for security is separable from the unequal political order through which that security was historically produced. Even so, this desired sense of security and consistency should be understood as having been materially produced through the structures of power itself. While participants do not advocate for the return of apartheid and recognise its moral failings, the stability they recall was enabled by a regime that systematically privileged white South Africans. As such, these memories are not analytically separable from the political conditions that produced them.

A potential argument against the above is that nostalgia emerges from memories of times, places and people as they were experienced by an individual. However, the resulting nostalgia still stems from the individual's subjective perspective of that experience. This does not mean that historical realities cease to matter. In cases such as apartheid, subjective recollection must be read alongside the broader realities of structural violence and racial hierarchy that enabled some experiences of safety and consistency while denying them to others.

Memory does not provide unmediated access to the past; rather, it filters lived events through later interpretation, affect and social positioning. That is, what one remembers is shaped by hazy recollection and by the subjective conditions under which experience is later narrated. This does not mean memory supersedes objective history, but it does show how remembered experience continues to shape present action and feeling. In this framework, Malpas' distinction between nostalgia and mythophilia becomes harder to sustain, because memory and collective narrative remain deeply entangled in how the past is lived in the present.

I concur with Malpas that there does appear to be a speculative, ideological distinction between the two; however, since the imaginary should be considered as real as the actual is, what then should be done with mythophilia? Rather than co-existing, or appearing as a matter of nostalgia's causation, I suggest that mythophilia predates nostalgia and indeed is a necessary requirement for nostalgia to develop. My reasoning here is that nostalgia appears to

act in collective commiseration. That is, the individual's nostalgia-derived grief manifests not only out of the past's effect upon the Self, but in tandem with the collective in conjunction with time. The Self understands that other individuals, within a collective, may understand and so deploy their Self in a way that other understanding individuals can comprehend and accept. Thus, the notion of grief becomes a matter of socialised embodiment. Memory, as per Henri Bergson's (1911) concept, contracts time and similarly contracts mythophilia and nostalgia and so the two forms of memory are felt simultaneously and the distinction between the two therefore becomes moot in terms of how they are perceived, felt and experienced. In an axiomatic and objective world, they may be separable but instinctually and subjectively they cannot be and to do so would be arbitrary.

Time and memory

According to Bergson (1911) memory plays a key role in an individual's perception and learning, providing a backdrop rooted in the past upon which perceptions of the present play out. The senses of the present initially provide a sketch of experiences, and in the form of an active, powerful memory of the past, the intellect fills in the details to give a sense of reality. Accordingly, I propose that this is how the collective impacts upon personal nostalgia, where the senses work in a similar way to Malpas' mythophilia. The collective memories that are provided by the community are initially second-hand memories passed on to the individual. Those second-hand memories, 'mythophilia', are then adopted by an individual, filling in the gaps with personally affective memories, which then amalgamate and become Malpas' notion of nostalgia. Thus, mythophilia and nostalgia act in a mutual back-and-forth reinforcement between individual and collective memory experience, so entangled they cannot be separated.

Bergson never wrote about nostalgia, however he did explain a related term in temporal perception, 'déjà vu', as memory being felt at the precise moment of its inception and so the body perceives time as contracted, feeling the past, present and future in a single moment. Nostalgia, as I see it, operates in much the same way, contracting embodied temporality making the past felt acutely in the present. A sometimes-upsetting feeling of abnormal circumstances is then felt as the body and the mind, normally operating in embodied unison, work at odds within one another. Such a view of nostalgia resolves the need to sense the past, because the body remembers through sensing only, unlike the mind which may remember

conceptual abstractions. This is why nostalgia is often sensed negatively – the desperate longing so often described – which, in Cartesian terms, is really a mind-body discomfort.

Bergson (1911) writes of two forms of memory: bodily, ‘habit memory’ and conscious or felt, ‘pure memory’. Bringing these Bergsonian concepts together with Afrikaner food’s nostalgic affect, upon eating *pap-en-smoor*, the individual moves out of present time and into a contracted time of the mind (that is, Bergson’s account of memory). The body retrieves unconscious information, habit memory, that is then projected throughout the body with pure memory and focused in the same way as Husserl’s (2012), and later Merleau-Ponty’s (2012), ‘horizon’, on the tongue and then sent back to the brain entangled with the remaining flavours of the dish. When we perceive an object (such as fire or a meal), in the moment we do not just perceive that object as it presently is but as a development of all previously perceived, contiguous objects. The timeline of that object is contracted into the present moment. These objects of contracted memory are felt personally but installed upon a background of collective history, without which the individual’s nostalgia cannot form. In this way, when the mind contracts time, nostalgia *becomes* flavour.

Further, upon sensing nostalgia, the collective may either enhance or deter the negative forces of the individual’s sensation. It may enhance it, as with the Swiss soldiers hearing the *Kuhreihen* of their homeland, as the individual senses that others may empathise with their negative feelings and so the individual is ‘permitted’ to grieve the disjuncture between present and past. However, the community can also relieve negative feelings through collective performance. In this case, the past is over-written with projections of future sensations, moods, emotions, experiences and relationships. The opposing results of contentment and grief must then be achieved through obtaining or not obtaining that which one is looking for. In the Swiss soldiers’ case, the song was not what they longed for, rather it was symbolic of something else they were incapable of possessing in that moment, their homeland. Singing the symbol then only further reminded the afflicted, on a subversive, bodily affected level, of what they could not obtain. In other cases, nostalgic affect is less pronounced and less negatively felt. I believe the difference is that that which one longs for is, in those cases, obtainable. Alison Blunt (2003) refers to a somewhat similar concept through her ‘productive nostalgia’ in relation to Anglo-Indian collective memory. In her article she explains the term:

represent[s] a longing for home that was embodied and enacted in practice rather than solely in the imagination, and a longing that was oriented towards the future as well as towards the past and to a sense of place that was both proximate and distant. (p.719)

and

...rather than view nostalgia as signaling loss, mourning, and the impossibility of return, [...] productive nostalgia is oriented towards the present and the future as well as towards the past. (p.736)

Thus, rather than nostalgia existing as a static, imaginary longing, it is the intersection between past, present and future, here and there, and the foundation for diasporic cultural practice (and by extension, identity).

I have met only very few Afrikaners who grieved for their life in South Africa. To verify this, during interviews, I asked hypothetically, if the political and social issues that afflict South Africa¹¹⁰ were to be resolved, would participants return? The answer was a reiterated, forceful and overwhelming ‘no’. Filtering this through the lens of food, such as the braai, *potjie* and *pap-en-smoor*, that which is longed for is unlikely to be mostly composed of a longing for a return to life in South Africa. Rather, a relationship with the Afrikaner collective, and fellow South Africans, is what is sought after; a wholly obtainable concept in New Zealand where more than 70,000 born South Africans now live, half of whom are Afrikaans speakers (Stats NZ, 2018a).

The braai is where individual identity and collective identity in Afrikaner ethnicity intersect. The performativity of specific rules of social engagement, the way in which food is cooked, the affective facet of braai fire and traditional forms of foods served at those meals all come together in line with the relationships that have formed over the course of an individual Afrikaner’s life. Therefore, the dishes recall a sense of collective, performative memory – of all Afrikaners getting together to share in the same meals – as well as the memory of relationships formed specifically within the life of an Afrikaner.

This echoes the work of David Sutton (2001) in his book, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*, where he discusses evocative sensory memory (termed

¹¹⁰ Throughout South African migration research these ‘push factors’ are broadly described as the most common reasons for migrating from South Africa (Lucas et al., 2006; Pernice et al., 2009; Wasserman, 2016).

‘synesthesia’), through the Greek islanders of Kalymnos. Here, he explains that taste and smell conjure more than just memories of the food in front of you. For example, regarding an account of a man, Yiannis, who described a 40-year-old memory in association with a bag of apricots, juxtaposed against Sutton’s own food memory experience, he goes on to explain that:

The apricots provided the taste and smell that could continually cue for [Yiannis] all the local knowledge of time of year, of places on Kalymnos where apricots could be found, and that unlocked a vaster structure of recollection of different times on Kalymnos [...] In other words, apricots evoke the Second World War for Yiannis, but they just give me hives. But say the words “Chinese Pressed Duck” and I am sent into reveries of early college years and love in bloom. (Sutton, 2001, p.90)

Similarly, eating at the sensory assault that is the braai is the practice of memory, caused by nostalgic affect, which recalls old relationships that cannot endure, renews current relationships that can, and forms new relationships of the future. The specific mode of memory practice, derived from collective nostalgia in the form of food and braai fire means that the majority of these relationships are based on historical, embodied understanding, thereby reinforcing the ethnic identity of the individual.

Thus, the practice of memory becomes a key component in retaining one’s ethnic identity, especially in a migratory setting where the traditional marker for Afrikaners, the language, is often lost to second generation migrants. To assimilate wholly into one’s host country, requires one to lose part of these practices and therefore part of one’s identity. Afrikaner migrant parents know their children will become Kiwis. Their use of Afrikaans will often reduce, responding to their parents in English when spoken to in Afrikaans. However, the importance of the braai appears to remain consistent, from non-participant rhetoric, such as that from my earlier, Master’s study (Finlayson, 2018). The community comes together then, and the children become exposed once again to performative Afrikanerness. So, the braai becomes a vital space in time where second generation Afrikaner children can witness and practise their Afrikaner ethnic heritage, continuing to form relationships in an Afrikaner way and, in doing so, supporting their own individual Afrikanerness. Therefore, the practice of Afrikaner memory is a reinstatement of Afrikaner identity. The same key component that

underpins social role performativity and braai materiality – the collective’s history traversing and transcending upon the individual’s present – is at work in the food that is served as well.

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson (1913) uses a musical allegory to illustrate his thoughts on memory’s perception and manipulation of time in consciousness and that can be helpful here too. When listening to a piece of music, we do not hear the notes independent of each other, for it to become music (as opposed to a sequence of sounds), they need to be taken together in context. For Afrikaners, food at the braai, most notably *pap-en-smoor* and *potjie*, are the bars within which the music of Afrikaner life is composed and then compacted together in a score of sadness, joy, loss, love and any number of other sensations. The sensation of food, in conjunction with nostalgia, permits a spacetime travel of the Self within a collective history, simultaneously dilating the mental continuum of time and compacting it into the present and subsequently determining the future. Understanding food in this way, the importance of specific foods at the braai by making, eating and sharing them, becomes all the more clear. Within a single bite, they allow the Self to sensorially remember collective history, personal history and create the future through new migratory relationships. The braai therefore is not the point of nostalgic origin but the conduit for a relationship-oriented nostalgia, and thus, traditional foods of the braai do not affect me in the same way as they do for Afrikaners who have that history.

Afrikaners, in remembering their individual-personal and collective-historical pasts, act upon them, creating multifaceted identities in ways that engage every sense. In the previous chapter, I showed how the properties of fire impacted upon this performative sensing and here I have described the contextualised taste element. What is evident is that the physical, molecular component of taste – how the flavours of the food interact with one’s physiology – cannot fully account for the taste of food. Once again, the human experience cannot be presumed from the total of its parts nor can a merely physical description account for the experience’s entirety. This is alluded to in a quote from a participant during interviews, which was prefaced with a discussion on Afrikaner braai culture, and connected to their collective history:

I love being outdoors [...], love being out in the bush in the wild and camping, tramping. It’s part of Afrikaans culture, [like the] the Anglo-Boer War and *die Groot Trekkers* and so forth. I think there's some sense of relating back to that amongst Afrikaans people, you know? Cooking outdoors, hunting and drying

the meat to make biltong, going to the farm. Virtually every Afrikaner or Afrikaans-speaking person has friends or family that has a farm somewhere, so going to the farm and spending time on the farm and working with the cows and working with the soil is part of Afrikaans culture.

To some degree, each food element cooked on or served at the braai relate in some form or another to collective and personal nostalgia. With respect to collective history, neither pigs nor chickens are driving animals that can be transported across semi-arid terrain without difficulty. Cattle feature the most of any food-animal, indeed any food, throughout the early first-hand South African diary accounts of Louis Trigardt (Trigardt & Preller, 1917) and Erasmus Smit (Smit & Mears, 1972), followed by sheep and lamb and then wild buck. Corn, in its various forms, is the most frequently referenced vegetable food, likely due to its ease of storage and transportability, though it also sits within broader South African foodways beyond Afrikaner practice. Pig is mentioned only very seldom, many accounts referring to pig meat are concerning wild boar and those that do not make such distinctions may still be referring to boar. In any case, the animal was only referred to seven times throughout these diaries, a mere one percent of cattle-related accounts. Although chicken is hard to discern since many of the words used can either mean wild fowl or domesticated poultry, all poultry related accounts (game and domesticated) are more common than pig but still much less than other food animals.

Building on the previous chapter, the braai is where non-material, symbolic culture intersects most prominently with material culture. Characteristic of most symbolic culture, that which is present at an Afrikaner braai event are hidden from those who have not attended many over the course of their life. Like a paragraph copied and pasted into Google Translate, material culture is moveable from one setting to another, but its specific, nuanced meaning is often lost in translation and the braai vessel is no different. Transferring braai equipment to a New Zealand setting without conveying the respective symbolic culture means that the equipment no longer exists under the term 'braai' and becomes broadened to 'barbecue' equipment. That is, the equipment itself is of little importance, rather it is symbolic culture – the movements, traditions, gestures and social organisation – that the braai vessel signifies which defines it as 'braai'. However, the symbolic culture cannot be transferred along with the object because it is held within the collective consciousness of those within the society who constructed it.

The most pronounced personal example of this, in my experience, is that of the cornmeal and tomato dish, *pap-en-smoor*. Irrespective of culinary preference, the dish did nothing for me, an outsider to the community, because the significance of the dish revolves around that which it *represents*, Afrikaner history and culture, which cannot be physically added like salt to a pot of bubbling cornmeal. The taste of *pap-en-smoor* is irrelevant when pitted against the nostalgia that is conjured upon eating it. To gain access to that cultural-historical ‘flavour’, an individual needs to adapt to that culture first, acting upon performative memory through social reproduction. Such examples demonstrate that a physical object may represent both material and non-material culture. However, the inherent meaning within both of these frameworks is non-transferable between cultures, as suggested by food anthropologist, Claude Fischler:

Food is central to our sense of identity. The way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organization, and at the same time, both its oneness and the otherness of whoever eats differently. Food is also central to individual identity, in that any given human individual is constructed, biologically, psychologically and socially by the food he/she chases to incorporate. (1988, p.275)

Food is not merely a form of physiological sustenance; in as much as it fuels the physical body, it fuels the cultural, social and emotional Self, and by extension, the community in which the Self socialises and identifies.

In the case of braai vessels, the *seeming* transferability of the object between cultures renders a decontextualised, broader meaning devoid of cultural representation. As Stephen A. Tyler (1969, p.3) wrote, “[cultures] then are not material phenomena; they are cognitive organisations of material phenomena”. The material itself (in this case, food and braai equipment) is not what is important, but rather the cognitive organisation of the objects used within the braai context.

Conclusion

Potjie contracts personal relational and collective historical time into a meal, changing the horizontal focus of Being-in-the-World actors within that space. The key to this modification of conscious time, is the practice of memory, described above, and catalysed by nostalgia.

Many of the descriptive elements from this chapter (for example, the type of meat used) are what participants referred to when they differentiated the braai from the Kiwi barbecue. Rather than specifying certain cuts and types of meat, the focus was mainly on how the meat was prepared and/or obtained, relating their form to ethnic history as opposed to taste. There are, of course, some elements that will not be recognisable to some outside of South Africa, such as *braaibroodjies* and *potjiekos*. However, most of the description here would not appear very foreign to a New Zealander, and so fitting in at a braai, based on previous attendance at barbecues, would seem fairly easy. Braais, however, are different in the hearts and minds of Afrikaners. Their esoteric quality, so dependent on embodied knowledge, sensory matter and memory, means there may be a sense of emptiness when braais begin to merge with Kiwi barbecue practice. The abstract, incorporeal element that brings the braai together is non-transferable. The effect of this is encapsulated in the statement from a participant, who recounted a braai they had arranged for a group of Kiwi-only guests, colleagues of theirs. Speaking of the guests, “they ate and then they left, and [we were] kind of like, ‘Okay... Was that it?’” Such embodied, relational matters are the focus of the following chapter.

Food is considered one of the most basic of physiological human needs, but the inflection of this basic need on one’s memory, Self and ethnic identity is incredibly profound. The multi-sensory nature of its cooking and subsequent consumption can recall histories that the consumer may or may not have personally acted in, yet most certainly experiences. These experiences, whether actual or imagined, inform Afrikaners’ Self within a community context.

Recipe: Lamnek potjie with pap or roosterkoek

This is a large recipe to fit a standard size #3 or #4 *potjie*¹¹¹; it can be halved or quartered, but keep in mind that this is for sharing. The number of people the recipe will serve depends on how much starch you make alongside it, but bowls made up of a 1:1 *potjiekos*-to-starch ratio will render about 8-10 servings. The recipe is the amalgam of many that I've found in books, online and been given by family members and friends in and from South Africa and based on what I saw participants doing during fieldwork (further emphasising the importance of community in *potjie* practice).

Ingredients

A few friends, two or more preferably	4 cups beef stock, more or less
4Tbsp olive oil	1 stick celery, diced
4 brown onions, sliced	1 parsnip, cut in four
2kg lamb neck chops	3 medium carrots, cut into thirds
2tsp salt, or to taste	3 cups (500g) fresh green beans, ¹¹² ended
½tsp pepper, or to taste	1kg small, new potatoes left whole
5 garlic cloves, diced	2 packets (60g) onion soup mix
3 bay leaves	2 courgettes, cut into chunks
2Tbsp mixed herbs	400g button mushrooms, whole or halved
1 cup red wine, plus more for drinking	

Method

Complete all washing, chopping and other preparations in advance. Build your fire as per the previous chapter's 'recipe' but have a second, adjacent space for your pot and shuffle small heap of coals under the pot. You'll need to either have a three-legged cast-iron pot, or you can use a flat-bottom pot with something to hold it over the coals, like a few well-placed bricks. For those just wanting to try out the recipe, you can use a Dutch oven on your stove top (but it may be best not to call it '*potjiekos*' in South African company).

¹¹¹ 7.8 and 9.3 litres in size, respectively.

¹¹² You can use frozen as well, but get whole frozen beans as cut beans will go too mushy.

Heat the oil in the *potjie* and fry the onion. Once caramelised (about 15 minutes), remove them to a bowl and set aside while you brown the meat (5-10 minutes on each side). Arrange the meat pieces so that a roughly level surface is created at the bottom, season with salt and pepper, and spread the cooked onion over it followed by the garlic, bay leaves and herbs. Pour the wine over the *potjie* (and into everyone's glass at the same time) and then the stock. How much of this you'll need will depend on the shape and size of your pot and meat pieces, but you shouldn't have so much liquid that the meat is fully covered, but almost. Tumble over the celery, parsnip, carrots and green beans then top these off with the potatoes; some cooks, however, will leave the meat to braise for 30-60 minutes before doing so.

Leave to cook for a good long while, one-and-a-half to two hours, and more or less forget about it while you chat, laugh and drink with a couple of friends. Don't open the lid – I was told (by someone who opened the lid rather often) that you should listen to the sound of the *potjie* bubbling to determine if the temperature is correct. He didn't say what it should sound like, but I've heard some say that you shouldn't be able to hear it from two metres away and others say that one light bubble-pop per second is good.

Half an hour or so before finishing, make a slurry with the soup powder with only just enough water to make it fluid. This is supposed to add flavour but also thicken the liquid. Open the lid and pour over the soup mix and stir carefully, trying not to mash the vegetables. Add the mushrooms and courgette pieces over the top, replace the lid and leave to cook for around 20 minutes. Finally, open the lid and check the liquid level; if it's too soup-like, let it bubble uncovered until it's reduced.

To serve

Serve only with a plain starch, like white rice, mashed potato or the more traditional cornmeal *pap*. To make the latter, buy a pack of white cornmeal. A few brands are available but 'Springbok' seems to be most common in New Zealand supermarkets. If it's labelled "maize meal", "*mieliemeel*",¹¹³ "*braaipap*"¹¹⁴ or has "product of South Africa" on the side, then it's probably the right one. The directions are almost always on the side, including suggested quantities. The key direction is to pour the meal directly into the centre of the pot of salted, boiling water, heaping it in a mound. Like an iceberg, the top should poke above

¹¹³ ['mi:.li:.mi:l]

¹¹⁴ ['bra:i.pap]

the water and the rest submerged. The *pap* is supposed to be steamed, not boiled so leave it mounded and untouched for at least five minutes (some say as much as 20 minutes) before breaking it up with a fork and cooking for another 20 to 30 minutes.

My favourite option though is *roosterkoek*.¹¹⁵ Make up a soft, plain white bread dough and allow to rise to double. Punch down and form the dough into balls about 8-9cms in diameter and leave to prove a little, 10-20 minutes or so. Place directly on the grill over cool embers by upturning them (so the base of the dough mounds is now the top), leave to bake, turning often until cooked through. Split these open like English muffins, using one half to eat with the *potjie* stew and the other spread with way too much butter. These breads aren't at all as common as *pap*, especially in a group setting, but are still a traditional standard and *potjie* braai accompaniment.

¹¹⁵ ['roʊs.tər.kuk]; literally 'toasted cake'. Basically, an English muffin baked on the braai grill.

