

Negotiating Historical Continuities in Contested Terrain:
A narrative-based reflection on the post-apartheid psychosocial legacies
of conscription into the South African Defence Force

by

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ABSTRACT

For a 25-year period during the apartheid era in South Africa, all school-leaving white men were issued with a compulsory call-up to national military service in the South African Defence Force. It is estimated that 600 000 men were conscripted between 1968 and 1993, undergoing military training and being deployed in Namibia, Angola and South Africa. The purpose of this system of military conscription was to support both the apartheid state's role in the "Border War" in Namibia and Angola and the suppression of anti-apartheid resistance within South Africa. It formed part of the National Party's strategy of a "total response" to what it perceived as the "total onslaught" of communism and African nationalism. While recruiting and training young white men was the focus of the apartheid government's strategy, all of white South African society was caught up in supporting, contesting, avoiding and resisting this system in one way or another. Rather than being a purely military endeavour, conscription into the SADF therefore comprised a social and political system with wide-ranging ramifications.

The 1994 democratic elections in South Africa heralded the advent of a very different political, social and economic system to what had gone before. The focus of this research is SADF conscripts' narrations of identity in the contested narrative terrain of post-apartheid South Africa.

The thesis begins with a contextual framing of the historical, social and political systems of which conscription was a part. Drawing on narrative psychology as a theoretical framework, the thesis explores discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat in conscripts' narrations of identity, the construction of memory fields in narrating memories of war and possible trauma, and the notions of moral injury and moral repair in dealing with legacies of war. Using a narrative discursive approach, the thesis then reflects on historical temporal threads, and narrative patterns that emerge when analysing a range of texts about the psychosocial legacies of conscription, including interviews, research, memoirs, plays, media reports, video documentaries, blogs and photographic exhibitions.

Throughout the thesis, conscripts' and others' accounts of conscription and its legacies are regarded as cultural texts. This serves as a means to highlight both contextual narrative negotiations and the narrative-discursive patterns of conscripts' personal accounts of their identities in the post-apartheid narrative terrain.

The original contribution of this research is the development of conceptual and theoretical framings of the post-apartheid legacies of conscription. Key to this has been the use of narrative-based approaches to highlight the narrative-discursive patterns, memory fields and negotiations of narrative terrains at work in texts that focus on various aspects of conscription and its ongoing aftereffects. The concept of temporal threads has been developed to account for the emergence and shifts in these patterns over time. Existing narrative-discursive theory has formed the basis for conscripts' negotiations of identity being identified as acts of narrative reinforcement and narrative repair.

The thesis concludes with reflections on the future possibilities for articulating and supporting narrative repair that enables a shift away from historical discursive *laagers* and a reconfiguration of the narrative terrain within which conscripts narrate their identities.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
APA	American Psychiatric Association
CSVr	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DSM	The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Liberation Front of Angola)
FAPLA	Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola (People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola)
FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
LAWs Project	The Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project (based in the Rhodes University History Department)
MK	uMkhonto weSizwe
MPLA	Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola (Popular Front for the Liberation of Angola)
NGK	Nasionale Gereformeerde Kerk (also known as the Dutch Reformed Church or DRC)
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NP	National Party
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SADF	South African Defence Force
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SANPAD	South African Netherlands Partnership for Alternative Development
SAI	South African Infantry Unit (usually followed by the number of the unit)
SAP	South African Police
SAWVP	South African War Veterans Project

SSC	State Security Council
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for Angola's Total Independence)
UN	United Nations
ZANU	Zimbabwean African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwean African People's Union

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INTRODUCTION

This research reached its conclusion within weeks of the passing of President Nelson “Madiba” Rolihlahla Mandela and a matter of months before the 20th anniversary of the 1994 first democratic elections in South Africa that brought the African National Congress (ANC) into power.

In the lead-up to the relatively peaceful 1994 political transition to democracy in South Africa, the South African Defence Force – in which conscripts had served – had withdrawn from Angola and Namibia and been required to support a complete military and ideological about-face on the part of the apartheid government. This research has set out to understand the narrative terrain that has shaped conscripts’ identities during this time of transition. In doing so, this research examines the discursive resources which have informed conscripts’ negotiations of this narrative terrain, and how post-apartheid memory fields have shaped and influenced what gets spoken about and what gets silenced in conscripts’ accounts of their experiences during this period of history.

This research also seeks to understand the social system that enabled and supported the system of compulsory military conscription of white men during the apartheid era, that also forms part of the legacies of conscription. The apartheid state’s “total onslaught” ideology ensured that the National Party government worked at drawing every white South African into its efforts to counteract the perceived threats of communism and African nationalism. Conscription therefore formed part of a broader social, political and ideological system of which every white South African was a part in one way or another. I have undertaken this research as a member of white South African society who was not conscripted, but who lived through that period of history and who feels there is a need to understand the psychosocial legacies of conscription within the post-apartheid context.

In this research, conscripts' accounts of their experiences and other related texts are regarded as cultural texts which inform and are shaped by the historical temporal threads that comprise the context of these narrations.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide some background to the research process, the methods used and the structure of this thesis. In addition, some of my own narratives have been included as a way of setting up the reflexive ethos that has been a key element of the research.

Setting the Historical Context

For a period of roughly 25 years, from 1968 until 1993, all school-leaving white¹ men in South Africa were issued with a compulsory call-up to serve in the South African Defence Force (SADF), the apartheid state's military system.² The primary purpose of this call-up was to support the Nationalist government's efforts to resist the perceived threats of communism and African nationalism. The initial time period that men served was nine months, but this rapidly increased to two years of service and a series of short-term camps, comprising 720 days in all.³ Until the mid-1980s, the options for men who did not want to

¹ Being "white" was a designation bestowed by the Population Registration Act of 1950, based on the apartheid system's categorisation of the South African population into four biologically determined racial groups: whites, Coloureds, Indians and Africans (see Posel, D. "What's in a name? Racial categorisations under apartheid and their afterlife" *Transformation* No. 47, 2001, pp. 50-74 for further discussion on this). Under the apartheid regime, an individual's race, as determined primarily by skin colour (and sometimes also by features such as hair texture), was the basis for deciding many aspects of individuals' and communities lives: where they lived, where they went to school, whether they could own land, who they could marry, where they could travel, when and with whom they could associate in public. In this case, it was conscripts' designation as 'white' (and male) that was the basis for being called up for military duty.

² Baines, G. "Introduction: Challenging the Boundaries, Breaking the Silences" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008); Gibson, D. "'The Balsak in the Roof': Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts" in Kapteijns, L. and Richters, A. (eds.) *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010); Rauch, J. "War and Resistance" in Cawthra, G., Kraak, G. and O'Sullivan, G. (eds.) *War and Resistance: Southern African Reports* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994) available on www.csvr.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=639 (accessed 11 March 2009)

³ Draper, C. *Psychological Experiences of Military Conscription in South Africa during the 1970's and 1980's* (University of Cape Town: Psychology Honours paper, 1999); van Zyl, M., de Gruchy, J., Lapinsky, S., Lewin, S.

serve in the military were limited; refusing to serve meant they were likely to be sentenced to up to six years in prison.⁴ It is not known how many men opted for other ways of avoiding the call-up – staying in the country but living below the official radar, using tertiary studies as a reason to avoid serving, or leaving the country and going into exile.⁵ While some conscientious objectors did serve prison sentences during the 1970s and 80s, the growth of the End Conscription Campaign in the mid-1980s led to increasing numbers of men being permitted to serve an extended period of community service as an alternative to serving in the military. They could do so if they could prove that they were objecting to serving in the SADF on religious pacifist rather than moral grounds.⁶ It was only in 1992, when significant changes were already under way in South Africa that an amendment to the Defence Act allowed for objection to serving in the military on moral, ethical or religious grounds.⁷

It is estimated that roughly 600 000 men participated in military training and sometimes intense combat during the time the compulsory military conscription was in place. Most of the combat took place in Namibia (then known as South West Africa) and Angola. However, some also fought in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) and Mozambique, although not on the same scale or for the same length of time.⁸

These conflicts in neighbouring countries have been rather vaguely described as the “Border War”, both at the time and in contemporary literature.⁹ The Border War was fought against the perceived communist threat to the apartheid state, and consisted of both conventional warfare and counter-insurgency measures (especially in Namibia).¹⁰ However, a fact that is

and Reid, G. *The Aversion Project: Human rights abuses of gays and lesbians in the South African Defence Force by health workers during the apartheid era* (Cape Town: Simply Said and Done, 1999)

⁴ Conway, D. *Masculinities, Militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign: War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), p.50

⁵ Baines, G. “Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation? White Conscripts Reassess the Meaning of the ‘Border War’ in Post-Apartheid South Africa” *InterCulture* 5.3 October 2008 p.219

⁶ Baines “Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation?” p.214; Rauch “War and Resistance” p.5

⁷ Rauch “War and Resistance” p.9

⁸ Baines “Challenging the Boundaries, Breaking the Silences” p.3; Gibson “‘The Balsak in the Roof’ p.211

⁹ Baines “Challenging the Boundaries, Breaking the Silences” p. 5

¹⁰ Diedricks, A. *Journey Without Boundaries: The Operational Life and Experiences of a South African Special Forces Small Team Operator* (Durban: Just Done Publications, 2007), p.9; Windrich, E. “Savimbi’s War: Illusions

largely ignored in memoirs about conscription is that conscripts also served alongside the police in South Africa's townships, the length and breadth of the country, as the government sought to quell the uprisings of the Mass Democratic Movement.¹¹ At the same time that the Border War was taking place, there was a civil war under way within South Africa. This meant that the borders along the boundaries of racially segregated areas in the country became as much a focus of conscripts' experiences of combat as the Border War, particularly from the 1984 declaration of a state of emergency onwards.¹² It is for this reason that I have chosen to use the term "Border Wars" in this research.

Regardless of where and when conscripts served, most South African civilians lived in ignorance of the details of conscripts' day-to-day lives, their whereabouts and their activities. The lack of information and understanding that conscripts experienced was enforced through the requirement that every conscript sign compliance with the Official Secrets Act.¹³ This sense of being silenced has continued in post-apartheid South African society, as conscripts have been widely regarded as agents of the apartheid state whose stories belong in the past.¹⁴

Since the tenth anniversary of the 1994 democratic elections, however, burgeoning literature, visual exhibitions, public debate and public awareness have reflected on many ways in which the legacies of conscripts' experiences are both prevalent and inadequately understood. This research seeks to contribute to this growing field of work by critically reflecting on the psychosocial legacies of conscripts' experiences.

and Realities" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.196

¹¹ Nathan, L. "Troops in the Townships, 1984-1987" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1989), p.67

¹² Nathan "Troops in the Townships" p.67; Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.43

¹³ The Official Secrets Act of 1965 prohibited a signatory from speaking about anything to do with the military and its work. See Gibson *The Balsak in the Roof* p.213

¹⁴ Gear, S. "Wishing Us Away: Challenges Facing Ex-combatants in the 'New' South Africa" in *Violence and Transition Series*, Vol. 8 2002 (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002), p.9ff.

Bridging History and Psychology through Narrative

This research has been based in the disciplines of history and psychology, which has presented some challenges but also enriching advantages and possibilities.

The primary advantage has been the way in which, given the focus of this research on the “narrative character of human experience”,¹⁵ both disciplines lend themselves to narrative approaches, including insofar as they engage with oral history, biographies, autobiographies and memoirs.

Two themes are key to both history and psychology, and the narrative focus of this research. The first is the prominence and credence given to research participants’ experiences. This means research participants have direct input into the research process and significantly inform perspectives that shape the research.¹⁶ This requires that a researcher not only invite conversations about the way in which the research is done and the questions being asked, but also exercises a willingness to learn from both the subtle moments of people’s lives and the impact of bigger, sometimes violent, events on narrations of their lives and their identities.¹⁷

The second is the issue of reflexivity, which has an epistemological role within narrative-based research of this nature. As is discussed in some detail in Chapter Four, reflexivity operates at a number of levels. The researcher’s engagements with both research participants and the process of undertaking the research itself need to be characterised and guided by constant cycles of reflection. This includes analysis and adjustment of the assumptions underlying the research as well as the actual practice of the research.¹⁸

¹⁵ Carr, D. *Time, Narrative and History* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), p.169

¹⁶ Bold, C. *Using Narrative in Research* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), p.69

¹⁷ Phoenix, A. “Analysing Narrative Contexts” in Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. *Doing Narrative Research* (London: Sage, 2008), pp.71,72

¹⁸ Ibid.

Equally importantly, there is a personal component to reflexivity within qualitative research, requiring ongoing critical reflection on the researcher's own history, role and subjectivities at all stages of the research process.¹⁹

Finally, there is an emphasis on identifying the narrative patterns and temporal continuities that emerge in current narratives. These patterns and continuities can only be fully understood when reflected on in the light of the historical contexts and temporal threads²⁰ out of which the narrative patterns being considered emerge.

The primary challenge in negotiating both historical and psychological research has been the task of bridging historiographical rigour and psychologically appropriate methodological frameworks.

My theoretical bridge has been the fact that this research aims to reflect the discursive resources, memory fields and temporal threads that emerge out of conscripts' narrations of stories and experiences within a particular historical period and context. The questions around which this research has developed have been fundamentally concerned with the relationships between choice-making, identity, context and history. The particular focus of these questions has been the interplay between people's personal identity-related meaning-making and their relationship with historical and contemporary contextual issues and dynamics. Given its narrative social constructionist framework, this research is therefore less concerned with historical facticity based on rules of evidence²¹ than the subject positioning and contextual social dynamics of people who were engaged in and affected by the apartheid era system of conscription.

¹⁹ Thompson, A.R. and Harper, D. "Introduction" in Thompson, A.R. and Harper, D. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Guide for Students and Practitioners* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p.6

²⁰ See Chapter Seven for discussion about the concept of temporal threads in the context of this research.

²¹ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.8

The research is therefore primarily a means of entering into current personal, social and political debates and dialogues about apartheid-era conscription into the SADF, rather than the establishment of an historical record or presenting empirical findings.

Carr claims that the vantage point of the historian is usually one where the end of the story is known; that an historian is looking back at facts and events already completed.²² While this claim is subject to contestation under any circumstances, this research in particular takes a very different view. History does indeed look back at traces of the past, but the focus is the imprints and legacies of past events that are constantly unfolding and therefore never complete. In the case of this research the story of systematic compulsory conscription itself might have ended, but it has an afterlife. Its psychological and social ramifications continue to ripple through individual's lives, families and social dynamics by means of both personal and contextual continuities. The purpose of the historiographical element in this research is therefore neither primarily cognitive nor intended to create objective representations.²³ It is rather to place the temporal elements of narratives about the legacies of conscription at the centre of the research.

One of the possibilities that basing this research in both history and psychology presents is that the relationships between the subject matter, the research participants and the researcher become part of the process of inquiry, reflection and formulation of ideas, insight and new knowledge. Central to the balancing of these relationships is managing empathy and what LaCapra would describe as "empathic unsettlement" in relationships with research participants.

In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra's book based on his research into the Holocaust (or Shoah) of the Second World War, he discusses in some detail the role and

²² Carr *Time, Narrative and History* p.171

²³ Ibid.

place of the researcher in documenting historiography that involves trauma and victimisation. While this research does not involve systematic violence or atrocities perpetrated on anything like the scale of the Shoah, his articulation of the consciousness and reflexivity of an historian writing about violence and trauma does have relevance for this research.