Chapter 6: Vignette prologue

Does pizza count as a braai?

The weather was absolutely miserable; grey, cold and heavy but, thankfully, little wind. I knocked on the door of my research participant, wondering how he deals with a braai in such weather. His wife opened the door with a loud and warm greeting, but clearly surprised to see me. This threw me off a little, giving the first hint that something was up. Did I have the wrong day? Had he forgotten altogether? She remembered me though and so I thought my fears were unfounded. We had only met very briefly about five months ago so I wouldn't expect her to remember my face, unless perhaps reminded of me by her husband.

I went in to greet her husband in the kitchen, cooking on the stove. This gave my second clue. But then, I'd also heard of braai's going on for hours and serving late into the evening, so maybe this was one of those, where 'pre-dinner' is served before lighting the fire for the main meal. Surely this was the right day. I double-checked with him to make sure.

"Yes, yes. Everything's fine."

It wasn't.

"No problem at all."

Clearly there was.

My partner and I took our seats in a lounge to the side of the dining room, a cute little sunroom, surrounded by windows. Sunken below the rest of the house's level, we took in a gorgeous view of Auckland's harbour in the background and two braais, gas and wood-fired, in the fore. He and his wife went to make everyone coffee. There's inaudible conversation coming from the kitchen that I desperately want to eavesdrop on, but instead I give them their privacy. Leaving my participant to finish up, his wife walks over and sits on the steps in front of our seats and reveals what I'd been dreading.

"So, my husband has forgotten to tell me you were coming."

Ah.

"He recently got a new job and has been busy getting up to speed on everything. He lost his wallet not too long ago and only found it two days later in his toolbox."

Shit. What now?

I wonder at suggesting we come back at a more suitable time. Or should I apologise on his behalf? I hate these kinds of situations. You know, the ones where someone else's mistake makes other people – me – uncomfortably planted in awkward situations. Mind you, my partner kept telling me to send confirmation emails a day or so beforehand. I should probably have heeded that advice.

I decided to do and say nothing and just see what they do and where it goes. My participant asks if we like pizza.

“It's too cold for a braai, and it's raining.”

I knew it! Caught in the act, shrugging off the possibility of braai for failing weather conditions. Jan Braai would be furious, but I knew it happened from time to time at least.

The kids (one of theirs, a friend who's come to stay, and ours) sat at the dining table to play boardgames while we remain nestled in the neighbouring lounge with our coffees. Thankfully the awkwardness was quickly eliminated, and everyone got on amazingly. Our kids became 'best' friends almost immediately – although this happens surprisingly often for credible use of a superlative – and the adults chat, without any awkward silences, about our day-to-day lives. The current situation in South Africa comes up but I was surprised at how little there was to say about it. The same with the usually prevalent immigration stories. Rather, the star of the conversation was our mutual home-schooling experiences.

Hours later, the parents of their children's friend who stayed over arrived to pick up their daughter. I had met them five months before at my participants' first interview; apparently, they're all very good family friends from back in South Africa. I was glad they remembered me from our first meeting since it makes conversation much easier (and the Kiwi-who-speaks-Afrikaans thing is always good conversation-kindling). My participant then launched into a repeat of the conversation we had just had over the past few hours, albeit in less detail. Discussion eventually turned into the eccentricities of Kiwi slang and phraseology and Afrikaners' general inability to understand New Zealand English. I managed to translate some persistent irritants and offer 'correct' pronunciation of vitally important words, like 'Mitre 10' and we decide that I'm tasked with publishing a Kiwish dictionary app for Afrikaans speakers. Although being right in the middle of the COVID pandemic, I wondered when it'll be needed again.

The night was an enjoyable one. Though not strictly a braai – or a braai at all, really – often the details of something are revealed in their absence.

Chapter 6: The braai as a gendered space: On screen and by the fire

Introduction

Pop cultural platforms, such as social media and televised or internet-streamed screenings show representations of cultural and societal norms to a wide audience. These are easily accessed and, in the case of internet-based representations, shared within communities and beyond. This provides a way for people to disseminate cultural norms to others within the community, reifying them, while simultaneously exposing people outside of the community to their cultural practice. At the same time, representations both affirm that these norms should be adhered to and also challenge one's own way of being, when exposed to other communities' practices. One facet of Afrikaner culture that is strongly displayed in imagery on social media is gendered norms. This online narrative on binary gender roles applies to men and women, but is most robust in dictating masculinity and the role of men at the braai. In doing so, these depictions also comment on the ownership of 'braai', expanding its meaning as not only integral to Afrikaner culture, but also to South African nationality. This chapter will explore these representations through widely disseminated memes, photo posts and television series, shared with me by research participants and other personal South African acquaintances. I then analyse these representations primarily through Judith Butler's (2006) seminal work in the gender space.

Social media has become very important for South African migrants, since it is the primary means through which they can retain a measure of social interaction with friends and family in their homeland and the diaspora. However, it has also been a way to share their culture with new acquaintances in New Zealand, particularly during COVID-19 lockdowns where in-person social interaction was minimised. Thus, a picture posted online can be a window into the idea of what life is like for an Afrikaner, to New Zealanders, and an Afrikaner in New Zealand, to South Africans. For example, the common image of a group, either in South Africa or New Zealand, of male friends standing around the fire and smiling with drink in hand sends the message that the braai is a place of friendship and conviviality. Also common is the donning of conspicuously green Springbok rugby shirts, demarcating the space as specifically South African. Such use of social media platforms makes it important for both retaining one's homeland identity *and* projecting it in their new environment.

While often imagined as a site of conviviality and equality, the braai space also becomes a powerful arena for the (re)production of gender norms – particularly those tied to Afrikaner

masculinity. This chapter explores how gendered identities are constructed, performed and contested around the braai fire, both through lived practice and mediated representation. Drawing on fieldwork and participant accounts, it considers who is seen to ‘belong’ at the fire, who does the cooking, and how these dynamics play out in everyday life and popular culture. In doing so, the chapter interrogates the symbolic and social labour of gender at the braai, offering insight into how Afrikaner identity is entangled with specific ideals of masculinity and division of roles.

Social media and screen representations of the braai

Facebook was the most prominent social media channel used by participants and so the majority of what I discuss here is sourced from that platform. I took part in some participants’ WhatsApp groups as well but I found these were mainly used for the purposes of sending short messages, while Facebook provided a more widely distributed window into participants’ lives, with images posted of what was important to them, such as the rugby-shirt braai photo just described or, also common, quotes or stories from the Bible or Christian leaders. Instagram was reported to be used primarily by the younger members of the community, but I was not invited to connect via this platform. There are many other platforms which were used by participants (such as YouTube, TikTok etc.) but it was mostly through Facebook, Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp where these other platforms’ materials were shared.

South Africa has produced quite a few screen representations of the braai in the reality and food television genres. The most commonly referred to of these is *Jan Braai vir Erfenis* (Scannell, 2011). This series features Jan Scannell (aka ‘Jan Braai’) travelling around South Africa and other nearby African nations (e.g. Namibia, Botswana, Madagascar) as well as some other popular destinations for Afrikaner migrants (e.g. United Kingdom and throughout Europe). At the time of writing he had not yet been to New Zealand but in an interview with *Konnekt*, a magazine produced for South African migrants living here, he has stated that he had intended a trip just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic closures (L. Baldwin, 2021). While travelling, Scannell braais in outdoor environments, often interviewing locals about their braai practice and, in episodes based overseas, their culture. While it is partly scripted, and so not a ‘genuine’ social depiction, the longstanding popularity of this more than decade-long series alone is cause for examination. Scannell and his series was often referred to by

research participants and was quoted by them in relation to some of the concepts mentioned below. Scannell and his brand have become iconic in relation to the braai in South Africa (and I would suggest, the Afrikaner version of the braai).

Apparently based on the *Come Dine with Me* series, another popular and long-running show is *Kom Ons Braai* (Media Club Productions, 2007), a reality series where three couples braai for each other, rate the braais and the one with the highest score wins. Again, this was referred to by participants as a semi-realistic depiction of the braai, at least in terms of cuisine and the fact that participants interact with one another, this part of which is largely non-existent in the other competition shows discussed here. A major consideration here though is that participants are required to follow a predetermined and timed order of service and the relational aspect, so integral to the braai event, is somewhat thrown out of kilter, since it is a competition with results determined by other contestants. Thus, while the series is closer to an accurate depiction of the sociality of the braai, it is still somewhat inauthentic.

The other main television series, and the only one I found available from New Zealand (via Netflix) that is aired in English, is *The Ultimate Braai Master* (Bonello, 2012), hosted by South African food writer, Justin Bonello. Similar to *Kom Ons Braai*, this is a competition series but the type of cuisine that is shown is more gourmet than homespun. It is very reminiscent of the worldwide MasterChef series (Roddam et al., 2008), though still centred around the braai. As prominent public examples of ‘the braai’, these shows are used in relation to the national and cultural conceptualisation of the braai in a modern concept.

Mediating Masculinity: Gendered Representations of the Braai

Braaiing against the weather, braaiing against history

My first experience braaiing was during my university days in Dunedin. My partner (who, at the time I had been dating for about a year), and I had bought some *boerewors* from a local South African butcher and I was trying to impress by cooking it in the traditional manner on the braai. The ‘fire’ – a term I am dubious about using here – was lit in a potentially illegal pit I had made from discarded bricks in the backyard of my partner’s flat. It had rained earlier that day and was still cold but not sopping wet like it was earlier. I had scarcely started when a light shower began, turning to rain and then hail. The kindling became damp quickly and there was a lot of smoke which seemed to have become a sentient entity, targeting the precise direction of my tearing eyeballs. But I persisted. Needless to say, the *boerewors* ended up a

patchwork of charcoal black and uncooked red and I was left with a wholly unenjoyable first solitary attempt at a braai. I remember questioning my own intelligence at the time, but I now look back on the event every now and then with a giggle and the odd facepalm. But from that attempt, I can definitely say that, for me at least, hail and fire really only mix well in biblical plagues.

No matter the weather...
We will Braai.



Figure 12: "No matter the weather..." (braai, 2021)

One of the foremost depictions that I regularly saw and heard throughout my years of association with the Afrikaner community in New Zealand is related to the environmental conditions for the braai. Specifically, the idea is conveyed that one can and should braai whatever the weather conditions. Memes and stories on social media commonly refer to braaiers' attestations that they will braai anywhere and in any weather. Images of men huddled over a smoking grill with tong in one hand and umbrella in the other, or braais nestled in the snow (for example, see *figure 12*), often with a humorous tagline, are not uncommon. This is especially true in the diaspora where poor weather conditions are more common than in Afrikaners' homeland. However, in the more than ten years I have associated with the community, I have seen the social medias memes and heard the stories but never witnessed anyone braaiing in poor weather. The disjuncture between what I saw

online versus what I experienced raised the question for me, ‘Do Afrikaners actually braai in adverse weather conditions, as shown online?’ The answer, I believe, sheds light on the cultural expectations of how a braai is to be performed.

The response to this question came quickly. One participant couple dropped out of the study¹¹⁶ after the first interview because we were moving into Winter, and they could not foresee pleasant enough braai conditions. Another male participant, whose ‘braai’ experience I recount in the vignette prologue to this chapter, ordered pizza because it was raining quite heavily on the day we arrived, although he had also entirely forgotten we had arranged to meet. Despite its prevalence in various media outlets, only one participant verbally pushed the idea of braaiing no matter the weather. In practice, he did braai in rainy weather, but comfortably seated in a roofed porch with a gas heater that was essentially an outdoor extension of the interior of the home. Not the same kind of rugged outdoorsmanship suggested online.

It is hard to discern exactly where the ‘braai anytime and always’ idea came from. However, following on from the history of the braai in the introductory chapter, modern braai practice is a historical derivative from the Afrikaners’ trek into the interior of South Africa at the turn of the 20th century. Cooking over an open fire was a necessity, not only for nourishment but also warmth, light and safety. History has traditionally been very important in Afrikaner identity formation, with stories of the struggle for independence and autonomy from Britain being used as context for Afrikaner ethnicity (Finlayson, 2019). This narrative appears to be changing with educational reforms where Afrikaner history is downplayed in comparison to apartheid-era curricula (Blaser, 2007) but the braai is a product of this ethno-cultural narrative of outdoor-related survival, and comes with it, a traditionally masculine narrative woven throughout.

¹¹⁶ This couple did confirm that I may use the research data that I had gathered up to the point where they left the study.

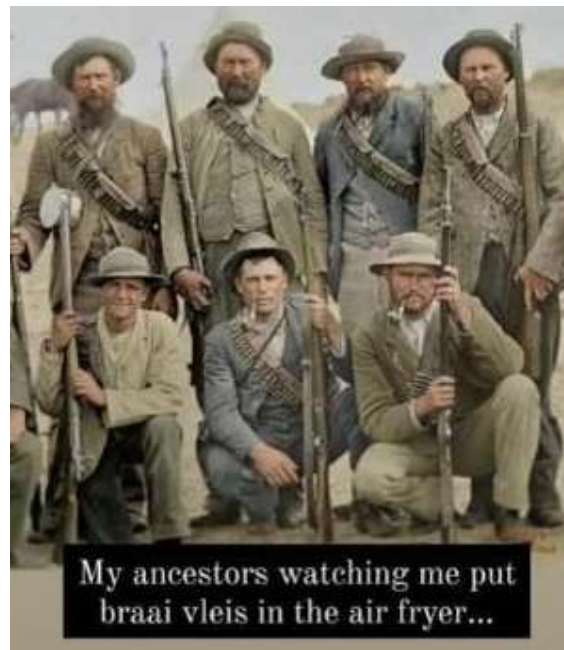


Figure 13: “My ancestors watching me...” (Whyte, 2022)

This historical link is evidenced in a more recent meme that started appearing in April 2022 (see *figure 13*). Within a month of its first creation and post (when it was first shared with me), the original meme had been shared over 200 times, in addition to being downloaded and reuploaded, and other images of Boer War fighters being posted with similar caption text. The meme suggests that putting meat suitable for being cooked on a braai (“*braaivleis*”) in an air fryer is something that ancestors of Afrikaners would look on with disapproval to the point of being battle-ready. Like many memes, this has a secondary suggestion that *braaivleis* is indeed sometimes cooked in an air fryer, rather than on a braai.

The idea that these memes offer in conjunction with each other, is that adverse conditions are an important component of the braai and that the ancestors of Afrikaners, guerrilla fighters in the Boer Wars, who endured some of the most adverse conditions in their people’s history, take note of how one treats braai tradition, thus equating ancestral history with modern cultural tradition. The memes being transferred from one to another via social media reinforce these rules, but the comedic tone of memes allows recipients to ignore them as traditional or extreme.

As I have mentioned, most participants did not struggle with adverse conditions, either having built an area that allowed shelter from the elements or simply choosing not to braai at all based on expected adverse conditions. This was further confirmed in the interview of a

participant who rejected the idea of struggling to braai in such conditions, preferring to cook inside:

Wife: When the weather is not as nice, [to husband] do you think we [braai] less? I think we do it less.

Husband: That's the only reason we would do it less. It's often not pleasant enough.

Wife: Some people, they have their own little area where it's sheltered, but we tend to do it slightly less because of that.

Husband: You get variances in how seriously people feel about it. Some people, the first thing they would do is create a corner where they can braai in rain, sunshine, whatever. I mean, that's not important to me, if I don't feel like standing outside, lighting a fire with the smoke blowing all over the place and getting the Weber¹¹⁷ out in the rain all of the time. I would rather make a meal inside.



Figure 14: “One does not simply skip a braai...” (Bezuidenhout, 2021)

For these participants, as with most others, practicality won out over reinforcing a popular narrative that one should not put off a braai for poor weather conditions alone (illustrated in the meme in *figure 14*). The reasons behind this are alluded to in the above participant's narrative, “That's the only reason we would do it less. It's often not pleasant enough”. This was a comparison made with the weather experienced in South Africa. While Cape Town is surprisingly similar in climate to northern New Zealand, the country does receive more rain

¹¹⁷ A popular brand of braai vessel, detailed in Chapter Four.

overall than South Africa does (Chappell, 2013; Weather & Climate, n.d.). Other countries where Afrikaner diasporic communities exist, such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada will also receive more extreme conditions, most notably snow.



Figure 15: "You know you're South African when..." (SAPeople.com, 2017)

Memes featuring braais in the snow (for example, *figure 12*) are still commonplace among New Zealand's diaspora community but braais in the rain, such as in *figure 15*, are far more commonly referred to in conversation and sent through WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger discussions. This tailors the conversation to a more personally felt reality, since migrants in New Zealand are more likely to encounter adverse rain and wind than they are snow. The consistent use of memes that depict a braai in the snow, however, indicate that such images may be designed more for comedic shock value than attesting to an unbreakable rule for life as a South African.



Figure 16: “Never ever give up...” (braai, 2019)

The reactions to a meme (see *figure 16*) may demonstrate this comedic shock value. At the time of writing, after the more than 10K ‘likes’, the next most common reaction was the ‘laugh’ reaction at 7.2K. All remaining reactions were less than 300. Should this be considered a sincere illustration, the ‘love’ reaction could be expected to have been used more, as is the case among the more representative braai posts.

The meme also came with comments and share texts such as:

“That guy bust his head against a iron wall...braaiing while it’s raining...??? Dik groe[n] [Knows nothing] 😞 😞 😞 ”

“Here dai vuur gn nooit brand nii 😂 😂 😂 😂 ” [Lord that fire’s never gonna light 😂 😂 😂 😂]

“Hêrrrrrrre B[o]jets....maar die coif moet droog bly met die “plêstiek keps”..... 🧑 ” [Looooord Bro....but the hair must stay dry with the plastic cap..... 🧑] (braai, 2019)

These show a derogatory, non-affirming take on the image, where even the braaiier’s intelligence is questioned. On the other hand, there are some posts where South Africans are indeed braaiing with an umbrella or in a ski suit while standing in snow. I have confirmed

that the man in *figure 15*, braaiing under the green Springbok umbrella, is a South African who braaiied in the rain.¹¹⁸ This image, was posted with the text:

Nou gaan ons braai...¹¹⁹ with Sean Kramer! Thank you Glynda Norwitz
Kramer – “#bluebloodsouthafrican... it was all funny until the lightning
bolt 😄” (SAPeople.com, 2017)

The man in the image is held up as an exemplar of someone who will braai no matter the conditions and ‘hashtagged’ as a ‘blue blood South African’ because “nothing can stop your lekker [nice] Sunday braai”. These phrases imply an *exceptionality* to the situation. It shows that, though it is not pleasant, the braai is more important and so a ‘blue blood’, someone of high social status considered exceptional by those around them, will braai nonetheless. The deduction here is that others, those who are ‘unexceptional’ (not blue blood South Africans), which is the higher proportion of the population, will choose not to.

One of the key proponents of this theme is Jan ‘Braai’ Scannell on his television series, *Jan Braai vir Erfenis* (Scannell, 2011). As noted earlier, the show centres around Scannell braaiing everywhere he can, whatever the situation, including a braai under water (*figure 17*) in a custom-built submarine braai for his 100th episode (Scannell, 2014).



Figure 17: Jan and his submarine braai (Scannell, 2014)

This is an extreme performance of the ‘braai anywhere, anytime’ idea, but it demonstrates how far the theme goes. A more realistic example can be found in episode ten of season four

¹¹⁸ Responding to a comment that it’s “Not even raining in the pic” (note the dry paving stones), the man in the image’s wife explained that “Lol it spat then poured” (SAPeople.com, 2017).

¹¹⁹ Literally this phrase means “now we’re going to braai”. It’s often said when something good has happened and is used by many people throughout South Africa, not just Afrikaners.

of the show. During this episode, Scannell travelled to Ireland and, over three episodes,¹²⁰ he explores the landscape and culture of the country, braaiing throughout.



Figure 18: Jan braaiing in Ireland (Scannell, 2014)

During his travels, he stopped at a popular tourist destination, The Wild Atlantic Way, with his cameraman, Stefanus, in the cold and rain to braai (see *figure 18*¹²¹):

Dis ysig hierbo en winderig en sê so nul grade. Die goeie ding is, dit lyk vir my hierdie huisie het 'n dak. Dink ons moet 'n binne braai hou. Die uitsig is mooi maar binne braai gaan dalk veiliger wees as buite braai. Die dak lek 'n bietjie, maar dis 'n dak. Dis baie warmer hier binne. Dis nog steeds koud maar dis warmer asof buite. [handing a cup of red wine to Stefanus] Gesondheid, hier in die koue. Ek dink ons gaan oorleef. (Scannell, 2014)

It's icy up here and windy and about zero degrees. The good thing is that it looks to me that this [abandoned] cottage has a roof. Think we should have an indoor braai. The view is nice but braaiing indoors will be perhaps safer than braaiing outside. The roof is leaking a little but it's a roof. It's warmer inside here. It's still cold but it's warmer than outside. [handing a cup of red wine to Stefanus] Cheers [literally 'health'], here in the cold. I think we're going to survive.

¹²⁰ Episodes nine to eleven (Scannell, 2014).

¹²¹ Unfortunately the streaming service Showmax ceased being available in New Zealand before I was able to retrieve a clearer screenshot of the episode.