LaCapra writes about the need to comprehend the way in which understanding an historiographical account and context characterised by violence and trauma “involves affect in both the observed and the observer.”²⁴ According to LaCapra, a researcher’s responsiveness to others’ experiences of possible trauma should preferably involve “empathic unsettlement” rather than appropriation of research participants’ experiences. He acknowledges that allowing oneself to be disturbed and unsettled in this way “poses a barrier to closure in discourse and places in jeopardy harmonising or spiritually uplifting accounts ... from which we attempt to derive reassurance or a benefit.”²⁵ This potentially poses significant challenges for a researcher because of how disorientating this empathic unsettlement can be, and the way it affects what the researcher is listening for. It is particularly challenging when a researcher’s capacity to listen compassionately is affected by this empathic unsettlement, because the researcher’s emotional withdrawal will more than likely catalyse a similar withdrawal on the part of the research participant. But it can also present possibilities for new understandings, awareness and critical thought about avoiding inappropriate dissociation or objectification of research participants. Instead, the need for reflexivity and awareness about empathic unsettlement highlight the need to be “cognitively and ethically responsible” in addressing utopian aspirations in the research being undertaken.²⁶

These levels of awareness described by LaCapra resonate strongly with the narrative-based approaches that have formed a bridge between the historical and psychological focus areas

²⁴ LaCapra, D. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p.41

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp.41,42

²⁶ *Ibid.* p.42

of this research. Narrative-based researchers such as Gready and Andrews also highlight the need for self-awareness and reflexivity in how one listens to people's accounts and what one wants to hear.²⁷

My awareness of the need to be conscious of my own story, subject positioning and role in this research has been both difficult and enriching. There have been moments of inspiration, empathic unsettlement in the light of conscripts' narratives, and experiences of intense grief. Coming to terms with the complexity of this research has required a rigorous commitment to listening and reflecting as ethically and rigorously as possible on what I have heard and experienced. The following section of this chapter will provide some background to this process by describing three key moments in my process of coming to terms with this research.

Studying War: A Woman Researcher's Journey

Story One: How this research began

The journey of this research began on 19 November 2004²⁸ with a memorable conversation.

I had been asked to speak about post-apartheid racial reconciliation at a farmers' association meeting almost three hours' drive inland from Grahamstown. During the course of my brief input at the meeting, I alluded to the fact that adjusting to post-apartheid South Africa must have been a significant challenge for men who had been conscripted into the SADF. A burly farmer leapt to his feet, waved a finger at me and declared that he and I needed to talk. I agreed to speak to him once the meeting was over, not without some trepidation. (As a student I had been a member of the End Conscription Campaign and encouraged young men in church youth groups to consider becoming conscientious

²⁷ Gready, P. "The Public Life of Narratives: Ethics, Politics, Methods" in Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. *Doing Narrative Research* (London: Sage, 2008), p.141; Andrews, M. "Narrative Research" in Seale, C., Silverman, D., Gubrium, J. and Gobo, G. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2004), p.15

²⁸ The Spirals Trust 2004/5 Annual Report p.11

objectors rather than serving in the SADF – my arms still remember the firm grip of some church elders as we were frog-marched off the church premises. Those memories flitted through my mind as I observed the farmer’s body language during the remainder of the meeting.)

No sooner had the meeting come to a conclusion than the farmer came striding towards me and started to talk. What ensued was a remarkable outpouring of personal memories and ideological struggles on his part. As I listened, I came to realise that this man was haunted by what had happened to him in the course of obeying his government’s compulsory summons to serve in the military. He remembered the faces of men he had killed, and yet still called them *kaffirs*.²⁹ He tried to suggest that he had moved on from those times, but also expressed fear about the possibility of being prosecuted by the ANC-led government for what he had done in Namibia and Angola as a soldier.³⁰ Most surprising of all, he left the meeting saying how good it had been to talk.

I remember very little of the scenery I drove through as I travelled home the next day. As someone who had worked extensively to support nonviolence in the political and social transitions to democracy in South Africa, I was stunned and incredulous at how I had inadvertently colluded with rendering the experiences of conscripts invisible. I resolved that day to find a way to address this oversight. This thesis is a result of that resolution.

“Scribbling the Cat”: A Woman Writing About War

In the early stages of exploring this area of research I came across Alexandra Fuller’s memoir *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier*.³¹ It is a partially fictionalised account of

²⁹ *Kaffir* is a derogatory term for a black person. www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kaffir (accessed on 12 September 2011)

³⁰ His concern about prosecution is unlikely to have proven valid. As far as I can establish, there is no precedent in South African legal history of a soldier being prosecuted for acting under orders. Additionally, it is my view that there would be very little political will on the part of the ANC-led South African government to carry out any such prosecutions.

³¹ Fuller, A. *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier* (New York: Picador, 2004)

time she spent with an ex-Rhodesian conscript many years after Zimbabwe had gained its independence.

A brief statement towards the end of the book struck me the first time I read it, and has remained significant for me in the years since:

Those of us who grow in war are like clay pots fired in an oven that is over-hot. Confusingly shaped like the rest of humanity, we nevertheless contain fatal cracks that we spend the rest of our lives itching to fill.³²

The imagery in this description is visceral and emotional, evoking both the intensity of war and its lasting legacies. The use of the word “us” was what struck me the most the first time I read it. Fuller includes herself, a woman who was never involved in military training or combat, as someone who has “grown” in war and had to face its enduring consequences. This tension of being part of a particular history but also always as a partial outsider captures a tension I have lived with both in my own experience of living through the apartheid era wars and in my journey with this research.

Over the five years that I have been working on this research, I have interviewed many conscripts, had countless conversations at social events, given talks, papers and lectures about my work and founded the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project based in the Rhodes University History Department. These have been years of ongoing learning, turmoil, privilege, insight and vicarious traumatising; ones I would be willing to experience all over again because of how much they have changed and humbled me. Through it all I struggled to make sense of my place in this work, as someone who was part of the social system that gave rise to conscription but who was positioned by the system in such a way that I could never understand the phenomenology – what it was *like* – of being a conscript in the apartheid military. As will be described in the next section of this chapter it was only as I entered the final year of my PhD that a moment of insight came which helped me to move towards completing this thesis.

³² Fuller *Scribbling the Cat* p.250

Story Two: How the Research Came Together

It was late summer in Namibia, 2013. I had been travelling with colleagues, interviewing people who had been involved with SWAPO in one way or another during the Border Wars. We had travelled as far west as Outapi, staying in an old SADF weapons bunker that had been converted into a guesthouse.

The day before my moment of epiphany, we had interviewed someone who was a resident in the Cassinga camp at the time that the SADF launched its controversial attack in 1978.³³ The stories of that attack ringing in my ears, I drove along the famous road to Santa Clara (the main route into Angola from Namibia) that so many conscripts had alluded to in interviews and conversations during the course of this research. Just before the Angolan border, I turned right and headed east along the newly tarred road that runs parallel to the Namibia-Angolan border. While I saw stunning forests, herds of grazing cattle and children playing on the roadside, I was well aware that this same area had been a war zone just a few decades before. It was hard to imagine.

The distances were greater than I expected, so I ended up driving the last few hours in the dark. This meant I witnessed the dramatic effect of a full moon in the Namibian bush, and recalled conscripts' descriptions of the uneasiness of full moon nights because that was when SWAPO was most likely to attack. When I finally got to Rundu, I spent the night at a guesthouse on the Kavango River – another name and geographical landmark which rang through so many conscripts' accounts that I had listened to over the years.

³³ See Williams, D. *On the Border: The White South Africa Military Experience 1965-1990* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2008), pp.77-83; Baines, G. *The Battle for Cassinga: Conflicting Narratives and Contested Meanings* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2007). There has also been substantial post-graduate research on Cassinga, including McGill Alexander at UNISA (Alexander, M. *The Cassinga Raid* Masters thesis, University of South Africa, 2003), Christian Williams at the University of the Western Cape and the University of Michigan (Williams, C. *Exile History: An Ethnography of the SWAPO Camps and the Namibian Nation* Doctoral Thesis, University of Michigan, 2009) and Vilho Shigwedha at the University of the Western Cape (Shigwedha, V. *Enduring Suffering: The Cassinga Massacre of Namibian Exiles in 1978 and the Conflicts Between Survivors' Memories and Testimonies* Doctoral Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2011)

The next morning I went to the old Rundu SADF base, now mostly abandoned except for the airstrip which is used as a civilian airport. My intention was to pay homage to a friend's brother who had left from that base on 21 May 1980 to participate in the 32 Battalion attack on Savate,³⁴ and lost his life in gruesome circumstances that day. I stood at the fence that ran some distance from the edge of the runway, trying to imagine the mood and feel of the place when the SADF was there. The rather derelict atmosphere of the place made it hard to get a sense what it was like when it was buzzing with vehicles, men in their "nutria browns" and the sounds and rhythms of military life; what it must have been like as a conscript to participate in the occupation of this wild and beautiful landscape.

That was when the realisation came: I couldn't. Being in Namibia gave me a visceral sense of the landscape, people, smells and rhythms of Namibia and this mythical place called the "Operational Zone" that had been part of the lexicon of my earliest memories. But the phenomenology of the experiences of military life in the SADF was not mine to know or place at the forefront of my research.

I turned back to the car, reaching for a tissue to mop up the tearful consequences of the emotions of my friend's family's traumatic loss and my own sense of lostness in my research. A movement caught my eye and I noticed a man lounging on a bench attached to a table outside the airport building. I had a sense that he had been watching me for a while. He waved in greeting and acknowledgement, with warmth and compassion. I waved back and smiled to him through my tears. I had the sense that I was neither the first (nor would I be the last) South African on a pilgrimage to that place to be greeted in this way. Somehow, it helped to have a compassionate witness.

³⁴ A comprehensive description of this attack, known as Operation Tiro-Tiro, can be found in Piet Nortje's *The Terrible Ones: A Complete History of 32 Battalion* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2012), pp.493-539

In the days and weeks of reflection that followed my trip to Namibia, I came to realise that – just like the man at the Rundu airport – my role in this research was also to be a witness. What narrative therapeutic theory would call an “outside” witness.³⁵ And, in being an outside witness, that I could play a role in what Jonathan Shay and Judith Herman have described as the necessary communalisation of the trauma of violence and war.³⁶

Framing and Communalising Trauma

The question of the extent and nature of traumatic stress that conscripts might have experienced is an area of some contestation.

While the narratives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and what might be called South African exceptionalism would posit that the levels of post-traumatic and ongoing traumatic stress in South Africa are extremely high, Kaminer and Eagle’s research suggests otherwise. In their seminal summation of trauma related research in South Africa, they claim that levels of traumatic stress in South Africa are on a par with other similar contexts around the world.³⁷ Much of the literature about Vietnam veterans that I have drawn on in this research speaks specifically about the trauma of combat, making any attempt at equating Vietnam veterans and SADF conscripts’ experiences of trauma both helpful but also problematic.³⁸ However, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three,

³⁵ I first came across this term through Kathy Weingarten’s work: Weingarten, K. “Witnessing, Wonder and Hope” *Family Process* Vol.39 No.4 Winter 2000. Thanks to Dr Trudy Meehan for helping me explore this idea further.

³⁶ Shay, J. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Unfolding of Character* (New York: Atheneum, 1994), p.40; Herman, J. *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora 1997, 2001), pp.70,71

³⁷ Kaminer, D. and Eagle, G. *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010)

³⁸ Boudreau, T. *Unpacking Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2008); Herman *Trauma and Recovery*; Marlantes, K. *What it is like to go to War* (London: Corvus, 2012); Shay *Achilles in Vietnam*; Shay, J. *Odysseus in America* (New York: Scribner, 2002); Tick, E. *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation’s Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 2005)

theories about moral injury that have emerged out of research with veterans have proven helpful in addressing some of the discrepancies between these two contexts.³⁹

Positioning this research with regard to the psychological effects of violence and trauma is therefore a delicate task. I have chosen to assume that every research participant has potentially had experiences that could have led to them being traumatised in some way. I have not differentiated between the trauma of military training, possible combat experience or even events that took place in civilian life. My primary focus has been shifting the memory fields regarding the potentially traumatising effects of the systematic violence of the apartheid system – for conscripts primarily, and by extension South African society at large. The language of trauma is both helpful and relevant in making sense of conscripts' narrations because of the texture and reference points it brings to narrations of the legacies of violence, rather than because it is a specific theoretical lens or frame of analysis that I have drawn on.

In shifting the post-apartheid memory fields within which conscription is narrated, it is my hope that this research can be a way of communalising the trauma of the apartheid military system. The term “communalisation of trauma” draws on the work of American psychiatrist Jonathan Shay⁴⁰ with Vietnam veterans and American psychologist Judith Herman with both military veterans and survivors of sexual abuse.⁴¹

Communalising the trauma of conscription into the SADF includes recognising that conscription was a social system, not only a military system. The social nature of conscription played a role in shaping every phase of compulsory military service for white men during the apartheid era. This included the preparation and indoctrination of young men from their early childhood, their period of actual military service as well as the legacies

³⁹ Shay *Achilles in Vietnam*, Boudreau *Unpacking Inferno*, Litz, B., Stein, N., Delaney, E. Lebowitz, L., Nash, W.P., Silva, C. Maguen, S. “Moral injury and moral repair in war veterans: A preliminary model and intervention strategy” in *Clinical Psychology Review* Volume 29, Issue 8, December 2009, 695–706

⁴⁰ Shay *Achilles in Vietnam* pp.39ff. and 66ff.

⁴¹ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.70 and p.242

and lasting effects of military service in their own lives, those of their families and in their communities.

Communalising the trauma of this system requires, firstly, recognising and acknowledging the ways in which white South African society as a whole participated in and enabled the system of conscription. Secondly, it requires a level of compassionate and unconditional listening that enables conscripts to communicate on their own terms what happened during their time in the military. Finally, it requires a process of acknowledging the long-term effects of conscription both on conscripts' own lives and on South Africa society as a whole. At different stages, this research has sought to realise each of these three aspects of the communalisation of trauma.

Positioning this Research in its Field

When considered in relation to other work that has been done in similar fields, this research is best described as incremental in that it builds on work that has been done before and represents something of a “next generation” of research.

What is new about this research is both the methodology and the focus. It is the first research of this nature to use narrative-based approaches to bridge social history and social psychology in relation to conscription. It is also the first piece of research to explore both continuities and shifts in conscripts' experiences and the social systems of which these experiences form a part, from the time that men were conscripted to the present day.

As will be discussed further in Chapter Five, the pioneers of the field of work that this research belongs to would be Jackie Cock and Laurie Nathan. *War and Society*, published in 1989, was the first collection of research papers to explore both the historiography of the SADF and the psychosocial elements of both conscription and the militarisation of South

African society.⁴² Cock went on to do extensive research into militarism and masculinities.⁴³ In later years Catherine Draper interviewed conscripts for her Psychology Honours long essay,⁴⁴ Sasha Gear of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation did extensive research on the psychosocial legacies of apartheid era conflicts for ex-combatants from different military structures.⁴⁵ Karen Batley later published an essay and a collection of poems by conscripts.⁴⁶

While a number of historians and ex-SADF officers wrote military histories about the SADF, Gary Baines of the Rhodes University History Department has done pioneering work over the last decade in providing a social history perspective on both the activities of the SADF and the ongoing aftereffects of conscription in post-apartheid South Africa. This culminated in the publication in 2008 of *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts*, a volume of collected works that he co-edited with Peter Vale. The publication consisted of historical, political, literary, artistic, psychological and gender-based analyses of the apartheid era conflicts and their legacies.⁴⁷

More recently, Diana Gibson from the University of the Western Cape has conducted interviews with SADF conscripts who experienced combat, which culminated in the

⁴² Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989)

⁴³ Cock and Nathan *War and Society*; Cock, J. "Keeping the Fires Burning: Militarisation and the Politics of Gender in South Africa" *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 45/46, *Militarism, Warlords & the Problems of Democracy* (1989), pp. 50-64; Cock, J. *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991); Cock, J. *Women, the Military and Militarisation: Some Questions Raised by the South African Case* (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 1992); Cock, J. "The Feminist Challenge to Militarism" *Agenda No.36 No to Violence* (1997), pp.27-39; Cock, J. "Gun Violence and Masculinity in Contemporary South Africa" in R. Morrell (ed.) *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001)

⁴⁴ Draper, C. *Psychological Experiences of Military Conscriptation in South Africa during the 1970's and 1980's* Psychology Honours paper, University of Cape Town, 1999

⁴⁵ Gear, S. "'Now that the War is Over' Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence: A literature review" in *Violence and Transition Series* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002); Gear "Wishing Us Away"

⁴⁶ Batley, K. (ed.) *A Secret Burden: Memories of the Border War by South African Soldiers who fought in it* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2007)

⁴⁷ Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008)

publication of a chapter in Kapteijns and Richters' edited volume *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts*.⁴⁸

While these and other works will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, the intention of this overview is to provide a sense of the foundation on which this research builds. In shifting this emerging field of research forward, my intention is to carve new spaces for future work in terms of methodology, focus and the contemporaneity of the discussion. The primary contributions this research makes in this regard are synthesising historiographical and psychological theory using a narrative-based framing of the legacies of conscription, which has led to the articulation of notions of narrative repair and narrative reinforcement. The intended outcome of these theoretical framings (rather than empirical findings) thus also communalise the legacies of conscripts' experiences through highlighting the ways in which conscription was a social and political system, in addition to being a military system.