After the braai, he refers to the quite heavy rain as *mot reën*¹²² [drizzle] and says, sarcastically, that it was “regtig baie aangenaam” [really very pleasant] before he and Stefanus laugh. To conclude Scannell explains that it is “net nog ‘n bewyse, ‘n Suid Afrikaner kan enige plek in die wêreld braai” [yet more proof that a South African can braai anywhere in the world], further reiterating the ‘braai anywhere’ mantra. However, about one year later, in episode 19 of season five, he revisits Ireland saying that:

Nou die miljoene gereelde kykers sal onthou, ons was al in Ierland maar toe was dit winter en dit het heeltyd gereën. Baie kykers het op die Jan Braai Facebook groep gesê, ons moet ‘n slag teruggaan wanneer die son skyn en dis presies wat ons nou gaan doen. Ons is in Ierland om hierdie fantastiese weer te geniet en te braai. (Scannell, 2015)

Now the millions of regular viewers will remember, we have already been in Ireland but then it was Winter and it rained the whole time. Many viewers said on the Jan Braai Facebook group, we should go back for a while when the sun is shining and that’s exactly what we’re going to do now. We’re in Ireland to enjoy this fantastic weather and to braai.

The weather during initial filming in Ireland made the experience unpleasant and the spirit that emanated from these episodes of *Jan Braai vir Erfenis* was one of exceptionality, despite a key premise of the show being ‘braai anywhere, anytime’. This narrative pushes a traditional ideal of masculine outdoorsmanship that is highly valued in Afrikaner culture and translates into a preponderance toward outdoor-based leisure activities. The reality is though, that the imagery described is one of unpleasant conditions that make the social aspect of the braai difficult to execute. In these cases, the braai becomes about the weather, demonstrated in Scannell talking more about this topic than anything else.

Following this ‘anywhere, anytime’ theme, another common scene in televised braai depictions is the southern African environment. The introduction to *The Ultimate Braai Master* (Bonello, 2012) centres on this and *Jan Braai vir Erfenis* (Scannell, 2011) is part cooking show, part travel show with the majority taking place in South Africa and its bordering states. *The Ultimate Braai Master* is available for worldwide streaming on Netflix in English and so it could be argued that it is used, in part, to advertise South Africa to

¹²² [mɒt riən]; one of my favourite Afrikaans expressions, literally means ‘moth rain’ and referring to a very light, powdery drizzle (i.e. imagine a moth fluttering against one’s skin).

potential tourists abroad. The same cannot be said for *Jan Braai vir Erfenis*, which presents South Africa in a similar way but is aired mostly in Afrikaans and without English subtitles.¹²³ The sense that I get from these shows is that South Africa, its environment, fauna and climate is strongly related to the braai experience. Equivalent New Zealand programmes, such as MasterChef New Zealand, have similar environmental themes, however they are more common and integral in South African braai series.

The environmental and scenic experience shown on these cooking shows, reminiscent of trekking in the wilderness, cannot be reproduced in one's backyard, but attempts are made in that direction by situating as much of the event outside as possible. In *Kom Ons Braai*, the eating is usually done outdoors, as is the social component (generally an 'ice-breaker' game). If the braai is built-in, it is usually on the side of the house, sometimes with a roof overhead but almost always with open access to the outdoors. All but one braai I attended as part of fieldwork had us eating outside.

Gender segregation

Another central theme in pop cultural representations of the braai is that it is a very male-dominated arena, particularly in terms of who is around the fire. However, in contrast to the previous theme, this is shown on social media less through memes and more through photographic evidence. When images of braais taking place are uploaded on personal Facebook pages, photos that include the braai in it usually feature only men. Searching for an image of any woman who is braaiing where men are also present returns very few results. This depiction of gender was regularly talked about during interviews and braais I attended and often in relation to being out of step with modern social values. It was also an issue raised by participants themselves. Although it was something I wanted to ask participants about, the subject was usually raised by them in conversation, organically flowing on from other related topics.

At braais, hosts and guests usually divide themselves into two groups, the men around the braai fire and the women elsewhere. Usually, women will congregate in the kitchen or a seated area outside, a few metres away from the fire. Yet all of the women I met with said they preferred being by the fire. One participant in particular spoke about being one of

¹²³ The show can be viewed on Showmax, a streaming platform that is available overseas although word of mouth marketing means it is only well-known among South African migrants.

“*those*” women who prefer to be standing around the braai, clearly referencing a kind of socially liberal or progressive Afrikaner:

Wife: I think there’s a lot to say for the fact that the husband does the [braaiing], because remember in our culture, we were brought up where the wife did all the cooking. Their husbands were working, so that’s the way most of us were brought up. But that’s changed through the years. But a braai was when *dad* did half of the work or he did, many times, most of the work and mum did less. So, it was also a way for her to relax. I think that’s an important part of it. Maybe it was not always for her, just the fun of a braai, but also less work.

Husband: And the actual braaiing was always done by a man.

Wife: I mean, even today, it’s still a bit strange if that woman does it. And we always have the saying of, “I’m one of those women who would prefer to be around the fire with the men than in the kitchen with a woman”. There was a common saying like that. Then you know, okay, she’s one of *those*, she’s one of those [laughs]. But the men [were] around the fire, and I was mostly at the fire, because it was more interesting. They talked about different subjects.

Such verbalised accounts from participants were fairly common; however, contrasting these, I never actually saw her, or any female participant, enter the vicinity of the fire and braai vessel, so traditionally expected norms prevailed over intent. Another said that she would normally sit outside but her elderly family member needs to stay inside and so she wanted to accompany her. And yet another said that she never liked the idea of segregation but upholds it now since it allows her to pursue her own interests, socialising with her friends on her terms and talking about things that appeal to her. So, for this participant, the idea of segregation felt socially forced in her youth but personally embraced as she got older. While this was not explicitly corroborated by others, during braais I got the sense that it applied to the other women as well. That segregation is a conversationally pragmatic practice and thus adopted by even those who disagree with its social enforcement.

My own survey of the many braai-related images shown across South African Facebook users’ pages confirms the segregated nature of the braai environment. Overall, the majority of braai images are more focused on food and equipment (as discussed in Chapters Four and Five), and less on the people attending. However, when images are shown of those who are

fireside, social media depicts a very male-dominated area. The few images that feature women braaiing tend to be when only female guests are present.

Televised depictions also show that women and men tend to be separated at social braais. However, during series where the cuisine is the primary focus of the show, women contestants are fairly common (though still comparatively underrepresented), for example during season seven of *The Ultimate Braai Master* (Bonello, 2012), there was one team duo with all women and another team with a secondary female contestant but all other teams, and the show's three judges, were male. While women were allowed to enter, it was still a highly male-dominated arena.



Figure 19: "This is men's business. Serious men's business" (Gakulu, 2006)

A short film on braai etiquette, uploaded to YouTube and simply called *The Braai* (Gakulu, 2006), that was shared to me a few times prior to and during fieldwork, illustrates this.

Kicking off from the introduction, the narrator, with thick South African accent, states, "I would not bother showing this film to any woman, they would never understand it. This is men's business. Serious men's business" (Gakulu, 2006). Later in the clip, a woman tries to join the men around the braai (figure 19) and they block her out. Eventually she finds a spot where the smoke billows out from the braai and she has to walk away (figure 20).



Figure 20: "I would not bother showing this film to any woman" (Gakulu, 2006)

Such depictions warrant analytic attention in their own right. Statements that frame the braai as something women would “never understand” and scenes in which women are prevented from joining men around the fire function to mark the fireside as a masculine domain and to normalise gendered boundaries of participation. While these moments are often presented through humour or caricature, they nonetheless reproduce hierarchical distinctions between men and women through everyday representation. Importantly, this need not imply hostility or aggression on the part of participants or producers; rather, it reflects how gendered norms are routinely maintained through familiar cultural forms before being complicated by alternative representations.

In contrast to these depictions, in episode three of season fourteen of *Kom Ons Braai* (Media Club Productions, 2007), a husband-and-wife team, has the wife cooking at the braai. The wife is silent but her husband explains that “ek *kan* braai. Ek verkies dat my vrou braai want die kos proe beter maar eendag as sy moeg is, sal ek die tjoppie vat”. [I *can* braai. I prefer it when my wife braais because the food tastes better but one day, if she’s tired, I’ll take the chop.] The reaction is not one of shock as some research participants indicated might occur at such a braai-side situation. However, one older female contestant on the show expressed intrigued surprise that the wife is braaiing and in the end saying “well, good for you”, indicating that it is unusual but nonetheless acceptable. Another male contestant said that he had respect for and was impressed by a woman who can braai while marking the team down for the *husband’s* lack of involvement. For this contestant, and others, the problem was not that the wife was braaiing but that the husband was not.



Figure 21: *How to Make a Braai Pie* (Anastasopoulos, 2014)

In 2014, a YouTube video was released depicting a female Afrikaans character, Suzelle, making a puff-pastry pie using her braai. Suzelle is the stage name of Julia Anastasopoulos (Anastasopoulos, 2014), a South African actress who created a YouTube series called SuzelleDIY. On the channel, Suzelle attempts to show viewers how to do or make various things, such as boil eggs, make biltong and peel apples with a power drill. Anastasopoulos' exaggerated Afrikaans accent and targeted humour meant that the video went viral quickly and shared among many in the Afrikaner community. The short clip was published eight years ago, and as yet, I have not heard any mention of her being a woman as outstanding or heard it spoken about negatively in any way.

When recounting the process of a braai during interviews, a male participant referred to this gender segregation, implying it was undesirable but unlikely to change:

Most of the people will have a drink, standing around the fire when you have a look at [the fire] and have a discussion. That's where most of the men will get together and have a discussion. A lot of people don't like it but it's the reality of life, the men are around the fire and the woman sitting in the house, having a chat.

When cross-referenced with similar statements from women, and noting their movement between spaces at braais, the practice appears to be collectively reproduced rather than solely imposed by men. This suggests that gendered segregation is sustained through shared norms and pragmatic accommodation, including by those it may disadvantage. This is further illustrated by another female participant, who expressed ambivalence toward gender segregation, noting that while she had not always liked it, it nonetheless allowed her to pursue forms of sociality that interested her personally:

I didn't used to like it. But as I get older, I kind of enjoy it. I kind of catch up with [the women] in the kitchen – I don't want to hear what [the men are] saying in any case – and then we catch up and you go like, “Oh, so what happened with that?” and so it would be things that [the men] are not interested in.

At braais I was part of, I did not get the sense that women would be shooed away from the fire by the men if they were to venture into that space. Indeed, another female participant explained that she is “one of *those* women” who likes to sit near the fire, and even though I did not witness her do so, such narratives and pop cultural depictions like SuzelleDIY show that it is possible. Yet, unlike the previous section, which explored a braai-side ‘rule’ for

environmental conditions that is often ignored by the majority of braaiers, gender segregation is an issue depicted on social media *and* mostly adhered to by the community in practice with some acceptable deviation mentioned in discussion.

Non-South Africans braaiing

Non-South Africans are also referenced in relation to braai practice on social media. *The Braai* (Gakulu, 2006) and another shared YouTube film, *James Braai 0027*:¹²⁴ *Live and Let Braai* (James Braai, 2011), depict characters with British accents as not performing correct etiquette around the braai. In *The Braai*, a male English guest drinking Fosters¹²⁵ beer, enters the braai fire vicinity with an awkward “How is it?” (misappropriating the common South African greeting, ‘howzit’¹²⁶). The English guest is allowed to stand at the fire until he suggests that “I thought they would’ve cooked a lot better if you didn’t keep pokin’ ‘em” (*figure 22*). The narrator calls him a “newcomer” and a “rabble rouser bringing his crazy ideas from the outside” and explains that “he didn’t understand the hierarchy. First the tong-master, then the *boerie*¹²⁷-layer, then the fork-pronger. Everyone below was just a watcher”. The others cast a hard stare in his direction and the defeated English guest ejects himself from the men’s circle.

¹²⁴ The national calling code for South Africa, adapted from the James Bond series (007).

¹²⁵ An Australian-brand of beer which has a significant market in the United Kingdom (Woolfson, 2018). The others were drinking Castle Lager, well-known beer to South Africans.

¹²⁶ A very common, colloquial greeting similar to ‘hey’, rather than a question asking how one’s day is going.

¹²⁷ [‘bu:.ri]; shortened form of ‘*boerewors*’.



Figure 22: The “rabble rouser” (*Gakulu*, 2006)

Additionally, in *James Braai 0027: Live and Let Braai*, a parody of the James Bond franchise where ‘James Braai’ brings “braai offenders to justice”. The primary ‘offender’ is also British, dressed in an England Rugby shirt, hosting a braai with predominantly South African guests (*figure 23*), evident in their green Springboks rugby shirts. His first offence, punishment administered by rugby tackle, is misuse of equipment. The character declares he will cook on gas (an “outdoor oven”, according to his female guests) and use a dinner fork instead of tongs. His second offence is cooking frozen hamburger patties and a variety of other meat that is clearly too little for the people present. After intercepting the offender, James Braai fixes this with a wood-fired Weber, long-handled tongs, T-bone steaks and a lot of *boerewors*, presented by Boerie Galore.



Figure 23: Binging “braai offenders to justice” (James Braai, 2011)

As in *The Braai*, there is another guest, this time a South African, trying to control the cooking process which is also rectified with a tackle and a pointed “you should know better” from James Braai. Interestingly though, even though the primary offender is British English, James Braai himself is an English-speaking South African, called a ‘soutie’¹²⁸ in the beginning. Originally derogative, ‘soutie’ is a shortened form of ‘soutpiel’ (literally, ‘salt penis’), illustrating that the soutie has one foot in England and the other in South Africa, spreading their legs across the Atlantic, with penis dangling in the ocean. It appears to have become less derogatory in recent years with some English-speakers using the term to describe themselves, probably in part due to the original meaning being lost. The use of an English-speaking South African as the hero of the tale, bringing braai offenders – even some Afrikaners – to justice, suggests that the braai is not an Afrikaner-only cultural affair, but rather a South African national pastime.

Justin Bonello supports this in his Netflix series *The Ultimate Braai Master*, where in the introduction to season seven, he explains that South Africa is a place where:

[...] different cultures have united to form the rainbow nation. And there is one thing we all love to do. To gather around an open fire in a space that breaks down the barriers and walls between us and connects us to each other. We love to braai. (Bonello, 2012)

¹²⁸ [ˈsœu.ti]; an English-speaking South African.

The ethnicity of contestants is not declared on the show but based on accent, surnames and linguistic code-switching between Afrikaans and English, Afrikaans contestants are a minority, perhaps three to five at most out of twenty. *The Ultimate Braai Master* is filmed in English, the preferred cross-cultural language of South Africans, and shows the braai at a more national level than other, Afrikaans-language, shows.

While this framing presents the braai as a shared national practice that transcends cultural difference, it should not be read as politically neutral. Rather, it reflects a particular post-apartheid narrative of unity that positions the braai as a unifying cultural form, even as it may obscure the unequal historical and social conditions through which different groups have come to occupy that shared space. This produces a tension between the braai as it is represented at a national level and how it is experienced and understood in practice.

This tension becomes apparent in participants' scepticism about whether non-South Africans can adequately braai. Participants interviewed often recounted disappointment ensuing at the end of a barbecue hosted by Kiwis and a braai with Kiwi-only guests. The social component simply did not meet South African-Afrikaner expectations, leaving participants underwhelmed primarily due to the shorter timeframe. Though invisible to outsiders, misunderstanding this important aspect has caused South Africans to regard themselves as agents of authentic social braai practice. This led some participants to respond to my question as to whether Kiwis can braai with a baulking laugh. Some toyed with the idea that Kiwis can braai before ultimately explaining that they cannot. Episode seven of *The Ultimate Braai Master* (Bonello, 2012) illustrates this with one contestant, Biggy, describing another, Alex, as "Mr. New Zealand". Alex had previously travelled to New Zealand and learned techniques and recipes from his travels, one of which is the hāngī-cooking¹²⁹ method, that he modified for a challenge in episode five. Biggy explains that Alex has "done it all. [It's] just quite funny, when he loses a challenge. It's after he said he's done it in New Zealand". The implication being that New Zealand is not a place where an Ultimate Braai Master learns their craft and Alex exemplifies this in his defeat.

¹²⁹ A traditional Māori cooking method whereby food is cooked in a pit oven by the addition of heated rocks. It is still fairly commonly used today, especially for large gatherings and special occasions.

The braai and masculinity

In New Zealand today, we have a variety of outdoor cooking options, the most common still being the gas barbecue. However, South African pop culture avidly declares that this is not actually a braai at all but rather a neatly arranged row of barbie dolls (*figure 24*) and often goes hand-in-hand with a play on words since the Afrikaans word, *gas*,¹³⁰ is the same for ‘gas’ and ‘guest’. Like the meme’s two parts, it has two messages. On the one hand, we have a blanket statement about the equipment used for a braai (as discussed in Chapter Four). On the other hand, we have a depiction of traditionally expected roles in Afrikaner masculinity. Indeed, the key theme throughout the imagery I have thus far discussed is that they are overwhelmingly about men.



Figure 24: “This is a Barbie queue” (Rosser, 2020)

As mentioned, the space around the fire is a male environment and so associating that environment with dolls, traditionally feminine playthings, is a clear demarcation of expected role of masculinity in braai etiquette. This is probably one of the most significantly disseminated ideas of the braai across not only social but also mainstream media. As explained in Chapter Four, a ‘real’ braai is never fuelled by gas, wood is the preferred medium and charcoal acceptable but of lower standing. In addition to posts and comments to posts on social media, this imagery is pushed by memes that tie into masculinities, such as the ‘barbie queue’ mentioned earlier. More than just a play on words, *figure 24* conveys the gas barbecue as a girls’ leisure activity and thus a direct threat to traditional Afrikaner

¹³⁰ [*χas*]; both ‘guest’ and ‘gas’ (LPG).

masculinity, enforcing the idea that braais are not gas. Should one choose to braai with gas, then his masculinity – traditionally, an important facet in Afrikaner identity – is questioned.

Yet this is not adhered to in practice. To illustrate, one male participant not only braaied on gas but cried during both interviews and while speaking about his migratory and spiritual experience in public, both diversions from traditional masculinity. Further, during a braai event at his home, a female guest stood outside chatting to him while he cooked on a gas-fired aluminium structure, which most would call a ‘barbecue’. This was the only time I have so far seen a woman socialising around the outdoor cooking area. While that was happening, his wife and I stayed inside, building a box for drying biltong¹³¹ – a traditionally very *male* activity.

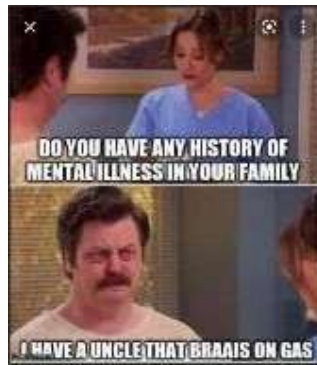


Figure 25: “...I have an uncle that braais on gas” (*Braai Army*, 2021)

In some conservative communities, we might expect to see his or his wife’s position in the community reduced because of such non-traditional behaviour, yet this had not happened. Contrary to this, a male participant who displayed assertive, traditional, and perhaps even *hyper*-masculine behaviour, was disciplined by the church community for actions related to this personality type and no longer attends the church.¹³² The disciplining of assertive, traditional masculinity by the church community is symptomatic of what Annika Teppa (2022) identifies as the shifting boundaries of ‘ordentlikheid’ (decency or properness). In the post-apartheid diaspora, the community must regulate personas of the past to maintain a version of ‘cosmopolitan whiteness’ that ensures moral acceptability in New Zealand. References to this person showing signs of traditional masculinity were talked about by

¹³¹ [ˈbəl.tɒŋ]; A cured and dried meat snack, usually flavoured with coriander seed.

¹³² The participant gave me permission to write about this but I have chosen not to give particulars here to protect anonymity.

others during interviews. In this regard, although respected as an elder in the community, the ejected man's assertively masculine behaviour was generally spoken of in a negative light.



Figure 26: "...Their dad "braais" on gas (Braai365, 2014)

There are many variations of memes that call into question the social standing of those who braai with gas. Mostly they question the masculinity of male braaiers but some other, well-shared memes include questions of mental health (*figure 25*), as upsetting to their children (*figure 26*) and access to nationally declared freedom during COVID for those in the British diaspora (*figure 27*).



Figure 27: "...If you BBQ, then you must stay at home" (SAPeople.com, 2020)



Figure 28: “...But you braai with gas” (Flippen Lekker Braai Resepte Boeke, 2020)

Another popular meme suggested that braaiing with gas prohibits one from becoming an adult man (figure 28). While I had seen this meme many times prior to fieldwork, it was referenced in a final interview with a participant, followed by a lengthy, to-and-fro discussion on the definition of a braai for him. Describing the text, this participant laughed at the joke that was made, while simultaneously affirming the content in the meme (that braais are not gas) and then going on to talk about his other braai, one that is fuelled by gas and yet still called a ‘braai’ by that participant. I asked him to clarify that, and he responded that it became a braai “because *I’m* doing it”. Noting that, earlier in the interview, he had explained that a Kiwi could braai, I asked for further clarification:

Culturally, [a gas braai is] not acceptable. But even then, I know a lot of people in South Africa that will do a braai with gas. So don’t think you have to have a wood braai to do a braai. The braai is not the actual, physical thing. [It’s] the whole thing of ‘coming together’. Because when I say to you, “ons moet braai” [we should/must braai], that doesn’t mean we have to ‘cook meat’. The thing is, you bring your [partner] and your kids and the kids are going to play together in the swimming pool and, you know? That’s what it is, a braai is an occasion. I don’t see [a barbecue] as really spending that time together.