The following section will provide a brief outline of the process and theoretical framing of this research.

The Theoretical Framework for this Research

As the title suggests, this research has used a synthetic narrative-discursive approach in working with a number of texts that enable an exploration of the psychosocial legacies of conscription into the SADF.

This synthetic narrative-discursive approach was developed by Stephanie Taylor, who argues that individuals' narrations of experience are simultaneously relational and social.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Gibson, D. "The *Balsak* in the Roof': Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts" in Kapteijns, L. and Richters, A. (eds.) *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010)

⁴⁹ Billig, M. *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) cited in Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk", p.26

Both biographical talk and the identities at work within that biographical talk take place within a conversation or interview. In this relational context biographical talk is simultaneously and reciprocally shaping and shaped by “social and cultural frameworks of interpretation.”⁵⁰ Biographical talk therefore includes the relational, social and cultural meanings and assumptions that come from a speaker’s (or writer’s) society and culture.

Taylor also argues that ideas and associations within narrations of experience make sense because they draw on established interconnections. This is the basis for Taylor’s idea of discursive resources in narrative work – an idea that draws on Potter and Wetherell’s interpretative repertoires⁵¹ and Bruner’s canonical narratives.⁵²

Constraints operate on biographical talk, in that there is an onus to be coherent in narratives and identity work, and to conform to what is generally recognised and expected. This leads to another significant concept in Taylor’s work – the idea that unexpected associations or connections, and disruptions in the relationships within and between discursive resources and spoken (or written) biographical talk, become a source of “trouble”.⁵³

What Taylor’s⁵⁴ synthetic approach does is to allow space for acknowledgement of both the way in which a person’s identity narratives are positioned by others and a person’s social context while also actively being positioned by the person themselves. In this discursive

⁵⁰ Mishler, E.G. (1999) *Storylines: Craftartists' Narratives of Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.18 cited in Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk”, p.26

⁵¹ Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. *Discourse and Social Psychology* (London: Sage, 1987) cited in Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk”, p.26

⁵² Bruner, J. “Life as Narrative.” *Social Research* 54: 11-32, 1987 cited in Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk”, p.26

⁵³ Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk”, p.26

⁵⁴ Taylor credits Wetherell as being partially responsible for the development of this approach to narrative. However, as will be seen in the references used in this section, Taylor has developed these ideas far beyond the initial conceptual frameworks she and Wetherell formulated.

narrative framework identities are simultaneously “conferred and actively claimed and contested.”⁵⁵

This research has drawn on Taylor’s work as a bridging mechanism in understanding three different elements of biographical talk that need to be held in tension in this research. The first is the phenomenological dimensions of biographical talk, which is the focus of Michele Crossley’s writing.⁵⁶ The second is the political nature and context of biographical talk, which is the focus of Molly Andrews’ writing.⁵⁷ The third is the social memory spaces within which biographical talk is spoken or silenced, which is the focus of Edna Lomsky-Feder’s writing.⁵⁸

I have also used Taylor’s narrative-discursive approach to draw some of my early articulations of this research into the thesis. I am referring in particular to my use of the term “discursive *laagers*”.⁵⁹ This draws on the notion of a closed memory field that acts as a narrative mechanism for buttressing historical social and identity constructs. It is used as a way of linking the apartheid era use of the word *laager* with the narrative-discursive terrain of post-apartheid South Africa.

As these aspects of narratives are explored over time, the research concludes by reflecting on the temporal threads that shape the narrative terrain and hold the other elements of stories and narratives in place both historically and socially.

A Brief Outline of the Process of the Research

The process of the research has consisted of 22 semi-structured interviews with conscripts, and a further seven interviews with people who had knowledge or experience relevant to

⁵⁵ Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk”, p.25

⁵⁶ See Chapter Two for further discussion about Crossley’s work.

⁵⁷ See Chapter Two for further discussion about Andrews’ work.

⁵⁸ See Chapter Three for further discussion about Lomsky-Feder’s work.

⁵⁹ See Edlmann, T. “Division in the (Inner) Ranks: The Psychosocial Legacies of the Border Wars” *South African Historical Journal* Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2012, 256-272

this research. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, transcripts of these interviews were analysed using a synthetic narrative-discursive approach.

The interviews conducted specifically for this research were supplemented by 32 transcripts of interviews conducted by Michael Cadman with people involved in the SADF, under the auspices of the Missing Voices Project at the University of Witwatersrand's Historical Papers Archive. A range of other texts, including memoirs, video documentaries, photographic exhibitions and newspaper articles were also incorporated into the synthetic narrative-discursive analysis used in this research.

The reflexive ethos of this research was significantly enriched by a number of support and consultative networks at Rhodes University.

The first is the South African-Netherlands Project for Alternative Development (SANPAD)-funded South African War Veterans' Project (SAWVP), led by Professor Gary Baines. The SAWVP contributed funding towards this research and held a series of workshops and seminars in its early stages, during which formative discussions and formulations of ideas took place.

The second is the Legacies of Apartheid Wars (LAWs) Project, of which I was the founding Director. A number of events, opportunities to travel and significant networking opportunities occurred through the LAWs Project during the final stages of this research, all of which contributed to the development of key ideas in this research. Finally, both the History and Psychology Departments at Rhodes University hosted seminars where aspects of this research were presented.

Goals of the Research

The overall aim of this research has been to use qualitative, narrative-based approaches in exploring the psychosocial legacies of conscription into the SADF.

The specific goals of the research are:

- To investigate the extent to which conscripts' experiences have influenced their narratives of identity in post-apartheid South Africa, with particular attention paid to how conscripts have dealt with the multiple (possibly conflicting?) identities of being participants in the apartheid regime's "total strategy" and citizens in an emerging democracy in the post-1994 context.
- To explore the dialectics between conscripts personal narrations and contextual dynamics in both the apartheid era and the post-apartheid era.
- To explore the discursive resources, memory fields and temporal threads that have informed narrations of conscription-related identities and facilitated negotiations of post-apartheid narrative terrains.

A Note on the Structure of the Thesis

The first three chapters of the thesis provide an historiographical and theoretical context for the chapters that come later.

Chapter One provides an overview of the period of conscription; the political system and personalities that drove the increasing militarisation of South Africa during this time, and the social systems that both supported and challenged conscription.

Chapter Two provides an outline of the ways in which narrative-based theories have framed this research, particularly the work of Crossley, Andrews and Taylor. Whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat are presented as examples of Taylor's notion of discursive resources within conscripts' accounts of their experiences.

Chapter Three explores theoretical frameworks for the way in which conscripts narrate memories of violence and trauma. Edna Lomsky-Feder's concept of memory fields is used as a narrative framework within which to place theoretical constructions of trauma. The final section of the chapter weaves narrative approaches into the theorisation of violence and war trauma.

Chapter Four provides an outline of the process and praxis of this research.

Chapter Five gives an overview of literature about conscription, and discusses some memoirs, video documentaries, photographic exhibitions and blog sites in relation to key narrative-based theoretical frameworks. These include the discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat, the memory fields within which they operate, and how temporal threads function within these texts.

Chapter Six discusses the way post-apartheid memory fields have enabled and silenced narrations of the legacies of conscription. Three case studies provide the basis for this discussion.