While this is also the case for New Zealand barbecue invitations, the participant is trying to convey that braai practice is even more so, evident primarily in the length of time each braai takes and frequency with which it occurs. The braai, for this and other participants, is the primary form of socialising in Afrikaner culture.

In the introductory chapter, I touched on linguistic terminology for the words ‘braai’ and the various iterations of ‘barbecue’. What this participant did was tease apart the many definitions of ‘braai’, landing on one that this study is most concerned with: the braai *event*. ‘Braai’, as a noun (1st), can mean a vessel on which fire is started, such as those discussed in Chapter Four. There is also a verb, meaning to cook food on that fire or in a pan with oil. Finally, also as a noun (2nd), it can mean an event where these other definitions, married with time spent together, are employed. These seemingly inconsequential definitions are important in understanding the structural rules of a South African braai and what can and cannot be edited through individual agency and still considered a braai by the wider community. While men cannot braai with gas, both the most traditionally and non-traditionally masculine people in the Afrikaans community braai with gas, both affirming it is indeed a braai whilst acknowledging that braais are not gas. This contradiction can be clarified through linguistics.

I believe the explanation is in deciding which definition (1st noun, verb or 2nd noun) the speaker is using. If a barbecue is employed while South Africans get together, and the other, more rigid structural components of that event are adhered to (discussed in the following chapter), then that event remains a braai. Many participants struggled with their own personal definitions with what a braai is to them and whether gas can be used. I believe the problem they encountered is rooted in ‘braai’ being loaded with these multiple definitions. This is further muddled with the addition of ‘barbecue’ in the Afrikaans language and both terms regularly used in South African English, an issue of synonyms that most other English dialects do not suffer from.

The vast majority of themes depicted on screen via memes and video content show a highly masculine event, where many of the images and much of the narrative is directed toward feeding into the idea that a ‘struggle’ is part of being masculine. No reasoning is offered for the denigration of gas as an adequate fuel for the braai and it is likely that the additional flavour and a central flame adding warmth and light to the area is part of the attraction for such a braai.¹³³ Yet, few could deny that there is more of a struggle in conjuring up fire. It is

¹³³ The theme is explored in Chapter Four.

most certainly harder, taking more knowledge and skill, than turning a knob on an “outdoor oven” fuelled by gas. The strong relationship between living outdoors, enduring the elements and contending with the memory of one’s guerrilla fighter ancestors continue to feed into this illustration of traditional manhood. Furthermore, having one’s masculinity questioned, through the association with young girls’ toys and being considered a boy, rather than a man, ensure this perception is upheld and reiterated.

During the Boer Wars, Afrikaner men went to war *for* their wives and children. The British put these women and children in concentration camps and carried out Kitchener’s infamous scorched earth policy. This further infuriated the men, embittering them to carry on fighting until their ultimate surrender in 1902. The struggle to exist is an integral part of Afrikaner masculinity and so the self-subjugation of withstanding the elements allows Afrikaners, if only in some small part, to act out this struggle while forming relationships with other Afrikaners. Far from simply being “a way for men to show off”, as a participant called it in her earlier narrative, the braai not only works to form the community through these created relationships, solidified around the fire, but reignites an inferred historic link to Afrikaner masculinity within their community-rooted, individual identities.

Boys and their barbies: An analysis of masculine braai ritual

Introduction: Performativity and/or ritual

While such examples may initially appear to complicate a reading of the braai as a misogynistic space, they do not operate outside patriarchal hierarchy. Rather, they illustrate how gendered value is unevenly distributed within it. Practices coded as masculine are afforded greater cultural worth, such that women who successfully enact them may be praised, while men who fail to do so are subject to denigration. These dynamics do not undermine misogyny but instead demonstrate how it is reproduced through everyday ritual, humour, and performative distinction.

For example, while men are denigrated as non-masculine through association with Barbie dolls and everlasting boyhood, when women cross these traditionally upheld gender borders the example is held up positively. The imagery of the traditional ‘*boervrou*’¹³⁴ is a positive stereotype among Afrikaners, where the woman is characterised as authoritative, hard-

¹³⁴[‘bu:r.frœu]; “farmer wife/woman”; referring to the stereotypical ideal of a traditional Afrikaner woman. It includes the connotation of a highly domesticated woman who is tough and capable.

working and somewhat gruff: traits that are otherwise typically male. Further, Afrikaner migrant men also described a significant weight from the impact of the decision they made to move away from South Africa. From the perspective of the men, although the primary motivation for moving is the expectation that their children's future prospects are better elsewhere, they also described choosing to move for the safety of their wives. The main occurrences of men weeping during interviews was related to the impact that their decision to migrate had on their wives (particularly relating to resultant broken relationships), despite their wives being part of that decision-making process. In doing so, Afrikaner men articulate a protective sense of responsibility for and to their wives that contrasts with overt objectification, while still operating within gendered expectations embedded in patriarchal social relations.¹³⁵

Finally, as explained by one participant and his wife during an interview discussion, notions of class are somewhat broken down in the braai environment:

Wife: Dis meer *equal*. Enige een kan langs enige een staan en gesels want jy het nie seats wat elkeen moet in bly nie. Dit is soort van 'n kuiery. [It's more equal. Anyone can stand and chat with anyone because you don't have seats that you have to stay in. It's kind of like a hangout.]

Husband: Traditionally. It's a way that the 'commoners', the middle class and the working class socialised [but] it's not associated with social climbing or status.

Wife: My dad, he had a big business in South Africa, and when he [would have] a function for his staff, he always had a braai because that was the way everyone could talk to him. Although some of them were people that would [normally] stay away from him but during those evenings, everyone would talk to everyone.

Post-apartheid South Africa has become a highly class-divided society with overt displays of wealth indicating this (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010; Seekings & Nattrass, 2005) and many Afrikaner migrants arrive in New Zealand surprised to find that, for example, doctors commonly drive non-luxury brand cars. If such matters of segregation in everyday South African society can be broken upon the braai, then why not gender? Granted, these are two

¹³⁵ This was not elaborated on in detail, but primarily the assumption was that women, wives and daughters, would be targeted as a rape victim in South Africa's current high contact-crime climate.

separate forms of social hierarchy but they stem from similar patterns in constructing the social environment: the idea that a certain person of particular birth (be it ethnic, gender or class) is better than others. Rather than assessing the relative prevalence of such prejudice across contexts, what is analytically significant here is how these hierarchies are understood, reproduced and negotiated within the braai environment itself. This shift in focus allows the braai to be examined as a site in which gendered distinctions are actively produced and maintained through social practice. The braai may be a highly gender segregated environment however the rules governing this divide does not seem to emanate from the idea that women are inherently 'less' than men, as one might initially assume. If this is the case, how can such segregation persist? Rather than treating sexism and gendered hierarchy as exhausted explanations for the braai's gendered divisions, Judith Butler's theory of performativity offers a way of examining how such hierarchies are produced, reiterated and normalised through repeated, embodied practice.

Given the highly gendered examples in this discussion, Judith Butler's (2006) performative gender theory is a choice of analytical framework that I felt would illuminate the examples depicted, encountered both through fieldwork and online. Butler's performativity originated from J. L. Austin's (1950), via Jacques Derrida's, description of 'speech acts' whereby Austin argued that speech not only described truths or falsehood (such as "the cat is on the mat", to use his own example (Austin, 1950)), as was assumed at the time, but rather they can also *create* truths when certain utterances are voiced in certain contexts (for example, "I do" at a wedding). That is, by verbalising those words in these socio-cultural contexts, the statement brings about fact and thus moves past mere description of it.

Butler then developed this idea, applying Austin's performativity of speech acts to the performativity of all actions in the context of gender identity. She argued that gender is not inherent in our biological sex, as thought at the time she wrote, but rather gained through the performance of gender.¹³⁶ Quite simply people are gendered women (or other gender) through the performance of the socially accepted norms that go along with that gender. In cases where one plays with the boundaries of these social norms, or transgresses them entirely, they enter into a space of ambivalence, unsure whether they will be affirmed or denigrated by the group. Thus, rather than speech acts constituting truths in themselves,

¹³⁶ Butler's writing also bears some resemblance to Garfinkel's (1967, p.) description of transgender woman, Agnes, in his book *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. For example, of her postoperative development he says, Agnes "was still learning to act and feel like a woman. She was learning this new role only *as a function of actually playing it out*" (p.135, emphasis added).

Butler asserts that the performance of any act in a social context constitutes *identity*. Gender, then, is not something one ‘is’ or ‘has’, but something one *does*.¹³⁷ Butler’s ideas have since been applied in many ways, including *male* gender (Brickell, 2005). These ideas are suitably applicable in the Afrikaner braai, where men, women and children, although separated, have clearly defined roles. However, it felt insufficient to stop there. I was convinced that something else appeared to be occurring that could not be fully explained through performativity alone.

Allegorically the braai is sometimes referred to as a form of ritual. For example, one participant referred to the braai in relation to the Other’s enjoyment of, and participation in, alternative cultural foodways ‘ritual’, relating this back to their own foreign cultural experience:

But [the braai is] the same when... I remember the first time I had a six-course meal in France, and after the cheese trolley, I think, I was sort of, like, ready to fall asleep, and the guy was really disgusted with me and said, [disdainful French accent] “You are not French” [laughs, normal accent resumes]. In the same sense, I would never pass for Frenchman, but it doesn’t stop me from enjoying their rituals. And so, [the braai with non-South Africans] doesn’t have to be the same as how we would do it in South Africa.

Anthropologically, I had tended to think of this as lay misuse of the term. However, mention and insinuation of the braai as ritualistic popped up in conversation outside of interviews and throughout fieldwork somewhat frequently. The sense was given that the braai was described as such to highlight its importance, rather than attest to some repetition of prerequisite actions and a change in social status of those attending.¹³⁸ While the markers of ritual in the braai may be shaky, many elements of the braai are remarkably consistent across iterations of the practice, signifying a potential ritualistic quality. The beginning of a braai event certainly has that unique sense of ‘anticipatory’ atmosphere characteristic of ritual (different to that of the braai being used as a mere method of cooking a family’s mid-week dinner meal), and the post-braai mood is often remarkably different to that outside of the event. Thus, reconsidering

¹³⁷ It should be clear, these performances are not a matter of deciding and performing, but building the performance over time, adopting them as habitually and instinctively.

¹³⁸ I suspect that there is a certain degree of added importance and the constitution of ritual, perhaps a rite of passage, at a young boys’ first experience being responsible for cooking at the braai, but this was not specifically mentioned during fieldwork or interviews.

the idea of the braai as ritual may lead to potential clues as to how the braai is socially arranged.

In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Catherine Bell (2009) suggests the key markers of ritual – or “ritualized acts”, rather – are Formality, Repetition and Fixity:

Formality as a matter of embellishment or repetition as a matter of redundancy has each been defined in turn as central to the communicative functions of ritual. Rituals come to be defined as a particularly intensive form of communication by virtue of their formality and repetition. Fixity of the times and places of ritual activities, as well as the exact gestures to be enacted, also tends to be linked to the authoritative modelling of ritual. (Bell, 2009, pp.92)

The authoritarian and repetitive way in which the braai is discussed as prescriptive follows these patterns. The strong opinions regarding the equipment that may be used, as outlined in Chapter Four, is an example of this. Further, as per Bell’s (2009, pp.198-224) description of ritual, the braai serves as a way to produce and maintain power relations, for example in regard to the class consciousness mentioned in Chapter Four and furthermore in the following chapter. Finally, with the exception of gender in the first part of the event, there is a certain degree of Turner’s (1969) *communitas*, a social stratification across usual divides of class, age etc., as explained by the participant earlier in the chapter, when she described the employees of her father’s “big business in South Africa” who would normally avoid him except at a work braai event. So, while Butler’s theory fits well, the exceptionality of the circumstance – the braai as an event of great *importance* – leads me to question whether performativity is all that is occurring here.

Initially Butler’s performativity (2006) and ritual theory seem to be opposing thoughts of becoming. Ritual and performativity have similar outcomes in that they both assist in creating one’s identity. They differ however in one significant way. In ritual, one ‘becomes’ through a single event, series of events or repetition of events, and the becoming is often immediate upon completing a certain action (particularly, but not exclusively, in rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960)). Butler’s performativity, however, constitutes a slow growth through the repetition of a sequence of acts over time. Social discipline for wrongs and affirmation for performing acts correctly guide the subject in Butler’s performativity, but in ritual, subjects are often guided by those who have already performed the ritual (as teacher or former subject) and have seen the ritual performed by others themselves. Most men are unaware that

their gait or choice of language are creating, and asserting, their masculinity. Bridegrooms, on the other hand, are necessarily (by New Zealand law, at least) fully aware that they are entering into an agreement that will change their state, legally and socially, from bachelor to husband. However, rather than Butler as *opposing* ritual theory, I started to think of their ideas as operating on a spectrum. At one end, Butler's performativity finetunes identity while ritual consists of exceptional events of change. Indeed, more broadly, both Butler (2006) and Bell's (2009) description of these concepts can be understood as a commentary on the tension between structure and agency. If such a spectrum were to exist, what happens in the middle where Butler turns into Turner and vice versa? The braai may offer a response to this question. Given the aforementioned differences, in between ritual and performativity, the subject and community must necessarily be both aware and not aware, performing prescriptively and subliminally and the phases both clear and muddled as the two forms of becoming turn into each other.

What is the braai's social function?

In considering the previously offered narrative examples, in conjunction with audio-visual material shown in this chapter, the focus of the braai appears to be most predominantly centred on men and controlling male behaviour. Specifically, participants spoke about women entering the men's space (although, to reiterate, I never saw this happening during fieldwork) but *never* spoke of men entering the women's space.

I was aware of the gender divide prior to beginning fieldwork and had anticipated leveraging my outsider status and intentionally breaking the expectation to see what might happen, in the tradition of sociologist Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodological 'breaching experiments'. In these experiments, Garfinkel intentionally broke (or caused others to break) the established behavioural norms in society. Most of Garfinkel's experiments, which were mainly used as tutorial exercises in ethnomethodology and performed by his students, were centred around creating awkward social conversation and less about being somewhere where the student should not. Primarily, his experimenters (the students) would continue to ask for clarification in instances where their subjects would generally assume understanding on the experimenter's part, usually resulting in exasperated and bewildered subjects.

In my intention to breach the women's space, I wanted to know if anyone would really care that I had wandered out of context, and if it did matter, would it matter to the men or the

women? I had underestimated my own adoption of braai etiquette however, and while I told myself it was ethically questionable, the fear of social exclusion stopped me from executing the experiment. In short, I wanted participants to like me, for research purposes but also as friends, and breaking the rules might have jeopardised this.

I spoke to a female participant about this during our final interview. The loud, piercing laughter, which lasted a long while before turning into residual giggle, demonstrated that such a breach would be, at the very least, highly unusual. However, prior to this, she explained that women would move as a group from the kitchen to the fire, upon needing their first drink refill, and become a part of the conversation with the men. At that point, the men's behaviour becomes out of the ordinary, something she initially criticised in her youth:

You'll go outside and join the men and then you know, they'll go 'Oh, hello', and they're always very... Men are funny with these things. [My husband] will never hug me or hold me or something, but when we're at a braai, he'll put his arm around me. It's kind of like men are... I'm not sure if they're showing off or being protective or... it's different? When I think about it, at some point in your life, you think, 'Oh that's stupid', and then as you get older, you carry on with those traditions because they start to mean something to you.

This participant's commentary and laughter at the prospect of a man, even an outsider, entering the women's space affirms that men's behaviour is controlled, and the parameters of masculinity socially dictated, while simultaneously explaining that this is accepted by the wider community as they grow into the various performative traditions acted upon at the braai.

Performative 'reaffirmation' ritual

Again, these aspects of braai behaviour may be read as sexist, and it is through ritual and performative repetition that such gendered hierarchies are sustained. Drawing on Turner, the braai can be understood as a ritual of reaffirmation in which established social identities are stabilised rather than transformed. Butler's theory of gender performativity further clarifies how this ritual form reproduces masculinity not as a fixed trait but as an identity continually enacted and maintained through stylised, repeated practice. The male braaier is someone who has already proven his masculinity through prior performative acts. However, by successfully adhering to the expected braai practices, he maintains and reasserts this masculinity, a facet of identity that is never fixed. As Butler writes:

...gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed [sic]; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. (Butler, 1990, p.270)

In other words, one is not a ‘man’ because he performed one act, or even a series of acts, once. In the same way, rituals associated with the maintenance of social identity – such as the braai – are not about initiating a person into a new status. Rather, they are about upholding or reasserting an identity already assumed. These rituals are not rites of passage, which mark transitions between social states, but recurring practices that stabilise and rehearse the social order. Masculinity at the braai is not being achieved anew; it is being repeated, confirmed and socially validated through stylised, shared actions.

One could leave the braai there, men simply enacting familiar gendered behaviours (tending the fire, cooking meat, drinking beer etc.). Yet, there is clearly something more going on. Why this format? Why does their conduct at the braai diverge from everyday social interactions? Why are gendered divisions reinforced at the fire while class differences seem to dissolve? In this sense, the braai resembles a social ritual. That is, attendees are temporarily separated from the broader group, take up specific roles and experience a shared bond. However, unlike rites of passage, the braai lacks a liminal or transformative core. The structure does not seek to reshape one’s social identity but to reaffirm its existing contours.

To navigate this distinction, I propose that the braai is a form of reaffirmation ritual, which functions to maintain (as opposed to alter) one’s place within the social world. These rituals are cyclical rather than teleological. That is, they reinforce what already is, rather than move the subject into something new. At the braai, the subject may be as specific as the braaier or as collective as the group of men assembled around the fire. Even where hierarchy appears (as in the YouTube clip *The Braai* (Gakulu, 2006) where men take on comical roles of varying authority), it is typically playful and performative rather than substantive. These roles do not confer or challenge real status. Instead, they reinforce group cohesion through caricatured performance. In this way, Turner’s notion of *communitas* is still evident; the men around the fire enter into a temporary state of equality, united by shared purpose and performativity, reinforced through the exclusion of adult women from this central space.

In this framework, the intersection of Butler’s gender performativity and Turner’s ritual theory provides a lens through which to understand the enduring centrality of men at the braai. Much of the media, humour and shared cultural reference points that circulate in the

diasporic community focus on men's roles, expectations and performance; a kind of social script for masculinity enacted around the fire. While women are undoubtedly present and involved in other ways, the discursive and performative focus remains on men. This focus is reinforced by symbolic associations with struggle, survival and endurance, with images of Boer fighters in the veld, Voortrekkers lighting fires in the rain, and men braaiing through storms. The weather, in fact, becomes part of the performance. To braai in the rain is not merely inconvenient; it is a demonstration of resilience, a nod to the ancestral scripts of masculine survival and cultural tenacity.

Conclusion

In light of the gendered dynamics and socio-cultural contexts explored in this chapter, the braai emerges not as a transformative rite, but as a ritualised reaffirmation of Afrikaner masculinity. When figures like Jan Scannell celebrate the ability to “braai anywhere, anytime”, they are not inviting men into masculinity anew but reminding them of their obligation to remain within its established form. The guest who braais with gas or uses inferior meat becomes a cautionary figure who embodies a failure to grasp the unspoken codes of Afrikaner masculinity. In comic sketches like *James Braai 0027* (James Braai, 2011), masculine law is policed through satire: traditional masculine authority (in the form of rugby tackles, utensil weaponry and fire mastery) restores ritual order.

Though women may sometimes enter the fire-space, and even be rewarded for doing so, such crossings are framed as exceptions to the norm, and do not reshape the gendered structure of the braai. By contrast, men who fail to meet expectations are infantilised or marked as insufficiently masculine. To ‘play like a little girl’ is not to be outside the order of braai practice, but to fail within it and a warning that masculinity must be continually earned through participation in this reaffirmation ritual.

Understanding the braai in this way also clarifies the limited presence of women in the fire-space. Their exclusion is not merely traditionalist, but functional within the reaffirmation of male identity. By creating a semi-exclusive arena for male bonding, men strengthen a shared understanding of expectations, codes and heritage. This is not the liminality of the threshold, but the boundedness of the circle, the fire at the centre and masculinity as the rule. Here, Turner's concept of *communitas* still applies, although not as a stage between statuses, but as a fleeting suspension of hierarchy among those who already share a role. Around the fire,

differences of class may be softened. What matters is participation, fluency in ritual form and the ability to hold one's place.

While reaffirming masculinity is central to the ritual purpose of the braai, its implications extend further. The braai functions as a stabilising structure for diasporic Afrikaners – a container in which community, belonging and cultural practice are continually reanimated. In reaffirming masculinity, the ritual simultaneously reaffirms Afrikanerness. And in doing so, it creates a space where identity is not remade, but remembered, repeated and re-bound into the shared life of the group.

Recipe: Braaied vegetables (elsewhere known as ‘chicken drumsticks’)

There are a few South African brands of spice mixes that are relied on by South Africans. One such brand is *Robertson Chicken Spice*. This spice mix was my first taste of South African food when my (then) partner made roast chicken and rice with the juices from the spicy meat drizzled over it. The spice mix is used in a variety of ways but most commonly with oven-baked chicken (whole or pieces) or on the braai. Below is a version based on the Robertson mix that can be blended at home, without additives. The most important thing to remember is that it should be used very liberally. When you think it’s enough, sprinkle a bit more and that should be fine.

Ingredients

Chicken drumsticks (about two per person)	1tsp sweet paprika
2tsp ground cumin	1tsp ground coriander seed
2tsp garam masala	1tsp salt

Method

Mix all spices together in a small bowl. Sprinkle liberally over chicken drumsticks, turning the bone to ensure a full and even coating. Braai until cooked. I find it easiest to place the chicken around the outer edge of the braai grill to start and move in towards the higher heat as necessary. I have also seen some Afrikaners par-boil the drumsticks to ensure they are properly cooked on the braai. This is a good, safe option if you’re new to braaiing chicken, especially unboned, although the pallid grey of chicken fished from hot water can be a bit of a turn-off. If you do opt for this, par-boil the chicken ahead of time, being sure not to cook all the way through, and add the spices after patting the drumsticks dry with a paper towel. In either case, braai until the skin is crispy and slightly charred.

To serve

If your braai is arranged like a buffet, arrange the drumsticks on a large plate and set alongside the rest of the food. Most often, however, since chicken is usually braaied after everything else is ready, they are served directly from the grill with leftovers placed on a plate and added to the centre of the table for anyone who wants second helpings.

Chapter 7: Vignette prologue

Cooking over brimstone: the damned braai

Eyes widened, my right brow raised ever so slightly more than the other, I stared at the man directly across from me, cocking my head down to the left slightly. The rest of my face was intentionally imbued with a forced paralysis, trying to convey a sense of polite confusion. My eyes moved to implore the man, another guest, to his left to explain what was going on.

Understanding and, with an otherwise similar stoicism, he stretched the corners of his bottom lips in commiseration. He doesn't know what's happening either.

Our braai host was arguing – no, debating (I think) – with a relative on the existence of Hell. He argues the more traditional, eternal ‘fire and brimstone’ model while she took the annihilationist's approach, arguing that the sinful will be snuffed out of existence instead of suffering imperishable misery. I found the subject fascinating, but it was awkward and uncomfortable to watch. The host was at one end of the table and the debating relative at the other, holding hostage any other possible conversation that might have aided in distracting guests from this car crash of a discussion that was going on.

This was *not* a typical conversation for a braai, but I think its peculiarity had less to do with the topic. I was already used to ‘flavourful’ subjects being discussed. It's one of the main draws of a braai. I loathe small-talk – please, *anything* but the weather – necessary though it supposedly is. Far from adhering to a mid-century-esque dinner table ban on politics, personal economics and religion, just about anything could be brought up at a braai, in New Zealand anyway. What I found different here though is the binary nature of the conversation. Two people spoke. And *only* two. There was little ability for anyone else to chime in making those watching feel uncomfortable.

I kept asking myself if I was expected to add to the discussion. I had thoughts, for and against (I do so enjoy playing Devil's Advocate), but neither the other guests nor the hostess seemed to be saying anything. Everyone sat still in their seats with hands under the table and eyes wide in consternation and it didn't help that neither of the speakers stopped long enough for anyone else to talk. I couldn't work out their intentions or their emotion, but the topic was a provocative one. Maybe that's what made it so uncomfortable; not being able to discern what either of them are thinking. I wasn't expecting anything dramatic like a family break-up but was there going to be some kind of fallout from this? I understood their logical position in the

argument but if they'd only given a foothold into how they *feel* about each other, I – one of the 'silent ones' – might have felt a little more at ease.

The host's relative was a petite woman, frail in body but with a resolute and tenacious spirit that was a formidable match for the tall and burly host. He, on the other hand, was an imposing man, both in size and disposition, who speaks with a confidence that could only be acquired either through years of trying pain or ignorant privilege. From interviews, I know it's the former. Her side of the debate was a highly unusual one for this community, a fact I was unfortunate enough to find out later in the week. I had revived the discussion, unsuccessfully attempting to avoid the force of that night, at a weekly *omgee groep*, a small Bible study group that I was attending as part of fieldwork. It was my week to host, which involved supplying a topic as well as coffee, and I had thought a lot about it in the days following the braai. Now it was my turn to make the church community's *dominee*, the pastor, feel uncomfortable... Oops. I might have taken my advocacy of the Devil a little too far this time.

Though I found the braai-side theological discussion interesting, the voracity and unpredictability with which the speakers were talking made everyone uncomfortable. I noticed the position of my feet had changed involuntarily, now firmly planted and unmoving, having changed from a relaxed crossed leg. I checked the other guests through spaces in the slatted table; they'd done the same.

Eventually, the debate petered itself out with speakers deciding to agree to disagree. The wife of the man across from me lets out a just audible relieved sigh and the hostess gets up to prepare dessert, a pudding my partner had brought. We're all a little relieved but the awkwardness lingered, receding only very slowly as non-adversarial conversation worked to re-establish the social order.

Chapter 7: Talking to ghosts: Discourse and perceptions of the Self in the Other

Introduction

Thus far, the discussion on Afrikaner identity within the context of the braai has centred primarily on individually affective processes. That is, how the collective affects the identity of the individual through braai practice and related social discourse. Chapter Four examined sensory affect, Chapter Five looked at nostalgia and memory and the previous chapter at how imagined history of an ethnic collective impacts upon individual gender performance of that ethnicity. This chapter, however, inverts this narrative slightly, aiming to bring these individualised processes together into conversation with each other. Bringing contemporary linguistic theory in line with Judith Butler (1990), Charles Horton Cooley (1964) and George H. Mead, (1962), I analyse discussions that I had with participants as well as some I heard between participants, considering them in light of what I have already discussed in those previous chapters.

As this chapter examines the Self in terms of intersectional positioning discourse, its structure is somewhat different to previous chapters in that description and analysis are intertwined. I first examine my own position as an Other compared with insiders to the community and other Others. Secondly, and following on from the previous chapter, I analyse in-group positioning discourse around the braai, with particular respect to gendered relationality, new members' repositioning within the migrant community, and the whole group discourse. It is here where the relevance of the prologue's vignette becomes most evident. Finally, I look at 'past' relationships with those who stayed in South Africa and migrants' future hope through participants' imagining of their children's uncertain, but hopeful, future.

Throughout, I demonstrate that identity is, of course, not a wholly personally constructed concept. Rather, it originates from within an individual, and simultaneously from outside, with no single creative process favoured over the other. For Afrikaner identity, it is curated by those within the social sphere of migrant Afrikaners in New Zealand, as well as those they know in South Africa, both Afrikaner and non-Afrikaner South African, and also non-Afrikaner New Zealanders. Further, it is constructed in a performative dialectic with *imagined* Afrikaners of the past and future. In short, while Afrikaner identity is brewed within an individual, the ingredients are provided by those outside of the Self. Thus, this chapter moves on from an identity of the Self to illustrate a construction of collective identity.

Notably, while participants frequently positioned themselves in relation to other South Africans and to New Zealanders, they did not explicitly construct Afrikaner identity in relation to indigenous South Africans as a distinct category within these discussions. This absence is itself analytically significant in shaping the relational field explored in this chapter.

Degrees of Othering

Perceptions of my positionality & relationship with the community

Prior to and during research fieldwork, I considered deeply my positionality with respect to the community I was researching. One key aspect that I was interested in understanding was how my position, as a ‘closely affiliated outsider’, would affect how others in the community would relate to me. As this is an intersubjective study, paying attention to how they would react to me, as well as towards outsiders who had fewer connections with them, and comparing this with how they reacted towards their compatriot Afrikaners, may generate a picture of how intersubjective relationships may impact one’s identity.

I am not an Afrikaner but was partnered with one. Afrikaans is not my native language but I did learn to speak it. I am not a South African but have spent years in the company of South African migrants in New Zealand, particularly at group braai events, and as such, have gained relevant social knowledge. Nonetheless, I am still an outsider. That said, while I was still the Other, when participants talked to me about New Zealanders, I was not included in the narrative around that group. In such discussions, Afrikaners were ‘us’, New Zealanders were ‘them’ and I was somewhere in-between. On one occasion I was even included in the former, ‘us’, group of Afrikaners.¹³⁹ In addition to taking note of my interactions in comparison to interactions between Afrikaners at the braai, my final set of interviews pondered questions around this idea. I asked participants how my position might alter what they tell me and whether the braai they had arranged was typical. I was surprised to learn that the community felt at ease with me around and considered me a ‘friend’ despite my overt intentions for being there.

Some participants said that they did not change *what* they said to me, but certainly altered *how* they said it. Inquiring further, these participants explained that they could assume a certain degree of knowledge on my part, which was not possible with other New Zealanders.

¹³⁹ I do believe, however, that this was unintended and either a slip of the tongue or the speaker simply not bothering to clarify my position since all who were present knew me.

One participant, for example, explained that she felt uninhibited in portraying South Africa and Afrikaners in a negative light, since the foundational understanding of these views is already in place and so the negative report would not be misconstrued. That is to say, she did not feel that she needed to sugar-coat her detail of Afrikaners despite my non-Afrikaner perspective. Similarly, others explained that they changed the information I was privy to, based on this assumed foreknowledge, since other “New Zealanders just don’t understand”, referring to South African societal dynamics. One participant quote, mentioned in the thesis Introduction, indicated that my ability to speak and understand Afrikaans demonstrated to him that I was serious about the community, since few would go to the trouble of learning the language of the community they cared little for, especially when virtually everyone in the community can communicate effectively in English:

The fact that you speak Afrikaans makes a huge difference. I think it makes a big, big difference. And even the fact that you’ve [gone to] the trouble of taking [Afrikaner migrants] as a topic for your field of study. I mean, it just gives a huge feeling of- ‘Somebody went through the trouble of doing that and speaking Afrikaans.’ I think it [builds] a lot of trust.

Others cited my partner’s introducing me to the Afrikaner community as evidence of trustworthiness:

Wife: The fact that you’re [partnered with] a South African makes a difference, I think we can be more open. It makes a difference because it makes you more a part of certain things. You would have been exposed to things.

Husband: Yeah, I agree. I have been more relaxed in trusting what I share about things that might be of a sensitive nature. Because I know, with that background, you are more likely to have some kind of comprehension and understanding for where we come from and in what we mean.

As explained in the Methodology chapter, I had expected that Afrikaans would be more than just practically useful for fieldwork and was happy to hear that the intensive months of Afrikaans immersion I undertook at home had paid off in terms of relationship building. That said, while intending to convey a sense of trust bestowed upon me, it also indicates that outsider New Zealanders cannot gain access to a full picture of Afrikaner subjective discourse, without similar relational groundwork, for fear of misunderstanding Afrikaners’

intentions or the failure to grasp the context in which statements and behaviours are made. That is, the perception that Afrikaners have of their own native, comfortable sociality is seen as potentially detrimental in a wider, non-Afrikaner context. While altered behaviours and language use is expected within differing cultural contexts (Roccas & Sagiv, 2010; Triandis, 1989), participants indicate a sense of threat. This idea is supported by Vanderhaeghen (2018).

Through participant discussions such as those above, a theme arose that aligns closely with Charles Taylor (1994) ‘(mis)recognition’, a concept discussed in my formation of a definition for ‘identity’ (see Literature Review). Participants saw how their identities might be viewed, or ‘recognised’, by the Other and that this perceived concept did not align with their self-recognition, resulting in the aforementioned ‘sugar-coated’ style of communication with the Other. To avoid *mis*recognition, participants convey additional information to guide the recipient of this communication more closely to the participant’s own sense of self-recognition.

Since participants felt that they were not required to do this so much with me, I was confirmed as not being fully the Other. However, I was still clearly not an Afrikaner.¹⁴⁰ As explained, when participants spoke about themselves, they did not include me. Yet, when participants spoke about New Zealanders, or non-Afrikaners in general, through a particular use of pronouns and narrative description, they made it clear that they did not include me in that group either. Finally, participants relayed accounts of Afrikaners they have met, who consider themselves ‘Afrikaners’ and are similarly recognised as such by the community but who were not born to South African or Afrikaner parents.¹⁴¹ One key feature of this discussion, however, is that these ‘[non-native] Afrikaners’ were reported to have *self*-identified as Afrikaners.

An important takeaway from such narratives is that being an Afrikaner, or non-Afrikaner, is not solely genealogically determined. The ethnic sphere may be penetrated, to varying degrees, based on the performative acts discussed in previous chapters (though not exclusively through braai practice), and perspectives from outside of the individual in question. Elaborating on these variations from Afrikaner ethnicity, including my own positionality and those of other non-Afrikaners, can also reveal the sociality of in-group

¹⁴⁰ I was often compared with English South Africans however this was mostly in relation to my accent and ability to speak Afrikaans and less, I believe, a matter of perceived identity.

¹⁴¹ For anonymity, I am not able to divulge these people’s non-Afrikaner nationalities or ethnicities.

dynamics. This begs the question, if Afrikaner ethnicity is not denoted in an ‘if-this-then-that’ way, how does one Afrikaner ascribe the status of Afrikaner on another? That is, in conversation, when is it that Afrikaners start adding further information to clarify their communication of ethnicity, thus denoting the recipient of said communication as ‘non-Afrikaner’?

Perceiving the Other: Taylor, Cooley and Mead

In describing his concept of ‘(mis)recognition’, Taylor (1994) draws on Mead’s (1962) work. Mead was a sociologist and philosopher who developed the idea of ‘symbolic interactionism’, which can assist in understanding this dynamic and offer some clarification for the social construction of identity. First though, to better understand Mead, it is important to examine his friend and sociology colleague, Cooley’s (1964) concept of the ‘looking glass self’, as this forms a principal component of Mead’s symbolic interactionism. While it is generally considered that Mead and Cooley had somewhat divergent perspectives, Norbert Wiley (2011) argues that their explanation of society’s formation of the Self, particularly in terms of individual reflexivity, are in fact so similar that they may be combined with little impact on their specific concepts. Either way, it is clear that Cooley greatly influenced Mead.

Cooley (1964) posits that a sense of Self is created in the interaction with others. He termed this idea the ‘looking glass self’, as he said that we perceive others reflecting an idea of ourselves back at us, and these ideas are either congruent or divergent with our own sense of Self. He suggests that through these interactions, individuals gain an idea about what others think of them and attempt to alter this perception through their own actions, or alternatively, adopt that perceived Otherly perception of the Self. He goes on to explain that the Self is determined by this imaginary reflection of our own perceptions. In short, Cooley suggests one is what they perceive others think of them. Thus, interactions with society determine an individual’s future interactions, and in doing so (via performative measures), their identity. As with the nostalgia discussed in Chapter Five, this form of identity creation brings the past into the present, where historic interactions become an all-important backdrop for present identification.

Mead’s argument is relatively similar; however he suggests that self-critique is not reflected but internalised and so “self-criticism is essentially social criticism, and behavior controlled by self-criticism is essentially behavior controlled socially” (1962, p.255). For Mead,

construction of the Self is entirely dependent on communication in one form or another: linguistic, gestural or even through the atmosphere created by the general attitude of a group of people, such as a mob led by a charismatic speaker. The primary dispute between Mead and Cooley is the perspective from which they view individual identity. Cooley suggests that the individual exists before society while Mead argues the reverse. Accusing Cooley of solipsism, Mead sums this difference up in a footnote to his book, *Mind, Self, and Society*:

Cooley's social psychology ... [is] inevitably introspective, and his psychological method carries with it the implication of complete solipsism: society really has no existence except in the individual's mind, and the concept of the self as in any sense intrinsically social is a product of imagination. Even for Cooley the self presupposes experience, and experience is a process within which selves arise; but since that process is for [Cooley] primarily internal and individual rather than external and social, he is committed in his psychology to a subjectivistic and idealistic, rather than an objectivistic and naturalistic, metaphysical position. (Mead, 1962, p.224)

Essentially, Mead's perspective is that the greatest social power is wielded by 'the Other', a reflection of society, over the individual while Cooley's is that the individual's imaginings of the Other mean they have ultimate control over what 'their Other' thinks. Mead sums up his position well:

...social control, as operating in terms of self-criticism, exerts itself so intimately and extensively over individual behavior or conduct, serving to integrate the individual and his [sic] actions with reference to the organized social process of experience and behavior in which he [sic] is implicated. (Mead, 1962, p.255)

While I do see merit in Mead's general perspective, it is probably unsurprising that I feel he is imprudent with Cooley's thoughts here. As I have explained in Chapter Five on nostalgia, the imaginary can and should be considered affectively 'real', and that I adhere to Thomas Nagel's (1986) view of 'objectivity' in theorising the Self in that it attempts an impractical 'view from nowhere'. These critiques aside, it is nonetheless unwise, indeed impossible, to disentangle the agency of the individual from the structure of society or vice versa, society from the individual. Rather, they have a mutualistic symbiosis, and so, like bees and flowers, they exist *through* their relationship with one another as opposed to being entirely non-

dependent species (or in this case, creative measures of the Self). Thus, since both the Self and society dialectically develop simultaneously, to remove one from the other in order to conclude the issue of primacy is tantamount to a chicken-versus-egg argument: An unending debate with few, if any, benefits.

Following on from Cooley, individuals within the community therefore act in accordance with how they imagine others in the community perceive them. To clarify, Person 'A' imagines how Person 'B' might perceive them and reacts accordingly, adjusting their language and/or body movements to influence 'B's' imagined perception (presuming, of course, that Person 'A' values Person 'B's' perception). There is no way of telling how 'B' actually views 'A'. Even if 'A' asked, it is possible that 'B' might misinform or miscommunicate their position, and so 'A' is left to work from their imaginings. This is fairly straightforward on a dual, individual-to-individual level.

However, for all of those in the community to work in this same way cohesively, they must first imagine a community context within which they operate. For example, an individual may act in one way around their colleagues but then differently while at their ethnic community's events. Recalling Merleau-Ponty's (2012) body schema, discussed in Chapter Four, the individual moves within their environment with their body and horizontal subjectivity, embodying the social norms in context and unintentionally anticipating potential action-related futures based on historically acquired, tacit knowledge. Changing the contextual social environment changes the tacit knowledge deployed for that specific context. For this to work appropriately, the individual needs to have acquired sufficient lived experience, thus enabling adequate embodiment of social expectations.

Community positioning discourse

Women's perspective

One example of this body schema is demonstrated through a participant description of her husband's social behaviour, discussed earlier. She explained that he would never hug her or be overtly affectionate with her in public. However, in cases where she and her group of other women at the braai would move to stand around the fire with their husbands, her husband would hold or put his arm around her in an affectionate manner:

They're always very [...] Men are funny with these things. [My husband] will never sort of hug me or hold my hand or something. But when we're at a [braai], often when I go and stand at a fire, he'll put his arm around me. It's kind of like men are [...], I don't know if they're showing off or protective or [...] They're *different*.

She explained that this was out of character for her husband and she was unable to determine his intentions. Couched in the context established in the previous chapter, it is likely that her husband embodied the masculine behaviours expected of him at the braai: the affectionate protector and provider. The disjuncture between his behaviour around the braai with his male friends versus other public arenas demonstrates the deployment of different identities, overlapping and merging into each other, for different contexts. This participant's husband identifies as an Afrikaner, a husband, a father, a friend, a Christian and likely some other identities too. None of these identities cease upon entering certain contexts, however they are executed differently, to varying degrees and often combined synchronistically, appearing to alter the individual within different social contexts. So, while the identities described throughout this chapter, indeed the thesis as a whole, are apparently dissected, segregated and individualised, in deployment, they remain whole. The volume of each is merely altered to suit the social environment in which migrant Afrikaners find themselves.

While the most obvious change is visible on the individual level, the social context is the focal point here. The participant's husband is unlikely to be the only individual around that braai fire whose deployment of identity altered for that specific context. During her account she mentioned a group of husbands being met by their wives, all of whom, husbands and wives, are certain to have adapted to the change in their social environment in some form or another. The subtlety of the change, however, is perhaps most evident to those closest to the individual, in this case, the spouse. Further, in many instances, we know each other only in those certain contexts, for example, the manager-employee relationship at work. Where the employee only interacts with their manager in an office environment, they will only be aware of a certain manner of identity: the employee. Though they will likely meet at other social areas, such as at church and in the community, for Afrikaners, more so than church at which attendance may waiver, it is possible, to only know one another within the context of the braai, as it is the primary means of their socialisation.

The role of women

The work carried out by women at the braai was said to be reduced, as the public aspect of cooking is performed by the men and this is the central role. Some participants even explained that women enjoyed the braai primarily because it was a meal they did not have to cook, organise and clean up after. However, these narratives were mostly couched in the norms of previous generations. For example, one woman explained:

You don't have to dress up. You don't have to be formal. [The braai is] a relaxed and informal way of entertaining so you don't have to be fancy. You can be as fancy as you like, but you don't have to. And it's relaxing for the wife because the husband is mainly busy outside with the meat so I'm not responsible for everything. It's easier actually because we both work and people bring food and there's a sense that anything goes with the way you present it. It's not so important. So, it's a nice way to relax and not be extremely tired afterwards because you had to do all the work, and the clean-up is relatively easy. I remember with paper plates my mom loved a braai because she could just throw the plates away after. We never ate braai food on a normal plate. We always had it in a paper plate in a little plastic holder and she could just throw [the paper plate] away. That was her joy, you know? No dishwashers during those days.