Chapter Seven discusses the way in which conscripts' personal narrations of their experiences require negotiating complex and convoluted narrative terrain. Interviews with research participants form the basis for an analysis and discussion of the ways in which the terrain defined by a period of social transition is negotiated through narrative reinforcement and narrative repair.

The concluding chapter summarises the findings and discussion of the research, and provides some frameworks for possible future work.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an historical background to this research and given an overview of the ethos, methodological frameworks and structure of the thesis as a whole. The following chapter will provide an overview of the historical context of the research, with a particular focus on conscription as not only a military system, but a political, ideological and social system as well.

CHAPTER ONE

ACCOUNTING FOR CONSCRIPTION AS A MILITARY, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEM IN APARTHEID-ERA SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a sense of the historical period and contextual dynamics during the time that compulsory conscription of white men into the SADF was in place. It is AN history rather than THE history of the period,⁶⁰ intended to provide a combination of historical detail and a sense of the historical context out of which conscripts' accounts emerge.

As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, wherever in the world it occurs, conscription needs to be understood as a social system rather than a brief phase of service in a young person's life.⁶¹ In a context where conscription is in place, there is socialisation about the "need" for conscription from the earliest stages of children's lives. This is followed by actual experiences of conscription. Once their military service is complete, conscripts (and the rest of their society) interpret their experiences through how the legacies of conscription are narrated. This chapter will focus primarily on the first two of the three social aspects of conscription into the SADF. The third will be the focus of the rest of the thesis.

Following discussion about how conscription functions as a social system, this chapter will provide some historical background to the development of systems of conscription internationally. This is followed by an outline and analysis of the ways in which conscription was implemented by the National Party government and the SADF. Further analysis of this history will then focus on men in leadership in the National Party and the SADF who played

⁶⁰ Conway, D. *Masculinities, Militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign: War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), p.8

⁶¹ See next section of this chapter for references to Kwon and Seegers' work in this regard.

key roles in shaping both the system of conscription and the ideological and socio-cultural buttresses that were required to sustain this system. The final section of this chapter reflects on the contextual and social dynamics that shaped and informed conscripts' experiences at the time, and their subsequent accounts of these experiences.

Conscription as a Social Phenomenon

In outlining any history of conscription, it is necessary to recognise that conscription is more than a person's period of service in the military. In her work on conscription in contemporary South Korea, Insook Kwon argues that an analysis of conscription as a social phenomenon should be divided into three phases: pre-conscription socialisation, military service and post-conscription interpretation of that military experience.⁶² Professor Annette Seegers of the Department of Political Science, University of Cape Town, made a similar point at the TRC's Special Hearing on Conscription⁶³ held in Cape Town on 23 July 1997.⁶⁴

Seegers urged the TRC to recognise the "socially pervasive influence" of national service in the SADF. In line with Kwon's theory, she highlighted parents' attitudes, the school system (especially the ways in which cadets at schools were part of the preparation of young men to serve in the military) and the roles of employers in co-operating with the system of conscription as key areas of pre-conscription socialisation. In her second point, again consistent with Kwon's three phases, Seegers listed men's experiences while in the SADF as warranting particular focus and understanding. Her final point, in line with Kwon's post-conscription phase, was that she felt SADF conscripts tended towards cynicism about public

⁶² Kwon, I. "A Feminist Exploration of Military Conscription: The Gendering of the Connections Between Nationalism, Militarism and Citizenship in South Korea" *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 3:1, 26-54, 2001, p.42

⁶³ The TRC's Special Hearing on Conscription will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

⁶⁴ The transcript of this hearing can be found on www.justice.gov.za/trc/special/conscrip/conscr01 (accessed 5 January 2013)

institutions after their military service and that conscription precipitated greater solidarity between Afrikaans and English-speaking people.⁶⁵

As stated earlier, the focus of this chapter is the first two of Kwon's and Seegers' identified phases, viz. making sense of the social system that gave rise to and supported conscription, as well as providing a sense of what serving in the SADF comprised. The majority of the remaining chapters in this thesis will focus on the third phase of conscription as a social system, by outlining the discursive resources, memory fields and temporal continuities at work in conscripts' accounts and interpretations of their experiences.

A Background to Conscription

Conscription has existed since ancient times as a system of enrolling citizens (usually men) for the purpose of some kind of public service (usually military).⁶⁶ The French Revolution (1789-1799) is cited as the time during which the form of conscription later used by the South African government first began. Other well-known examples include Prussia-Germany in the nineteenth century, most countries involved in both World Wars⁶⁷ and Israel from the time of its establishment as a nation in 1948.⁶⁸ The Draft System during the Vietnam War in the United States of America is another form of conscription which has resonance with the South African context, as successive governments used the Selective Service Act, which had been in place at times of war since 1917, as the basis for a ballot-type system of compulsory military service.⁶⁹ The draft subsequently became universal but there were always escape clauses for sons of the elite.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ TRC Report Vol.4 Ch.8, p.225. Seeger's point about the relationships between English and Afrikaans people is debatable, and – in my view – dependent on context rather than being a wide-ranging reality. See discussion on whiteness as a discursive resource in Chapter Two for more detail on my analysis of this issue.

⁶⁶ Parkinson, R. *The Encyclopaedia of Modern War* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p.45

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.45

⁶⁸ Ben-Eliezer, U. "Is a Military Coup Possible in Israel? Israel and French-Algeria in Comparative Historical-Sociological Perspective", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jun., 1998), pp. 311-349

⁶⁹ Parkinson *Encyclopaedia of Modern War* p.46

⁷⁰ Wilson, T.C. "Vietnam-Era Military Service: A Test of the Class-Bias Thesis" *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.21, No.3, Spring 1995, 461-471, p.467

Conscription and colonialism have had a long and close relationship, a pertinent example being that citizens throughout Africa (and on other continents) were conscripted by colonial powers to fight in both World War I and World War II,⁷¹ although the South African government voted narrowly against complying with this – relying rather on men volunteering to serve.⁷² The fact that South African men fought for the Allies in both World Wars has played a significant role in shaping understandings of the duty to undertake military service as a discursive resource for generations of white South Africans. This was in addition to many men in the generation before World War I also being caught up in the South African War (also known as the Second Anglo-Boer War),⁷³ on one side or the other.⁷⁴

Part of the historical influence and social significance of conscription into the SADF is that it perpetuated a colonial and racially determined social system,⁷⁵ with very particular understandings of duty, service and identity for white South African men. In acting as protectors of white culture and privilege, conscripts were called on by the apartheid state both to perpetuate many of the racially exclusive social norms established during the colonial era and to participate in preventing any genuine or meaningful self-determination for black South Africans.⁷⁶ This claim is subject to (often vehement) contestation. Much of the literature and many of the political and military leaders of the time, not to mention several of the participants in this research, assert that the primary objective of the SADF's

⁷¹ Rice, L. "African Conscripts/European Conflicts: Race, Memory, and the Lessons of War", *Cultural Critique*, No. 45 (Spring, 2000), 109-149, p.111; Echenberg, M. *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books and London: James Currey Ltd, 1991); Grundy, K. *Soldiers Without Politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983)

⁷² Rauch, J. "War and Resistance" in Cawthra, G., Kraak, G. and O'Sullivan, G. (eds.) *War and Resistance: Southern African Reports* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), p.1

⁷³ See www.sahistory.org.za/south-africa-1652-1806/south-african-war-1899-1902-second-anglo-boer-war for clarification on the use of these respective terms for this period of history. (accessed 1 December 2013)

⁷⁴ It is important to acknowledge that men and women of all races were caught up in and affected by all these wars in various ways. The sense of a military lineage for white men is being highlighted here because of its direct bearing on the focus of this research.