This participant related the braai to being an easier form of interaction due to reduced formality and labour around the work required to pull it together. In reducing the role of women, they are given more time and energy to direct toward interacting with their peers. This was corroborated across other participant interviews:

[The braai] was a chance for everybody to sit and relax outside around a fire, you know? Chatting and talking about what happened in the week [and gave] the opportunity for mom to have [time] off from the kitchen.

These narratives further demonstrate a delineation of the role of women in Afrikaner ethnic identity in that there are expectations on them when hosting guests apart from the braai. Thus, in order to gain access to the desired social interaction, Afrikaner women are best served by hosting a braai as opposed to parties in other Western forms, such as organised dinner parties. As such, neither in practice nor narrative, did I encounter any other form of food-oriented social event during fieldwork. By transposing entertaining into a braai environment, they gain the positive personal associations of sociality without the negative labour-intensive ones. The

braai, therefore, offers women a kind of liberating conformity: a way to adhere to the social order that they themselves choose to uphold while also retaining agency over how and what they do about it.

However, the seemingly throwaway statement of “no dishwashers during those days” is also important, couching the discussion in historically-oriented narrative. There was not a single braai where I ate food from a paper plate, as this participant described eating from in their youth. Even in the case of the community potjie braai, with a large crowd gathered to eat together, generating a lot of mess and dishes, we still ate on earthenware plates and used stainless steel cutlery. The difference between my fieldwork experiences and the mid-20th century that the above quote refers to, is that *everyone* helps. At the community braai described in Chapter Five, men, women, young and old were all in the kitchen of the golf club where the braai took place, everyone so eager to help clean that it made manoeuvring in the relatively small space rather difficult. At smaller braais, guests bring food in serving dishes and much of the mess is cleared when packing their belongings away. Guests (and dishwasher machines) help the hosts with washing up. Yet, the 20th century narrative of women’s work continues to dominate, bringing past associations into the present where they may no longer function or provide context in the same way or to the same degree as they once did.

Yet incidental commentary indicates that women still prepare for much of the event but that the work of women is seemingly hidden from view at the braai. During initial discussion with potential participants, I specified that I would like to assist in the setup of the braai event, such as helping in the kitchen, making salads, side dishes, setting up tables etc. While all agreed that that might be interesting, no participant invited me to take part in preparing for the braai, despite my reminders. The few who mentioned this indicated that they just ‘threw a salad together’, or ‘set up just before I got there’ or that I was their guest and should just relax by the fire with a drink and enjoy the day. In hindsight, I realise the error was in my request: I had also asked that the braai event be ‘typical’ in format, as they would subjectively consider a braai, and since I am male and a guest (though with clearly communicated ulterior motives), these two requests contradicted themselves. What it did confirm, however, is that ‘women’s work’ at a braai tends to be hidden as it is preparatory and multivariate. Rather than one macro-task, women tend to do many small tasks that are easy to (mis-)label individually as unimportant to the braai but nonetheless positioning their gendered Afrikaner identity.

Understanding collective understanding

We cannot know any other 'Being' fully and truly, as argued by Nagel (1974) in his seminal article, "What's it like to be a bat?". However, social communities appear to be held together by the assumption that members of that community 'get' each other and so, to some degree, there is a manner of knowing someone well enough to become co-members of a group through sociality alone, however imagined that 'knowing' may be. I believe an important addition to this discussion can be found in Butler's (1990) concept of performativity, the same theoretical framework that I discussed in the previous chapter. To recap, Butler supposes that our identity is founded in the unconscious performance of that identity. That is, identifying as a gendered female has little to do with being born with female sexed biology and more with assuming the roles which the culture contextualises as 'female'. However, the individual must first ascertain, through consistent and constant social contact within the group, what exactly it is that the community deems legitimately female in order to adequately perform those roles and be seen by others as having that identity. This requires communication between parties, the kind of communication of perception which Cooley (1964) and Mead (1962) identified. The individual, in communication with the wider community, creates the determinant features of the identity. Returning to Butler (1990), the individual then adopts those determinants, which may be an entirely unconscious action on the individual's part and identifies accordingly.

Transposing this to ethnic identity and collective consciousness, the same process is evident. Members of the community observe the practices inherent within that community and adopt them for themselves and thus begin to identify with the community. Migration adds, perhaps, an even greater dimension as they compare these identity-related practices with those of their wider social community, for example, contrasting South African braai practice with the New Zealand barbecue. The individuals then become a part of that community, where they are also creating the context which they once adopted. Rather than only receiving the information from the community as to what constitutes adequate ethnic performativity, the individual then becomes one of those in the group that actively creates the context wherein ethnic practice is determined. This then goes on to influence other individuals who adopt those practices and so on. Thus, the collective consciousness of a group, such as Afrikaners, is also determined through performativity and the individual's consciousness transcending collective boundary lines through said performativity.

'The fresh ones': New members' (re)positioning

This collective performativity is most clearly demonstrated in Afrikaner discourse on new migrants to New Zealand in relation to class consciousness. What they describe is that many South Africans are overly aware of their social position in their homeland, which appears to be primarily determined by wealth, and attempt to restart in New Zealand with that same position but in a different context. Eventually, however, migrants learn that personal wealth is not advertised in New Zealand in the same way as it is in South Africa. Participants pointed to traditionally high-income positions, such as doctors, lawyers and politicians, explaining that, in New Zealand, these professionals may drive a non-luxury car or forgo first-class holidays for something less opulent. Conversely, they went on to recount that, in South Africa, this would be very unusual. Most participants looked down on new migrants. Having themselves taken on the more relaxed, New Zealand attitude to displays of wealth, they denigrated those who attempted to break the community's acquired views. This is apparent in the Chapter Four, with some narrative around expensive braai vessels (that is, without additional personal ingenuity and innovation driving its creation), as well as through a participant couple's initial interview:

Wife: The first kinds of questions that [new] South Africans will ask you is, 'Where did you live in South Africa?' 'Where do you live now?' 'Where do you go to church?' and 'Where do your children go to school?' These kinds of questions [are asked to] put you in a category. It puts you in a situation that says, 'Okay, now you're classy, you can be friends with me.'

Husband: But the longer they've been here, the less you get those questions.

Wife: Yes, it's the fresh ones. It's the 'babies'.¹⁴²

Husband: I must still drive a BMW or I must drive a Mercedes Benz and I must own a boat and I must live in this big house or in this part of town. That type of personality.

Me: Is it safe to say that it's the wealthier immigrants that are asking these questions?

¹⁴² This is idiomatic and refers to new, adult immigrants.

Wife: No, they're not rich. They're not rich.

Husband: It's how they perceived themselves in South Africa. You'll see a guy driving with a big smile in a BMW... It's not a smile, it's hunger pains [laughs]. That's a joke, but it's just to give that image of, 'I have this, I have that'.

Wife: In South Africa, the more debt you've got, the better. People will go overboard in having different loans at different places and stuff like that, to keep up this image. That's where [the questions] come from.

This was one of the more detailed accounts of 'fresh' South African migrants' attitudes. What was most common among longer standing migrants was the maxim that 'You have to step down a few notches', referring to wealth and social positioning. Further, some talk in the community that I heard during a fieldwork event was expressed regarding a community member's rented home, which was elegant, large and boasted luxury extras that are fairly uncommon in New Zealand except for particularly expensive properties. Although the community had nothing to do with their personal expenses, it was seen as wasteful and projected as short-lived due to the extra expenses required from new migrants to obtain residency. Such rhetoric, although only hinted at in front of the residents themselves, affirmed an expectation by the community that new Afrikaner migrants should 'step down a few notches' and disassociate themselves, and thereby the community, from a lifestyle dictated by displays of wealth, social standing and class consciousness.

Community positioning: Prismatic, not just reflective

Returning once again to the example of the husband adopting braai-adapted masculinity towards his wife, we can see this synchronistic dual process in action. This example demonstrates how the individual influences the social collective while the social collective influences the individual. The husband has embodied appropriately masculine behaviour for the specific group and environment around the braai at that moment through social influence. Taking Butler (1990) and Cooley's (1964) ideas in tandem, this occurs based on the individual's current and historic perceptions and experiences, reflecting the behaviour of those around him but also those projected from the past into his private memory recall. Outside of fieldwork, I have seen similar instances take place where a man will put his arm around his wife while another mirrors this behaviour almost instantly with his own spouse.

Thus, in doing so, the individual also becomes a part of the social order that influences other individuals, confirming what he believes the social order dictates.¹⁴³ Should he believe slightly differently from others (as in the case of his wife), then such actions can either be adopted and confirmed by others, rejected or perhaps simply stored away in the mind for future subconscious contemplation.

In this way, rather than using society as a mirror, as Cooley (1964) suggests, I propose it is better to consider individuals within as a group as prismatic entities. Such imagery demonstrates Cooley's reflective consciousness while adding the dimension of splitting light, where light is the deployment of Self. As the Self is deployed in different contexts, it emanates from the individual and is received by those around them who also absorb that light and, in turn, deploy it to those around them, including to the original prismatic light bearer. Thus, society is built through the reflection of actions translated from one individual to another throughout time. As in Mead (1962) and Cooley's (1964) writing, however, each individual must first interpret these actions and act upon them in accordance with how they view society, and so the active movement of this prismatic light is interactively diffusive. The Self and individual create the Other and society, while the Other and society simultaneously create the Self and individual. This change in imagery is a very minor alteration to Cooley's looking glass self yet it resolves the 'individual versus social' primacy issue discussed earlier.

Applying this to Afrikaner identity, what can be seen in the above example, is that individuals within the community act, and simultaneously *react*, to others within the community's actions. For example, regarding the open displays of affection towards their wives, the aforementioned husband displayed affection, in accordance with what he deemed socially appropriate, and the other men followed suit, based on their perception of historically created social appropriateness as well as the first husband's indication that it is appropriate in that particular context.

The community's identity-related behaviour, therefore, is a discursive matter, something that is communicated in one form or another, be it openly verbal, performed through action or by delineating difference between one's own community and the Other. The sheer diversity of

¹⁴³ This is, of course, not a specifically an issue of gender and can be applied to many other forms of identity deployment, but lends itself well to the present discussion of Afrikaner performance of masculinity.

thought on the construction of community becomes united under one roof of processes within an infinitely complex grouping of conscious experiences through time.¹⁴⁴

The Afrikaner community I worked with consists not only of those who participated in my research, but also their ancestors before them, their children, their fellow church members, their friends who stayed behind in South Africa and their neighbours, friends and colleagues of different ethnic backgrounds. All of the experiences felt by these individual consciousnesses feed into the individuals they interact with, and who are a part of the Afrikaner community, and thus have a hand in creating the identity of Afrikaners.

We are not the only signifiers of our own identities – we look outward to others to formulate, validate and confirm our identity. For example, I will only know that I am a ‘good’ academic if my ideas within this text are received by others as well communicated and acceptable to a certain indefinable point of critique. The same goes for sports players, chess players etc. These functions of the Self are created in dialogue with others and thus require feedback in order to become part of our Self to begin with.

Community discourse

Genders: Separate and together

As already reported, men and women separate themselves for socialisation before eating, with the men at the fire and the women either a few metres from the men, or in the host’s kitchen. I was aware of this divide and had some previous experience with it but nonetheless expected one of two outcomes from the separation, at least in the men’s area where I was relegated to. The first was that discussion would centre on sport, the weather, food or be flooded with silent moments as we collectively stared into the fire, from a kind of flame-induced group hypnosis. Conversely, I had also expected deep, introspective conversation congruent with the close relationships that guests had with each other and the host.

¹⁴⁴ As it is impossible to know the inner workings of an individual’s mind, I will use a personal example of how this discursive, socially enforced behaviour might occur. While dating, I once put my arm on my partner’s shoulder whilst talking to a computer store assistant. Perhaps it was too intimate an action in a public space or appeared to be a *domineering* gesture, but almost immediately, I noted the shop assistant’s slightly awkward facial expression. Minute though it was, this seeming rejection of my bodily action within this context, deterred me from repeating it. Although this experience was almost 20 years ago, I continue to remember the look on the face of the person we were speaking with, and the sense of social insecurity I felt in response to it. Socially cohesive communities, such as migrant Afrikaners, enforce certain acceptable social practice in a similar, subtle yet obvious manner.

I was wrong on both counts. We rarely talked about sport or the weather although silence did feature from time to time but did not dominate as I had initially thought it would. On the other hand, the topics discussed were not particularly deep or personal either. At first, I suspected the latter may be the fault of my presence, as perhaps I had not yet become entrenched into the Afrikaner church group's 'family'. However, on reflection, a weekly function that I attended, an *omgee groep* (a church Bible study or cell group), contrasted this hypothesis. These groups took place once per week, the location of which rotated between members' homes, and focussed less on the intended Bible topic and more on deeply personal worries and experiences of those present. From the first *omgee groep* I attended,¹⁴⁵ themes discussed were highly personal and often involved tears.

At braais, reports from women suggest that they experience similar levels of conversational depth as the men, though with discussion centring on community chitchat and recipe swapping:

I kind of catch up with [the women] in the kitchen – I don't want to hear what [the men are] saying in any case – and then we catch up and you go like, "Oh, so what happened with that?" and so it would be things that [the men] are not interested in. It's not talking behind somebody's back, it's just 'women's stuff', you know? Or you share a recipe or you talk about this or that.

Prompted to query, female participants explained that when a group of women are together at the braai, apart from the men, the level of talk is often surface level with little personal depth. However, if two women break off from the group, it often results in a deeply personal conversation such as those around relationship woes and financial or mental health issues. This mirrored my own experience with one-on-one discussion where participants, who were aware of the many hours of driving I was doing at the time, felt free to ask after my physical, mental and financial health regarding this.

Once the two gendered factions combine, however, the themes of discussion often become more introspective and personal, usually with mutual commiseration and congratulation through other, similar and corroborative stories. This mostly presented in the form of migration narratives, and often to do with the immigration process, however other themes such as the inability to find work, adequate housing, the financial strain on day-to-day living,

¹⁴⁵ This was within a week of being introduced to the church as a social researcher.

adjustment to New Zealand society and difficulty with mostly communicating only in English. The most emotionally affective of these, however, were the emotional recounting of the breakdown of family after having moved to New Zealand; and a community member who was living alone in New Zealand, with their family trapped in South Africa, unable to move due to COVID-19 restrictions.

When men and women were together in conversation at the braai (mostly during the eating phase), the most common feature was that these stories were usually recounted in the first person, giving the sense that participants saw the exchange of personal vulnerability for social cohesion as pertinent. This struck me as different to a New Zealand barbecue, where first-person narratives may feature, to varying depths depending on company, but where stories about something funny that happened to something or someone else are generally more common, such as a sports team's victory or defeat or a story about a colleague's blunder. In support, I have also witnessed such intimate and personal exchanges at other community's braais, even those not established through a primary church environment. This focus on first-personal stories creates an atmosphere of acceptance and ease with which one can speak.

Lundgren (2004) unpacks the gender dynamics of sociality in relation to Cooley and Mead based on two previous studies with a colleague (Lundgren & Rudawsky, 1998, 2000). Using participant groups comprised of university students, the researchers found that a mixed pool of genders created more social feedback than groups of a single gender. The social feedback discussed in their article is different to those discussed here in relation to Afrikaners, and as they were all students, "a category of persons whose views of self may be particularly malleable and responsive to social influences" (Lundgren, 2004, p.283), the participant dynamics are quite different as well. However, upon grouping together while eating, it is interesting to note that Afrikaner participant conversations deepened considerably, resulting in more positive social feedback from the group which undoubtedly further encourages others to share as well.

As with the *omgee groep*, which is *not* a gender segregated forum, upon joining together for eating, the men and women discussed more personally affecting topics than when apart in separate, all-male or all-female groups. Braai conversation usually begins with a brief round of congratulations, usually on the host's ability to braai, the great taste of this or that flavouring or a pleasant side dish. After this, however, the conversation often moves onto

issues that the group are facing or have faced in the past, usually in relation to another's current issues. The migration process most commonly features, in addition to its related factors, such as finding work or accommodation after settling in New Zealand. Unlike the *omgee groep*, tears (of sadness) have never featured at a braai I have attended; however, the interpersonally penetrating kind of discussion that takes place is nonetheless affective.

At the braai table, participants recounted stories about the emotional experience of their parents' passing after migrating (some during COVID restrictions) and another's relief at having returned to South Africa just in time to be with her ailing father. Difficulties with work relationships were commonly discussed as were migration issues, both in terms of bureaucracy and socio-cultural differences. At a braai with a blended family, the husband and wife recounted difficulties they and their children experienced in coming together before moving to New Zealand, as well as a brief on the husband's ex-wife's past poor mental health. I would consider all of these as out-of-place at a New Zealand barbecue, however participants narrated their woes with little obvious inhibition. Less affecting topics, though still often avoided in non-Afrikaner social situations, were included on politics and religion. The former often generated a lot of discussion as views varied from Centre- to more Right-leaning perspectives. The latter was prevalent but less so, presumably due to an assumed coherence of belief across the community. Indeed, my partner and I were asked at length about our religious beliefs, which differed considerably from the community's. Only one discussion stood out as causing discomfort to guests present: A debate between family members over the existence of Hell, recounted in this chapter's opening vignette.

Speaking in reverse: Negative contrastive speech constructions

When speaking, participants tended to add an extra level of clarification to what they say, more commonly than compared with New Zealanders or other ethnicities that I have encountered. Participants would rarely say just what they want to explain and then add clarification upon request by the listener. Rather they would make their point, ensuring that others understand not only what they are trying to say but also what they are *not* meaning. That is, ideas are communicated both in the positive ("I'm meaning this...") but also the negative ("...but by that, I'm not saying this").

Linguists refer to this form of ‘not X but Y’ speech pattern¹⁴⁶ as ‘negative contrastive constructions’ or ‘contrastive negation’, the type of which I encountered most regularly was ‘non-reactive’ (Silvennoinen, 2020). This is to say that the contrastive negation was not specifically responding or reacting to a previously uttered statement. An example of a reactive statement is:

Person A: Will you have tea?

Person B: Not tea but coffee, thanks.

By contrast, a non-reactive statement is one where the concept that is negated is first raised by its speaker:

Person A: What’s the matter with you?

Person B: Ugh, I’m just so uncomfortable. The temperature, I mean, it’s not just hot, but so humid.

The former emphasises that Person A is mistaken whereas the latter adds clarity to the ambient conditions leading to Person B’s discomfort. Silvennoinen (2020) explains that non-reactive contrastive negation is used for adding clarity through contextualisation and as a preventative measure to potential misunderstanding by navigating the hearer’s thoughts.

An example of this positioning discourse from interviews is demonstrated when asked why one participant moved to New Zealand. He explained in a single sentence that his personal reason was that he felt directed to move by God (“Well, in my case, the sole purpose for me coming to New Zealand was because I believe God called me and God sent me”). He then proceeded to explain a variety of different reasons that South African migrants might want to come to New Zealand before circling back and restating his personal attestation, positioning himself in contrast to what he believed was the most common reason for migrating.

Such additional clarity, though perhaps for different objectives, is demonstrated in a section above, where a female participant explained what women do when alone in the kitchen together, saying “we catch up” but then clarifying that it is “not talking behind somebody’s back, it’s just ‘women’s stuff’, you know?” Immediately, one is led to think of this as a

¹⁴⁶ As Olli Silvennoinen (2017) explains, there are many different forms of contrastive negation and the ‘not X but Y’ construction is but one of these. A full linguistic explanation, however, is out of the scope of this project.

matter of ‘saving face’, ensuring that the listener does not consider her and her friends as mere, perhaps shallow, gossips.

In another example, a participant explained how he saw my position in the community, including a lot of extra, back-and-forth narrative to ensure I was not able to meander into a misunderstanding of his point. Salient clauses are underlined for clarity:

I have more trust in relating to you because you speak Afrikaans and because you have a relationship with..., your [partner] comes from South Africa-Namibia. So that makes it a little bit more trustworthy – I don’t know whether trustworthy is the word – but relatable? So yeah, I think it makes a difference. I mean, still, in your own mind, I think [you researching the community] would still be difficult – and I’m not trying to disqualify you by saying that – but I think it’s very difficult. It’s just, like me, I’m in New Zealand but I cannot assume that I understand the Kiwi or New Zealand people, because I haven’t been here my whole life, you know?

Like the mention about ‘women’s talk’, this latter example is an understandable attempt at avoiding negative associations or offence, as I was there and he was talking to me, about me. It does, however, most clearly demonstrate the type of speech patterns that were commonplace in my conversations with Afrikaners.

A very common narrative in interviews and discussions around the braai is that of Afrikaners being misunderstood by South African society and the world, due to their historic, and less-so-but-still-current, right-wing politics. It is very likely that this form of sentence construction, which is not prevalent when Afrikaners speak Afrikaans, is brought about by the perceived belief of outsiders mistrusting Afrikaners. That is, Afrikaners may feel the need to control the wandering imaginations of the Other before they could potentially land on a misconstrued understanding of what they are trying to say.

In support of this theory, this form of narrative was much more common when talking about sensitive topics, such as South African, New Zealand or world politics and society, racism, finance and a complex social issue that was affecting the community at the time of interviews. However, it was also noticeable in less sensitive discussion such as where home is for one participant (“If I think of ‘home’, I think New Zealand, I don’t think South Africa”) and why he does not support New Zealand’s national rugby team, the All Blacks (“The reason why I can’t root for the All Blacks is not the All Blacks itself, it’s the All Blacks’

supporters”¹⁴⁷). With such construction being so common, it can add a sense of ‘heaviness’ to these conversations but does indeed work to clarify their point, the purpose of this manner of speech.

This form of orienting to counter-discourse via negative clarification was more prevalent in discussions with me. As mentioned above, if Afrikaner participants used this form of speech pattern with each other, it was noticeably less than when in conversation with me. Admittedly there are potential counter-arguments to this. For example, even though interviews were somewhat casual, they had a clear, intentional purpose and may therefore have directed participants to pay closer attention to clarity of speech.¹⁴⁸ It is also possible that participants may have been uneasy about their command of the English language and so attempted to over-clarify for certainty, although all but one participant (who used negative clarification the least) said they felt very confident using English, so this is unlikely.

Overall, participants appeared to regard me as better able to contextualise their meaning when speaking Afrikaans and so using this language may have acted as a reminder of my understanding of their community. However, this did not automatically admit me into the Afrikaner lifeworld and so my position moved back and forth throughout my time in the community, embodying different ways of Being, as perceived by the community.

As mentioned, conversations were ‘heavier’ when dotted with contrastive negation, although they certainly worked to ensure I was not led astray. Previous studies, including my own, portray Afrikaners, and South Africans in general, as very direct people, to the point of appearing ‘brash’, ‘rude’, ‘tactless’, ‘pushy’ and ‘aggressive’ to non-South Africans (Finlayson, 2019; Forrest et al., 2013; Jagtenberg, 2019). Further, Hanna Jagtenberg (2019) explains that Afrikaners see indirect “British politeness”, common in Australia (and similarly New Zealand), as rude and quotes a participant as saying “if you want to know something, you just ask. You don’t *mean* anything with that” (Jagtenberg, 2019, p.161).

Many participants in this study similarly indicated that they are happy to be clear, direct and to the point of what they mean. However, their increased use of contrastive negation

¹⁴⁷ He explained that he perceived All Blacks supporters as boastful winners but sore losers and that South African Springbok supporters were less so.

¹⁴⁸ It should be noted that Afrikaans has a particular grammatical structure when negating sentences. Sentences are negated by adding the negator (*nie* [ni]) both after the verb and at the end of the sentence. This is similar to French (a possible historical source of Afrikaans’ negating structure), where sentences are negated using ‘ne... pas’ and may impact on Afrikaans speakers’ English. It is, however, possible that contrastive negation is an English correlation for Afrikaans speakers.

throughout conversations with me demonstrates the opposite. In using this form of speech, participants showed that they were unsure of how they might be perceived by the Other in saying directly what they mean. Adding negative clarification reduces the possibility for misrecognition by the Other and therefore potential future social penalties that this might entail. For participants to feel the need to use negative clarification, there must first be an impression of how they might be viewed in the future *without* such clarification. From this, it can be inferred that participants imagined a future representation of the Self by the Other that did not align with how they saw themselves. Thus, Afrikaners brought a version of Cooley's (1964) 'looking glass self' in dialogue with Taylor's (1994) '(mis)recognition' in order to avoid misrecognition by me, perhaps mindful that interview excerpts would be disseminated to a wider audience through quotes in this thesis. Working against the Afrikaner migrant stereotype, contrastive negation softens a direct, brash approach by disallowing the listener's mind to wander to imaginary negative illustrations of the Afrikaner speaker.

Imagined people, past and present

The Other in South Africa

In relating to others around them, participants seem to have become well-adept at hiding parts of themselves for the sake of others. Some explained that, on social media platforms, their lives here in New Zealand are partially hidden from people they once socialised with in South Africa in order to avoid potentially creating envy in those who wish they could leave South Africa but could not and also the bitterness from those who resent their choice to abandon South Africa. Such accounts, perceived from those who remained toward those who left, are not uncommon in research (Duxfield, 2013; Jagtenberg, 2019) and many of those in my study explained they felt the same.

Conversely, some also explained that they must hide a part of their thought-lives from those around them in New Zealand. Here, it is believed by Afrikaners that a conservative, protestant ethic is perceived as low in value or denigrated, belittled and disparaged by wider New Zealand society. Thus, some Afrikaner migrants live two half-lives, with one foot in New Zealand and the other in South Africa, never able to show what they view as their 'true' Self to anyone. Participants who chose not to hide parts of their lives from either faction had made a conscious decision to ignore these perceptions.

While similar sentiments were alluded to by other participants, it was most clearly articulated in an extended dialogue between a husband and wife on the consequences of apartheid, unpacking the difficult nuance while both showing signs of grief towards those in South Africa and New Zealanders, while also concluding that hope can be found in the children¹⁴⁹:

Wife: Yeah, so this is the case for us and it runs through all South Africans. I'm sure it does. The world made us feel guilty and ashamed of something that we weren't even aware of, we were coping with it, we were dealing with it and we didn't even understand the problem ourselves. So, you feel kind of the unfairness of that. So, either feel guilty and ashamed, or feel angry. Being here, the guilt of doing so well while our people are getting murdered. Raped and murdered. Horrible, horrible things are happening there [in South Africa].

Then COVID breaks out but we're safe, you know? [South Africans who stayed] didn't like us making this decision but we're enjoying the consequences of that decision today and they're bearing the consequence of their decision [to stay]. But you have this torn thing in you because of all these things. You want to talk [about the issues] but you can only talk to [other South Africans] about racial things. You can't really do it here because you're being judged, because people just don't know. And you can't really tell [South Africans who stayed] how lucky and blessed you are here, because you feel guilty that they're not. I mean, I sent a picture of my garden and I wanted to show them this plot, the avocado trees that we planted. They don't see the avocado trees; they see how green everything is. How loving, how safe, how peaceful, how calm [it is]. And then I'm sorry that I sent the picture.

So, I think the children [don't] have that problem, it's the adults who came for the children's sake. They struggle with these emotions that we are talking about. The shame, the guilt, the anger, the sense of a loss, because of however you were brought up, but the children don't have that. And in the end, [the parents] find joy in how their children adapted and they sound like Kiwis and do like

¹⁴⁹ Rather than adjudicating the factual accuracy of each claim, the analysis here situates such fears within broader post-apartheid discussions of whiteness, insecurity and responsibility (Steyn, 2001), while also attending to how they are experienced as real by participants.

Kiwis do and they feel, ‘Okay, it worked, it worked’. But the adults are going through a different process.

This account is analytically significant not only for what is said, but for how it is expressed. The participant articulates a complex interplay of guilt, fear, perceived judgement and moral tension that emerges in the aftermath of migration. While such statements reflect sincerely felt experiences, they should be understood within the broader historical and political context of post-apartheid South Africa. As Steyn (2001) notes, white South African narratives of insecurity and victimhood are often shaped by the afterlives of apartheid, in which experiences of crime and instability are apprehended in the present without necessarily being situated within longer histories of structural inequality and racialised violence. In this sense, the account is not treated here as an empirically neutral description, but as affective narrative through which identity, responsibility and belonging are negotiated in diaspora.

The difficulty expressed in speaking about these issues in New Zealand further highlights the relational nature of this identity work. Feelings of being judged or misunderstood point to a perceived disjuncture between how participants understand their own experiences and how they anticipate these experiences will be interpreted by others. This tension reinforces the importance of examining such narratives not as straightforward claims about social reality, but as situated expressions shaped by both past political conditions and present social environments.

After the wife concluded, her husband then continued, explaining the dual sociality of Self that this realisation creates, generating an obligation to hide their South African-ness from New Zealanders and their New Zealand-ness from South Africans:

Husband: A part of us, a part of our experience, of our reality, we have to keep from sharing with our South African family and friends. And part of our experience from the past, and how we perceived our lives, and our realities, we have to shield that, or not share it, with New Zealand.

Wife: And I think it’s wise to do that.

A future hope in children

As alluded to in the earlier participant excerpt, children were seen as a source of innocent hope but were talked about in other ways as well. As is expected, parents often mused over

their children's futures; however, migration adds another dimension to these thoughts, including questions about directions for their identity. Participants would often wonder aloud about the kind of partner they might have. Again, this is not unusual; however, in addition to wondering about whether they would be 'good', pleasant, and other itemised quality descriptors, parents wondered about whether they would be South African, speak Afrikaans, or if they would marry a New Zealander. Participants never offered a position on whether they thought this would be a negative concept, just that they wondered.

Parents felt much more of their children's lives was unpredictable compared with what they would have felt in South Africa. While explaining the disparity between the emotional response of watching the South African rugby team versus New Zealand, a participant wondered aloud as to whether their children would feel the same, linking this directly to their national identity:

I love watching [the All Blacks] play but I haven't got the same emotion that I have when I watch the Springboks¹⁵⁰ play. And I wonder whether the kids will have that emotion when they watch New Zealand play, how they will think of themselves. I mean, we listen to Afrikaans music and we have braais and we probably do [a lot of] South African stuff, but I don't know where they will [end up]. Whether they would want to remain- you know, if somebody asked [my son], 'Where are you from?' if they would keep saying proudly 'Oh, I'm South African', or whether they will eventually feel, 'Actually, I'm a New Zealander.'

During this part of the interview, the participant seemed sombre and pensive about their description before waving it off as something to think about in the future, when they had managed to get permanent residency to stay in New Zealand. Like this participant, some yielded to the understanding that their children's future identity was unknown, while many others were certain that they would become Kiwis. This appears to be a commonly held idea for Afrikaner migrants, as linguist, Gary Barkhuizen (2006), similarly found in relation to migrant parents' perception of their children's use of Afrikaans in New Zealand:

Gert, for example, states quite boldly that his children 'are going to eventually speak more and more English', adding that 'they will probably be proper Kiwis'. Marike says the same about her children: 'I think they will be definitely stronger

¹⁵⁰ The South African national rugby team.

in their English than they are in their Afrikaans, and they have got a Kiwi culture. They will be New Zealanders, I don't see them being South Africans, in the sense of culture' ... Although Marietjie says, 'I know it is a better life for them', she concedes that her children will not be Afrikaners: 'That's hard to realise that they wouldn't and that they would get married to Kiwis and that they will only be speaking English. Especially the smallest one that is so English. It is hard to think of that'. (Barkhuizen, 2006, p.75)

Not all research indicates a sense of loss or grief with respect to this. Indeed, some research indicates that South Africans may view 'becoming Kiwi' positively (Meares et al., 2011; Philipp & Ho, 2010). Jagtenberg (2019) explains that parents who felt personally discriminated against by their Australian host country retained the hope that their children would become Australian, with one interviewee saying "My sons have a future here. They will not be discriminated against in this country because they are very Australian" (Jagtenberg, 2019, p.147).

The worry, however, is for their potentially diminishing *Afrikaner* identity. Most of the participants in my study conceded the same; however, they generally expressed little negative or positive feeling about it; just pragmatically that it is the inevitable cost of migration. Most accepted that their children would end up speaking primarily in English, as so many Afrikaner migrants, and researchers in the field, have discovered (Barkhuizen, 2006; Barkhuizen & Knoch, 2005; Hatoss et al., 2011).

The braai, however, was often viewed as a refuge for cultivating future potential identity. While adults gather together to eat at a braai, one of the first subjects raised is the children. At this point, parents, as well as older participants whose children had already grown, would make statements such as:

Daar's ten minste die braai, jy weet? Hulle kan die braai gebruik om hulle Kiwi maats of meisies na hulle kultuur bloot te stel. [At least there's the braai, you know? They can use the braai to introduce their Kiwi friends or girlfriends to their culture.]

Thus, in addition to being an environment where a sense of community through mutual sharing can be created, the braai offered participants the ability to hold onto the future prospect of their identity through their children. Traditionally, language has been seen as a

marker of identity. This is especially true for Afrikaans, which was historically fought long and hard for and only officially recognised as a language apart from Dutch in 1925. Not only does it represent a manner of speech, but a fight for heritage, the battle for which continues today. However, where language and all else may potentially be lost to migratory acculturation, the braai remains the constant of Afrikaner ethnic determination.

The braai is the re-enactment of home and the familiar, which is itself a re-enactment of the nation-creating historicity of Afrikaners. Performing the braai is to perform Afrikaner ethnicity. Migrants know the next generation will become Kiwis. This is well-documented, particularly in linguistic studies, where even prior to leaving South Africa, departing migrants know they are not able to pack into their suitcase their children's future national and cultural identity (Barkhuizen, 2006). By re-enacting ethnic identity within the braai environment, migrants are able to recreate what has been left behind in a very similar, authentic way as was once done 'back home'. This re-enactment is played out before the eyes of their children, who will one day go on themselves to perform what they have seen their parents and parents' friends do.

Upon moving to New Zealand, migrant children tend to lose their language, integrate into non-denominational, English-speaking 'Kiwi' churches, if at all church-going, and make non-Afrikaans friends and so their cultural identity becomes confined to their parents' home environment. By hosting and attending braais, the Afrikaner community hold onto a modicum of their cultural identity for the next generation, where it could otherwise be all but lost. Yet, as with Theseus' ship, mentioned in relation to nostalgia, time and memory in Chapter Five, to continue being that Ship, as opposed to becoming a new one, the present iteration must be built upon the former and continue to be recognisable as such. Its *history* must be identifiable in the present Ship. The same is true for the braai and Afrikaners. Parents then recreate the braai from home in a way congruent with what they know. This is projected into the future through association with their children, which may then be capable of adopting Afrikaner ethnic identity through their own relative performance of this practice.

Conclusion

The themes discussed in this chapter contextualise identity. They position Afrikaner migrants within their community and in respect to those around them, both non-migrant South Africans and the New Zealander Other. This positioning context is vital in understanding

Afrikaner identity as an intersubjective ‘presupposition of the Other’, as late anthropologist, Stephen Tyler (1978), writes:

When I say “I think,” I implicate every other thinker, past and present, just as I implicate a world that preceded me, contains me, and will persist after I am no more when I speak of “my” experience. So, too, when “I speak,” I implicate someone spoken to, something spoken about, a reason, intention, or purpose for speaking, a means or instrument of speech, and a location within a conceptual order and in space and time. Our subjectivity, then, requires a world of external convention which it supposes is objective but whose objectivity is, in fact, a consequence of intersubjectivity. The poles of our understanding – its subjectivity and objectivity, immanence and transcendence – derive from that intersubjectivity manifest in the first act of genuine speech. (Tyler, 1978)

Afrikaner identity is what it is, has been, and what it will become. It is what it is and yet not what it is not. These simple, obvious statements are not a superfluous waste of space, they are vital to understanding the concept of identity and Selfhood. They describe the vast, wide-ranging, complex and infinitely nuanced way in which humans identify with, and against, each other, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Taking ‘today’s’ view of the Self (yet still within its vital context), upon meeting the Other, the Self imagines how the Other perceives the Self as being. Should this imaginary view not align with how the Self wishes to be seen (either as a true reflection of their Self or the image they *wish* the Other to see), then the Self will act and speak in a way that attempts to adjust the perceived view that the Other holds of the Self in order to change the Other’s view. Conversely, the Self may also perform more closely the identity that the Other is seen as perceiving. In accordance with Butler’s theory of performativity, the Self, by habitually speaking and acting in these ways, becomes that which they speak and act and so their identity of Self starts to alter. Thus, in attempting to correct the perceived misrecognition of the Other, the Self cultivates identity change.

Such a theory, rooted in Taylor, Cooley, Mead and Butler, breaks out of the Cartesian mind-body dualism which dominated theoretical debate of the Self for much of pre-20th century Western philosophy. *Cogito ergo sum*, defining the wholly subjective Self as the only solipsistic certainty, is no longer robust logic, since the Other is inherent within the Self’s

creation, as much as the Self itself. For one to ‘think therefore I am’, one needs the Other in order to construct the ‘I’ that thinks ‘I am’.

Recipe: Melktert

Although this chapter did not mention dessert of any kind, it felt only fitting to finish the thesis off with a sweet dish, the *melktert*.¹⁵¹ This is my favourite braai dessert, having an unusual rich-yet-refreshing quality. In the community, a bit of a fuss was made over one woman's recipe for the traditional custard tart for which she was quite famous. I was told by another guest that this is "the best I'll ever have". My partner exclaimed that I might give her a bit of competition, as I'd become rather good at making the tart to traditional standards. The woman and I then carried on in conversation about what type of recipe we each use (there are three different methods) and how we've adapted our respective methods to make it our own. Below, I offer mine. This is a very traditional recipe except that it has the uncommon addition of a little bit of gelatine, which doesn't alter the flavour at all, but aids in cutting the tart without the tip of the wedge sagging during plating.

Ingredients

1 sheet shortcrust pastry	Pinch salt
500ml milk, plus 60ml extra milk	1½tsp powdered gelatine
15g butter	80g sugar
1 cinnamon stick	2 eggs
20g plain flour	½tsp vanilla extract
15g cornflour	Ground cinnamon, to serve

Method

Prepare this the day before your braai to allow time for it to cool properly (no-one likes a warm or sloppy *melktert*). Preheat the oven to 200°C and grease a 25cm quiche dish with butter. Roll the shortcrust pastry out thinly, to about 5mm thick, and line the dish with the pastry, crimping the edges. I've never been good at this sort of faffery but seasoned *boervroue* will know how to do this so the end result looks pretty.

¹⁵¹ ['melk.tert]; milktart, a tart or open-top pie dish with a custard filling, very similar to New Zealand's 'custard pie', but lighter and creamier.

Lay a sheet of baking paper over the pastry and fill the cavity with ceramic pie weights or uncooked rice and bake for 15 minutes (that is, ‘blind bake’ the pastry). Carefully remove the weights and continue baking until light brown, about 5 more minutes.

While that’s baking, start the custard by heating the milk, butter and cinnamon stick in a pot to almost boiling point. Be careful not to let it boil and scald the milk. In a separate bowl, beat the flour, cornflour, salt, gelatine powder and extra (not hot) milk until smooth. Pour about half a cup of the hot milk into the flour slurry mixture and stir until smooth. Pour the slurry into the rest of the hot milk and heat again to a light simmer (all this back-and-forth makes for a smooth custard). Cook for a further 3 minutes, making sure to stir the whole time. It will thicken considerably during this time.

In another bowl (you can use the slurry bowl), beat the eggs, vanilla and sugar together. Pour a little of the hot milk mixture into the egg and sugar mix and beat until smooth. This tempers the eggs and stops them from curdling. Pour the egg mixture into the rest of the hot milk and stir quickly.

Fill the pastry crust with the custard and smooth the top. On top, sprinkle an overly generous amount of ground cinnamon – enough to call it a ‘top crust’ – and leave to cool to room temperature. Once cooled, chill in the fridge overnight.

To serve

It’s best to cut this with a sharp knife, cleaning and wetting the blade between cuts, which will give sharp and tidy edges for serving.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter brings together the major insights, theoretical implications and methodological reflections from the preceding chapters of this thesis. The study began with the aim of investigating Afrikaner identity-based social practice both in South Africa and in New Zealand through a comparative lens. Yet, like many projects undertaken during COVID-19, the plan was reconfigured in the wake of pandemic lockdowns. While the final design of research relied solely on participant recollections of home and expressions of identity in New Zealand, it allowed a deeper, more focused exploration into how Afrikaner migrants negotiate, maintain and transform cultural practices, specifically through the braai and related to identity formation. The study draws renewed attention to how diasporic communities assert and reinvent their sense of belonging in a new homeland.

The study makes clear that the braai is more than a simple gathering around a fire, more than the braai apparatus itself, and indeed more than a kind of primordial nourishment. Rather, it is a malleable social and cultural practice, intimately bound to Afrikaner history, kinship and everyday negotiations of identity. I begin this concluding chapter by first revisiting the aims of the study and how they were reshaped by unfolding global events. I then go on to synthesise key findings, from the significance of braai materiality to the intangible elements of togetherness, nostalgia, narrative and memory that give the braai its distinctive cultural flavour. Methodologically, the study demonstrates how approaches such as participant observation, the Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) and reflexive fieldwork practice collaboratively offer a nuanced understanding of the interplay between material culture, the Self, community and social practice. This chapter also points to limitations in scope and offers suggestions for future research directions, both within Afrikaner diaspora studies, and more generally, within migration and anthropology. Finally, it closes with reflections on my positionality.

Revisiting the Research Aims

Original Purpose and the COVID-19 Pivot

The original intent behind this research was to explore how Afrikaner identity practices evolved before and after migration, ideally capturing field data from both South Africa and New Zealand. This comparative approach promised to provide a multi-sited perspective on

how social practices, language use and expressions of culture shifted through transnational relocation. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, forced a more narrowed methodological scope than originally intended. Travel restrictions meant that exploring Afrikaner practice in South Africa was no longer possible, confining the field site to the Northland region of New Zealand. The comparative element had to be reconstructed. Rather than a direct on-the-ground comparison, the research pivoted to rely on participants' recollections of their life in South Africa, placed side by side with their present experiences in New Zealand.

This narrower frame led to richer attention on the braai as a key cultural practice. Rather than dividing time across two locales, I was able to concentrate on the Afrikaner church community in Northland, experiencing the complexities, tensions and social depths entwined with the braai. This reshaped aim came to focus on three principal questions:

1. How do Afrikaners in New Zealand express and maintain cultural identity through the braai?
2. In what ways does the embodied act of braaiing invoke memory, nostalgia and modes of belonging?
3. How are these expressions inflected by both subjective experiences of migration and the broader socio-cultural frameworks in the new homeland?