⁷⁵ Craig, D. "'Total Justification': Ideological Manipulation and South Africa's Border War" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.57

⁷⁶ Cock, J. *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.66

strategies and activities in the period covered by this research were aimed at supporting the West and its allies in Cold War related efforts to resist communist domination in Africa.⁷⁷ There is no doubt that the Cold War was a significant factor in the Southern African conflicts of the late twentieth century. However, the apartheid state managed to conflate and exploit the fact that the country was protecting its own interests through its particular military agendas while simultaneously supporting America and its allies in the Cold War dynamics playing out in sub-Saharan Africa at the time.⁷⁸ The effectiveness of the apartheid state's indoctrination can be seen in the intensity of current ongoing arguments and contestations in South African society regarding the Border Wars (which will be discussed in Chapter Six). The impunity⁷⁹ inherent in Dutch, British and apartheid colonialism, and the temporal continuities supporting the ideological frameworks that were used to justify the implementation of the social system of conscription, will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

“Total Onslaught, Total Strategy”

The apartheid state's efforts to ensure the perpetuation of white political power and privilege were achieved through the development of what it called a “total strategy”. This was an idea first articulated by the Ministry of Defence in 1966 that was put in place in response to a perceived “total onslaught”, allegedly primarily from communism. It was later actualised in the Defence White Papers of 1973 and 1977.⁸⁰ The “total strategy” was a wide-ranging and comprehensive campaign in which all aspects of civil and military life fell under

⁷⁷ See Chapter Three for more on the legacies of this contestation.

⁷⁸ Popescu, M. “Mirrorings: Communists, Capitalists and Voortrekkers of the Cold War” in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.53

⁷⁹ The use of the term impunity will be defined in more detail in Chapter Seven. For the purposes of this research, the term is not used with a litigious or primarily human rights focus. The emphasis is more on a personal and group-based assumption of the power to act in one's own interests without regard for the consequences – or for the perspectives and needs of other people and groups who might have different views.

⁸⁰ Hamann, H. *Days of the Generals: The untold story of South Africa's apartheid-era military generals* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2001), p.50; Scholtz, L. *The SADF in the Border War 1966-1989* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2013), p.36

the control and auspices of the state in its social, economic, political and military efforts to resist various (and conflated) perceived threats.⁸¹

Conscription formed an integral part of this strategy and occurred in response to significant political and military developments in Southern Africa during the previous decade. The 1960s had seen two neighbouring states become engaged in liberation struggles against Portuguese colonial government, viz. Angola (by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Angola or MPLA)⁸² and Mozambique (by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique or FRELIMO).⁸³ Rhodesia, whose white minority government had unilaterally declared independence from Britain, was facing armed resistance from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).⁸⁴ This, combined with the fact that the South African Police Force (SAP) was increasingly engaged in combating guerrilla activity by the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) in the South African protectorate of South West Africa,⁸⁵ left the Nationalist government in South Africa fearful that white minority rule could be overpowered by liberation groupings in neighbouring states, especially Namibia, resulting in a collapse of the apartheid system in South Africa. Legislation was therefore passed in 1967 to replace the previous ballot system with compulsory military conscription for all white male citizens to ensure the continuation of white minority rule in South Africa and its neighbouring states, in cooperation with Portuguese and Rhodesian military forces.⁸⁶

The South African government was therefore not alone in its efforts to use military and security systems to bolster a system based on political dominance at the expense of

⁸¹ Craig "Total Justification" p.58

⁸² Grest, J. "The South African Defence Force in Angola" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.116ff.

⁸³ Davies, R. "The SADF's covert war against Mozambique" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.103ff.

⁸⁴ Rauch "War and Resistance", p.2

⁸⁵ Weaver, T. "The South African Defence Force in Namibia" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.90ff.

⁸⁶ Rauch "War and Resistance" p.3

democracy. It is one of the primary reasons parallels are often drawn between SADF and Rhodesian conscripts' experiences.⁸⁷

1968-1993: An Overview of Compulsory Conscription into the SADF

The scope and nature of conscription into the SADF shifted and changed during the 25 years of its existence. Initially, from 1968, conscription consisted of nine months of national service for all white⁸⁸ males between the ages of 17 and 65 years.⁸⁹ In 1972, this national service or conscription was increased from nine months to one year. In addition, conscripts were expected to serve 19 days annually for five years as part of the citizen force.⁹⁰ By mid-1974, control of northern Namibia⁹¹ was handed over to the SADF by the South African Police (SAP),⁹² and in 1975 the SADF invaded Angola.⁹³ These pressures resulted in the state increasing conscription to two years in 1977, with an additional 30-day annual call-up for a further eight years (240 days in all, excluding operational duty).⁹⁴ This was later increased to 720 days over a period of 12 years.⁹⁵ In 1982, conscription was further extended to (white) foreigners resident in South Africa.⁹⁶ In 1984 conscripts were deployed in townships in South Africa.⁹⁷ Although this is not indicated in the literature, participants in this research have indicated that the period of conscription was decreased to 18 months in 1989. By

⁸⁷ Oral history research has recently been conducted with conscripts in the Rhodesian army. The website for this project is: www1.uwe.ac.uk/cahe/research/rhodesianforcesoralhistory (accessed 30 November 2009)

⁸⁸ See discussion on race in the Introduction and Chapter Two for clarification regarding the use of this term.

⁸⁹ Baines, G "Site of struggle: the Freedom Park Fracas and the divisive legacy of South Africa's Border War/Liberation Struggle" *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* Vol. 35, No. 2, September 2009, 330–344, p.330

⁹⁰ Draper, C. *Psychological Experiences of Military Conscription in South Africa during the 1970's and 1980's* Psychology Honours paper, University of Cape Town, 1999, p.2

⁹¹ South West Africa became a South African protectorate (in effect, a fifth province) in 1919 under a mandate from the League of Nations after World War I. It was only when South Africa withdrew in 1989 that the Republic of Namibia gained its independence and held its first democratic elections. See Hamann *Days of the Generals* pp.63ff for further detail.

⁹² Weaver "The South African Defence Force in Namibia" pp.90-102

⁹³ Ibid. p.93

⁹⁴ van Zyl, M., de Gruchy, J., Lapinsky, S., Lewin, S. and Reid, G. *The Aversion Project: Human rights abuses of gays and lesbians in the South African Defence Force by health workers during the apartheid era* (Cape Town: Simply Said and Done, 1999), p.46

⁹⁵ Ibid. p.46; Draper *Psychological Experiences of Military Conscription* p. 2

⁹⁶ Rauch "War and Resistance" p.10

⁹⁷ Sandler, D. "The Psychological Experiences of white conscripts in the black townships" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.79ff.

1993, with the National Party involved in negotiations that would lead to the establishment of a constitutional democracy, the cessation of conscription was initiated by the African National Congress (ANC).⁹⁸ The legislative abolishment of conscription was completed in 1994.⁹⁹

Continuities in the System

While there may have been variances in terms of time spans and types of military service for conscripts, several issues and factors remained constant throughout this period.

In line with Seeger's point discussed earlier in this chapter, one was the regularity with which every white man received papers from the military half-way through their final year of schooling.¹⁰⁰ School authorities seem to have sometimes assisted with the administration involved in the distribution of these papers and ensured that the recipients responded on time.¹⁰¹

Part of the reason for the success with which the SADF enlisted men (with, for the most part, the support of their families) was the government's comprehensive indoctrination of the youth. This was done through control of the ideological content of the school curriculum,¹⁰² the censoring of all media and artistic endeavour in society¹⁰³ and the inculcation of a universal sense of threat to white society in Africa.¹⁰⁴ There were a number

⁹⁸ Rauch "War and Resistance" p.10

⁹⁹ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.43

¹⁰⁰ Evans, G. "Classrooms of War: The militarisation of white South African schooling" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.284

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p.281

¹⁰² Ibid. p.291

¹⁰³ Koornhof, H.E. "Works of Friction: current South African literature" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.276,277

¹⁰⁴ Posel, D. "A 'battlefield of perceptions': state discourses on political violence, 1985-1988" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.262-274

of youth and cultural programmes such as the “Veld Schools,”¹⁰⁵ school outings described by South African academic Peter Vale as:

...a rite of passage for white youths who were taken to nature camps at which the importance of environmentalism, and a romantic love of nature were drawn towards the security threat that the Russians/the Communists/Black people/Africa states were said to present to the white state. This was a kind of Rousseau meets the Russians.¹⁰⁶

Another is the Voortrekker Youth Organisation, an Afrikaner cultural organisation similar to boy scouts, which trained boys in skills and ideologies that prepared primarily Afrikaner men for conscription into the military.¹⁰⁷

In addition, many, but not all, schools used a system of cadets. This was a paramilitary structure that existed within schools, training young men with the skills and military knowledge that it was claimed would assist them when they served in the SADF, and instil in them the militarism which characterised South African society as a whole.¹⁰⁸ Thus schools, youth programmes and, to some extent, conscripts’ parents participated in what South African gender and militarism researcher Jacklyn Cock has described as the “ideological coercion” that every young white South African man was subjected to.¹⁰⁹ It needs to be highlighted that none of these systems was universally implemented, and many of them were regularly disrupted by acts of resistance by young men and their families. The social systems and agencies that buttressed the system of conscription might have been coercive for the duration of the time that conscription was in place, but neither it nor citizens’ responses to it were homogenous.