Situating the Braai as Central to Afrikaner Identity

Throughout the thesis, the braai was the core lens used in examining wider anthropological themes. From the emotional weight of longing for 'home' to the forging of new friendships in a migrant environment, braai events became a place of fusion for communal values, an integrative event where participants brought with them their histories and day-to-day life experiences and wove them together in community to create a renewed social Self.

Ultimately, the study's reconfigured aim highlighted the braai not simply as a meal but as a simultaneously material and symbolic resource for collective identity. It carried forward longstanding historical narratives of Afrikanerness, stereotypes of segregation, traditions and pride, while also teasing out alternative perspectives on these issues and revealing points of friction and departure from norms. The pivot thus allowed an in-depth understanding of how migrants actively shape and reshape tradition, identity and community through this social practice.

Synthesis of Key Findings

In Chapter Four on materiality, we see that a pronounced tension surfaces around fuel; wood or charcoal versus gas. While many insist that a '*regte braai*' demands wood or charcoal – to summon the tastes and aromas of past gatherings in South Africa – New Zealand's uncertain weather and a desire for convenience lead others to adopt gas. Gas braais may draw good-natured teasing, being called 'Barbie queues' or 'outdoor ovens' – yet participants negotiate this boundary pragmatically, balancing authenticity with adaptability. This negotiation underlines the effort to sustain cultural continuity in a new homeland.

Ingenuity also emerges as a core cultural value. Home-built braais or improvised setups exemplify the '*'n Boer maak 'n plan*' ethos, celebrating resourcefulness and practicality. In contrast, ostentatious imports such as the Kamado Joe sometimes read as status symbols – echoes of class distinctions many Afrikaner migrants sought to leave behind. Through these material innovations, participants signal identity and belonging in a diaspora context.

Turning to Chapter Five's discussion of sensory affect and nostalgia, the braai's multisensory dimensions come to the fore. The heat of the flame, smoky aromas, the pop and sizzle of dripping fat and the coriander flavour of boerewors intertwine with memories of home and past gatherings. These sensory cues act as conduits for nostalgia, evoking familiarity, continuity and emotional comfort amid displacement. Taste and smell thus become powerful agents of cultural memory, turning nostalgia into a crucial element of food seasoning.

In Chapter Six on masculinity and gender, the braai emerges less as a neutral site of conviviality and more as a stage for reaffirming Afrikaner masculinity. Analysis of social media imagery – memes of men clustered around the flames in Springbok jerseys and video clips of men assuming varying authority at the fire – underscore a persistent binary. That men command the hearth while women remain on the periphery. Framed through Butler's notion of gender performativity and Turner's ritual theory, these enactments function as a cyclical reaffirmation ritual. Each act of tending the fire, grilling the meat and male sociality around the embers serves to reiterate an already-assumed masculine identity, suspending class distinctions but reinforcing gendered roles through stylised repetition. Ultimately, Chapter Six shows that the braai's power lies in its capacity to ritualise and reproduce Afrikaner masculinity in both mediated and lived practice.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, the braai stands as a vessel for social bonds. Fuel choices or protein preferences may spark teasing (such as chicken being referred to as a 'vegetable') but

such jests only reinforce conviviality. Laughter, collaborative cooking, shared stories and animated conversation around the fire underscore that the braai's true substance lies not in its material form, but in the communal experience it sustains.

Theoretical Implications

Diaspora Studies and Culinary Praxis

Building on research into migrant foodways, this thesis reaffirms that communal cooking practices can act as 'portable homelands' while also being conduits for the renegotiation of ethnic identities and the Self. They link participants' present realities to their past, influenced by new community and sensory inputs as well as personal agency. Afrikaner migrants in New Zealand do not merely replicate home-based customs. Rather, they adapt them in dynamic ways, exemplifying anthropological arguments that diaspora traditions are part continuity and part transformation.

The Body, Memory and Material Culture

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of the lived body illuminates how braai experiences revolve around sensation and memory. The heat on one's face, the smell of smoke, the light and spark of embers, these bodily encounters inscribe old recollections onto new geographies and timelines. Similarly, Derrida's idea of *différance* and Roland Barthes's 'death of the author' concepts help contextualise how the braai vessel's design ceases to matter once it is employed by Afrikaners for braai purposes. Its meaning is reconstructed through practice and collective cultural framing.

Crucially, the open flame itself emerged as a symbolically charged element in participants' narratives. Many Afrikaners in the study regarded a wood or charcoal fire as the authentic heart of a 'proper' braai, imbuing it with a lively, almost social presence that heightened the sensory experience and communal atmosphere. By contrast, gas flames, though often used for convenience, were seen as lacking this elemental character, sometimes humorously dubbed an 'outdoor oven' or 'braaibecue' to mark them as different from a traditional braai fire. Even so, participants demonstrated flexibility in practice; once a gas barbecue was incorporated into their braai practice, it too was accepted as a braai (to a point), reinforcing the idea that it is ultimately the act of gathering and cooking together that defines the event's meaning. The emphasis placed on flame type underscores how material facets of the braai are imbued with cultural significance far beyond their practical function.

Nostalgia as Flavour Agent

While most discussions of diasporic foodways emphasise recipe transmission or symbolic ‘portable homelands’, this study shows that nostalgia itself operates as an active agent in taste – what one might call a flavour agent of identity. In the braai, the smokiness of wood or charcoal, the balance of spices, even the sequence of marinading and turning the meat, are all calibrated not only for palatability but for their capacity to evoke specific kitchens, voices and gatherings left behind. Each aroma and mouthful seasons the present moment with remembered affect, transforming sensory perception so that certain flavours carry the weight of collective memory. Here, nostalgia does more than colour perception with longing; it modifies gustatory thresholds, making familiar tastes ‘taste like home’, regardless of local ingredient substitutions or novel cooking implements.

Conceptualising nostalgia as an embodied flavour agent enriches both sensory anthropology and diaspora theory by foregrounding how affective memory is inscribed through the palate. Beyond Boym’s restorative/reflective dichotomy, the braai enacts a ‘productive nostalgia’ in which taste itself becomes generative. That is, each communal meal not only recalls the past but actively forges new social bonds in the present. This flavour-infused memory complicates binaries of authenticity versus adaptation, demonstrating that diasporic identity is continuously remade not only in practice and material forms but at the level of sensation itself.

Methodological Reflections

Participant Observation in an Embedded Setting

Conducting fieldwork through the Afrikaans church community, in addition to my pre-existing personal and linguistic links to the community, fostered the trust necessary for intimate data gathering. This approach validated a key principle of ethnography. Prolonged and genuine engagement often yields deeper insights and creates a space in which participants share unanticipated facets of their lives.

Moreover, my intimate connection to the Afrikaner community – through a long-term partnership with an Afrikaans speaker – deepened my fieldwork and granted greater access to private gatherings and conversations over late-night braais. My command of the Afrikaans language further opened doors, creating a trust that would otherwise have been hard-won in my position as a researcher to a community that feels unfairly marketed to the world.

Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method of Interview

The Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) approach struck a balance between letting participants guide the discussion and ensuring in-depth exploration of their narratives. Using this method positioned participants as leaders in directing the interview. Through open-ended prompts, their migration histories, personal beliefs and everyday concerns surfaced organically, allowing me to conduct thematic analysis at a deeper level. The resulting analysis highlighted the complexity of diaspora life. Although similar themes ran through each account and throughout the fieldwork, no two experiences or interpretations of the braai were identical.

Re-listening to participants' voices and transcribing their stories multiple times fostered a reflexive awareness of my own biases. Rather than imposing neat analytical categories, I allowed their multifaceted accounts to shape the emergent themes. This approach honoured the truth that life narratives are rarely linear but are braided with tangential anecdotes and emotional resonance.

Braai events themselves served as mini field sites. Each gathering allowed observation of social roles – host, helper, friend – and provided insight into the banter and embodied practices (such as how participants tended the fire or passed around plates of food). The synergy between formal interviews and spontaneous braai-side conversations generated a layered dataset, illuminating how participants actually performed the identities they described in interviews.

Limitations of the Study

Geographical and Demographic Constraints

This research was confined to a relatively small Afrikaans-speaking community in Northland, meaning it cannot represent the experiences of all Afrikaner migrants abroad. The participant sample also leaned significantly toward Christian, middle-income, heteronormative individuals in married relationships. Future studies might engage more secular or socio-economically diverse Afrikaner migrants to capture a wider range of perspectives.

Timeframe

A nine-month fieldwork period, though sufficient for building rapport, is short in terms of capturing the flux of diaspora life over years or decades. Braai practices and community

relationships will continue to evolve, shaped by changing personal circumstances and the broader socio-political context. Prolonged longitudinal research could map these trajectories more fully.

Directions for Future Research

Comparative Studies and Multi-Sited Ethnography

Completing the originally intended multi-sited design remains a promising avenue. Comparing braai practices in contemporary South Africa with those of Afrikaner migrants in various parts of New Zealand (or other diaspora contexts such as Australia or Canada) could reveal broader patterns in how traditions transform or remain stable across different environments.

Generational Shifts

Further, investigating generational transitions would deepen our understanding of cultural continuity. For example, how might second- or third-generation Afrikaners, with limited or no personal experience in South Africa, carry forward or revise braai practices? Will the braai remain a vibrant symbol of Afrikaner identity for those born in New Zealand and for their children?

Final Reflections: Belonging, Migration, and the Resonance of the Braai

The braai's significance to Afrikaner migrants cannot be reduced to a single cultural domain – whether religious, culinary or social. Rather, it operates as a mosaic of meanings. In a diasporic context, deeply rooted sentiments mingle with pragmatic compromises; wood or charcoal for sensory richness, tradition and flavour, versus gas for convenience and speed. The impetus to replicate home-based customs coexists with an impetus to adapt.

A vital lesson emerging from this study is the power of the everyday to communicate deeper truths about migration and identity. The braai, an outwardly simple cooking event, is revealed to be an axis around which participants organise intangible threads such as memory, fellowship, comfort and pride. Intangible tensions, such as class status, divergent religion or the politics of language, are all partially mediated through conversations about how one lights a fire or prepares a marinade.

Positioning the Researcher: Between Insider and Outsider

Throughout fieldwork, I negotiated a position simultaneously inside and outside the community. My Afrikaans language study and personal associations placed me near the heart of participants' gatherings, but my background and role as a researcher kept me slightly apart, a curious observer as well as a friendly insider. Reflecting on these experiences, it seems that anthropology frequently thrives in this middle ground, where the researcher's partial alignment echoes the migrant community's own negotiations of belonging. The stories shared – in interviews, around dining tables or amid drifting braai smoke – ultimately reflect both their journey and my own in forging paths of understanding.

Conclusion: The Braai and the Future of Afrikaner Identity in Diaspora

This thesis has shown that the braai is at once a deeply rooted tradition and a dynamic social practice. Far from being a static replay of South African customs, the braai emerges as a complex cultural performance in the diaspora, allowing Afrikaner migrants to carry forward memories of home, experiment with new practices and articulate belonging in changing environments.

Everyday gestures – tongs in hand, swirling smoke and sizzling boerewors – prove extraordinary when viewed as part of a vibrant cultural fabric. By focusing on the braai, we see how diasporic identity is woven through seemingly routine acts, where multiple layers of meaning (from religion to language and from nostalgia to innovation) converge. The braai thus stands as an expression of Afrikaner identity in New Zealand, embodying how communities navigate continuity and reinvention within new cultural terrains.

In summary, the braai's power lies in its capacity to gather people around a shared flame, fuelled by the heat of collective memory, as much as by charcoal. It stands as a living testament to how cultures adapt and endure in the diaspora, simultaneously grounding Afrikaner migrants in a sense of tradition while granting them license for experimentation. As global migration accelerates and communities become ever more fluid, the braai reminds us that what may appear to be an unremarkable culinary ritual can, in fact, be a dynamic medium for cultural reproduction, transformation and a renewed sense of home.

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Appendix One: Phonetic guide to pronunciation of Afrikaans words

Afrikaans	Pronunciation	English
Afrikaans	[af.ri'kɑ:s]	<i>Afrikaans</i>
Afrikaners	[af.ri'kɑ:.nərs]	<i>Afrikaners</i>
biltong	['bəl.təŋ]	<i>cured and dried meat snack, usually flavoured with coriander seed. See also droëwors.</i>
blits	[bləts]	<i>"firelighter(s)". Literally 'lightening flash', derived from a popular South African brand name, 'Blitz Firelighters'.</i>
boer, Boer	[bu:r]	<i>farmer, Boer</i>
boerewors	['bu.rə.vərs]	<i>boerewors; a beef sausage, flavoured with coriander seed and left unlinked in a coil shape.</i>
boerie	['bu:.ri]	<i>shortened form of 'boerewors'.</i>
boervrou	['bu:r.frœu]	<i>"farmer wife/woman"; referring to the stereotypical ideal of a traditional Afrikaner woman. It includes the connotation of a highly domesticated woman who is tough and capable.</i>
braai	[brɑ:i]	<i>braai, to braai</i>
braaibaas	['brɑ:i.bɑ:s]	<i>"braai-boss", someone who braais very well.</i>
braaibroodjie	['brɑ:i.broi.ki]	<i>a sandwich lightly toasted on the braai</i>
Braaidag	['brɑ:i.dax]	<i>Braai Day</i>
braaipap	['brɑ:i.pap]	<i>see entry for pap.</i>
braaivleis	['brɑ:i.fləis]	<i>meat intended for use on the braai (see Chapter Four regarding standard 'meat' exceptions)</i>
bredie	['brɪə.di]	<i>traditional stew dish. See also bredie and potjiekos.</i>
bring-en-braai	[brəŋ ɛn brɑ:i]	<i>bring-and-braai; a braai event where both guests and host bring meat for all to eat together.</i>
die Groot Trek	[di 'xrot træk]	<i>the Great Trek</i>
dominee (ds.)	['do.mə.ni]	<i>pastor</i>
droëwors	['drœ.vərs]	<i>"dry sausage"; a sausage that dry-cured and eating as a snack. See also biltong.</i>
Erfenisdag	['er.fə.nəs.dax]	<i>Heritage Day</i>
gas	[xas]	<i>guest, gas (LPG)</i>
groente	['χrun.tə]	<i>vegetables; literally 'greens'.</i>
kameeldoring	[ka'miəl.duərn]	<i>vachellia erioloba or camel thorn. See also rooikrans and sekelbos.</i>
melktert	['mɛlk.tɛrt]	<i>milk tart; a tart or open-top pie dish with a custard filling.</i>
mieliemeel	['mi:.li:.mi:l]	<i>maizemeal; like polenta but more finely ground.</i>

mieliepap	[ˈmi:.li:.pap]	<i>cornmeal porridge. See also braaipap, pap and pap-en-smoor.</i>
mooi man	[mo:i man]	<i>a phrase expressing approval, similar to New Zealand's "Good on ya".</i>
mot reën	[mɒt rɪən]	<i>"moth rain"; referring to a very light, powdery drizzle.</i>
omgee groep	[ˈɔm.χiə χrup]	<i>"care groups"; a Bible study or cell group organised by a church.</i>
pap	[pap]	<i>cornmeal porridge. See also braaipap, mieliepap and pap-en-smoor.</i>
pap-en-smoor	[pap.ən.'smo:r]	<i>a dish of cornmeal porridge, similar to American hominy grits, with tomato sauce</i>
pastoor	[ˈpas.to:r]	<i>Pastor</i>
potjie	[ˈpo:i.ki]	<i>"little pot"; a cast-iron pot, usually with three legs built-in. Also the braai event where it is used. See also potjiekos and bredie.</i>
potjiekos	[ˈpo:i.ki.kɔs]	<i>"potjie food"; a dish, usually of meat and vegetables, cooked in a potjie. See also bredie and potjie.</i>
regte	[ˈrɛχ.tə]	<i>real, actual, genuine.</i>
rooikrans	[ˈro:i.krans]	<i>acacia cyclops or red-eyed wattle. See also kameeldoring and sekelbos.</i>
roosterkoek	[ˈroʊs.tər.kuk]	<i>"toasted cake"; a small English muffin-like bun cooked on a braai grill, directly over coals.</i>
sekelbos	[ˈsiə.kəl.bɔs]	<i>dichrostachys cinerea or sicklebush. See also kameeldoring and rooikrans.</i>
soutie	[ˈsœu.ti]	<i>an English-speaking South African. Originally derogative, being a shortened form of 'soutpiel' (literally, salt penis), illustrating that they have one foot in England and the other in South Africa, spreading their legs across the Atlantic, penis' dangling in the ocean. It appears to have become less derogatory in recent years with some English-speakers using the term to describe themselves.</i>
Trekboer	[ˈtrɛk.bu:r]	<i>Trekboer, migrant farmer</i>
veld	[fɛlt]	<i>field, open rural land</i>
vleis-en-rys	[flɔis ɛn rɔis]	<i>"meat and rice"; referring to a basic diet of meat and starch, similar to New Zealand's "meat and three veg".</i>
Voortrekkers	[ˈfor.trɛ.kərs]	<i>Voortrekkers, pioneers</i>

Appendix Two: Confidentiality Form



Performing Ethnicities: An Ethnographic Analysis of Afrikaner Identity in New Zealand and South Africa

Confidentiality Agreement

I have read the accompanying Participants' Information Sheet and the ASAA/NZ code of ethics and understand the principals governing the study.

I understand that the confidentiality of participants in the study, including but not limited to participants' identities, is paramount and that no information whatsoever that is gained through, by or for the study may be transferred in any way, to any person, that is not the main researcher and/or his research supervisors. I understand that this includes the prohibition of discussing information about one participant with another participant.

I understand that my role in the study is to serve only as cultural and linguistic advisor and any queries about the research, from participants or other concerned parties, will be deferred to the researcher.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name - printed _____

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ki Pūwhiri

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Appendix Three: Participant Information Sheet



Performing Ethnicities: An Ethnographic Analysis of Afrikaner Identity in New Zealand

Information Sheet

Study Introduction

I, Kris Finlayson, invite you to take part in research to help further the understanding of Afrikaners as a unique, distinct and positive member of the World's ethnicities.

Performing Ethnicities: An Ethnographic Analysis of Afrikaner Identity in New Zealand is a PhD study in social anthropology, carried out by Kris Finlayson under the supervision of Dr. Robyn Andrews and Dr. Graeme MacRae of Massey University's School of People, Environment and Planning. This study seeks to understand more about migrant Afrikaner identity in New Zealand primarily in two central environments where Afrikaner culture is performed: the braai and the Afrikaans church.

New Zealand hosts the largest per capita proportion of expatriated Afrikaners, an estimated 9% globally (StatsSA, 2016), yet there is relatively little research on this community. The study will contribute to a better understanding of this large contingent of New Zealand's immigrant population, and its patterns of similarity and difference to wider New Zealand society and their homeland.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

I am looking for participants who consider their own ethnicity to be "Afrikaans" and have moved to New Zealand any time between 1995 and 2020. All potential participants must normally reside in the North Auckland area and be over 16 years of age at the time of agreeing to participate.

Project Procedures

Participants will be involved in two informal, conversational interviews which can be organised to suit each participant's schedule and centred primarily around Afrikaner life in South Africa and New Zealand. Interview duration is entirely dependent on participants, however previous experience indicates that interviews may take from one to three hours. In addition to interviews, I will attend one or two pre-arranged braais, hosted by the participant with the participants' preferred guests. I will also attend other, public South African-themed events in the area, which participants may be part of, but this is not a requirement for participation in the study.

Please note: Interviews will be conducted mainly in English, however as I have a good level of understanding in Afrikaans, participants may elect to speak Afrikaans as required for self-expression. It should be emphasised that at any time, any participant may speak in whichever language they feel best articulates their meaning.

Data Management

Once interviews have taken place, the audio will be transcribed by myself. All hardcopy data will be stored in a digitally encrypted safe located at my home and electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Participants may request a copy of their transcripts which they are welcome to make omission and/or edit requests or add further commentary on what was said within two weeks of receiving. Steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality of identity for all participants, including the use of pseudonyms.

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Participants' Rights

Please note: You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If do you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw as a participant at any time before the end of two-week period after receiving the interview transcript (mentioned above);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- be given access to digital copy of the full and final thesis when the study is completed.
- ask for the recorder to not be used, or to be turned off at any time during any interview.

Project Contacts

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study please contact either myself or one of my research supervisors using the details below:

- Kris Finlayson: k.finlayson@massey.ac.nz or +64 [REDACTED] (Northland, NZ)
- Dr. Robyn Andrews: r.andrews@massey.ac.nz or +64 6 350 5799 ext.83853 (Manawatu, NZ)
- Dr. Graeme MacRae: g.s.macrae@massey.ac.nz or +64 9 414 0800 ext.43474 (Auckland, NZ)

Statement of Ethics

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 20/10.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Fiona Te Momo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone: +64 9 414 0800 ext.43347, email: humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix Four: Participant Consent Form



Performing Ethnicities: An Ethnographic Analysis of Afrikaner Identity in New Zealand

Participant Consent Form

I have read the accompanying Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.
My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions
at any time during the progression of the study.

I understand my rights as a research participant, as detailed on page two (2) of the accompanying
Information Sheet.

I agree / do not agree [delete one] to interviews being sound recorded. If I agree, I know that I may ask,
at any time during any interview, to have the sound recorder stopped or certain information to be erased
from the record.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name [print] _____

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