¹⁰⁵ Evans “Classrooms of War” pp.292-294

¹⁰⁶ Vale, P. “The Cold War and South Africa: Repetitions and Revisions on a Prolegomenon” in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.35

¹⁰⁷ Popescu, M. “Mirrorings: Communists, Capitalists and Voortrekkers of the Cold War” in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), pp. 42-55

¹⁰⁸ Cawthra, G. *Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa [IDAF], 1986), p.41, cited in Gear, S. “‘Now that the War is Over’ Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence: A literature review” in *Violence and Transition Series* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002), pp.82,83

¹⁰⁹ Cock *Colonels and Cadres* p.69

The second constant factor in the social system of conscription was that standard military training methods remained in place throughout the 25 years that conscription was in place. As the numerous accounts in publications such as *An Unpopular War*¹¹⁰ and *Troepie: From Call-Up to Camps*¹¹¹ attest, every conscript went through three months of basic training, after which a sifting and selection process would take place. Some would be deployed immediately, either to the border or within the country, while others were selected for training as officers, for units that required specific skills or for elite units. The elite units for which conscripts were most commonly selected were the Parachute Battalion (also known as Parabats) or the Reconnaissance Unit (also known as Recces). From the outset the training was intensely physical and very rigorous.

After the first few months of basic training, conscripts' experiences of service were more diverse – although the system they went through remained relatively unchanged from one generation of conscripts to another. The follow-up training a conscript received was significant in determining how their experience in the SADF played out, and also where they were deployed.

However, whether their experience involved being sent to the “Border”, participating in combat or being confined exclusively to camp life, another ongoing feature of conscription into the SADF was the universal boredom of being caught up in a massively bureaucratic military system. For some there were also accounts of wonderful adventures and opportunities that men had never had before in their lives. Inevitably, there were also experiences of extreme hardship and endurance, as well as experiences of combat involving levels of violence that were severely traumatising for some.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Thompson, J.H. *An Unpopular War: From Afkaf to Bosbepok – Voices of South African National Servicemen* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006)

¹¹¹ Blake, C. *Troepie: From Call-Up to Camps* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2009)

¹¹² Kaminer, D. and Eagle, G. *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), p.84. Two memoirs that capture some of the effects of these traumatising events are Holt, C. *At Thy Call we did not Falter: a frontline account of the 1988 Angolan War, as seen through the eyes of a conscripted soldier*

The physical, emotional and technical demands placed on conscripts were significant. Eugene de Kock had the following to say in his statement to the TRC, later published as a book:

In my view Swapo (sic), despite inferior weaponry, was ahead of us in most respects. Again, in my view, there was one reason for this: our troops were not bush-savvy. We took a boy who had just matriculated, gave him a gun after two to three months of basic training – and then threw him into the middle of a country that he did not know, people he did not understand and an enemy he had never seen. No wonder that he did not do very well. (I exclude the reconnaissance units, the “Recces”, and 32 Battalion from this point; they were a different kettle of fish.) Nevertheless, the young conscripts bore a terrible load, for which they received little gratitude.¹¹³

While the majority of accounts would seem to suggest that the SADF was a disciplined army and followed conventional rules of engagement, there were nevertheless exceptions. These included incidences of both violent atrocities and resistance in which conscripts went contrary to official policy or the stated roles of soldiers as protectors of their society. The realities of these extremes are seldom publicly acknowledged in literature about the Border Wars. However, negotiating choices in the face of both excessive violence and defiance of the system were another constant factor in conscripts’ experiences throughout the period that compulsory conscription was in place.

The following analysis by UNISA researcher McGill Alexander of the SADF attack on Cassinga in Angola in May 1978 gives some sense of possible silences in conscripts’ accounts of life while serving in Namibia and Angola. Alexander’s descriptions also touch on an aspect of serving in the SADF that sometimes provoked defensiveness and denial when I asked about atrocities on the border during interviews conducted for this research. While the majority of conscripts probably did not participate in atrocities, the fact that they were part of a war and a social system that created the possibility of the kinds of acts described below gives

(Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005) and Feinstein, A. *Battle Scarred: Hidden Costs of the Border War* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011).

¹¹³ de Kock, E. and Gordin, J. *A Long Night’s Damage: Working for the Apartheid State* (Johannesburg: Contra Press, 1998), p.65

some sense of the negotiations of impunities narrating conscription inevitably requires at times for conscripts:

Although the universal terms used by the SADF to describe SWAPO and the activities of SWAPO were “terrorists” or “terrorism”, there can be little doubt that the counter-insurgency measures adopted by the SADF were, in the eyes of the local inhabitants, as closely akin to terrorism as anything done by SWAPO. Individuals and groups of soldiers who ignored or deliberately flaunted instructions to treat people humanely exacerbated the situation, as in any war. There were reports of security forces being guilty of breaking into homes, beating up residents, shooting innocent people, stealing and killing cattle, pillaging stores and *cuca* shops, raping young girls and enforcing the curfew rule mercilessly under pain of death, even in cases of severe illness or childbirth. And of course there were the brutal interrogations of suspects.¹¹⁴

Every conscript’s experience involved negotiating military, cultural and systematic norms that characterised the SADF during the apartheid era. However, shifts and changes inevitably played a role over the 25 years that this system was in place. Conscripts’ accounts reveal shifts in trends, the types of events they experienced, places they went to and shifting messages from their leadership that were particular to the time and context of a particular conscript’s service. The following section of this chapter will discuss some of the contextual shifts and changes that took place during the time that compulsory military conscription into the SADF was in place, which would have influenced the quality and memories of a particular conscript’s experiences.

Escalating Operations, Escalating Opposition

While systematic elements of the SADF changed relatively little, the political and regional ethos and role of the SADF changed considerably over the 25 years that conscription was in place – an issue that has been discussed very little in most of the literature about this period. Key to understanding the context of this research is the fact that there were different “sub-generations” of conscripts over the 25 years that the system was in place. This was the result of shifts and escalations of combat and areas of military involvement

¹¹⁴ Alexander, M. *The Cassinga Raid* Masters thesis, University of South Africa, 2003, pp.34,35

directly affecting the levels of violence, indoctrination and possible traumatic stress that conscripts were exposed to.

In 1968, when conscription shifted from a ballot system to being compulsory for all school-leaving white male South African citizens, the primary purpose of this new and enlarged force was to take over from the South African Police Force (SAP) in northern Namibia, due to the fact that the SAP had been unable to quell SWAPO activities in the area.¹¹⁵ This meant that very few conscripts had any experience of direct combat at this time, and the majority would have emerged from their period of service relatively unscathed both physically and psychologically.¹¹⁶ It would seem, however, that some conscripts were deployed in neighbouring states, mostly Rhodesia, during this time.¹¹⁷ (This is another aspect of conscription into the SADF that has been inadequately researched or documented.) The likelihood of combat and the experience of traumatic stress was far higher for these conscripts.¹¹⁸

A significant shift took place in October 1975 when, following the 1974 coup in Lisbon,¹¹⁹ the Portuguese colonial government in Angola collapsed and the SADF entered Angola in support of UNITA. This invasion was named Operation Savannah,¹²⁰ an offensive which penetrated deep into Angola.

Operation Savannah was not only a strategic shift for the SADF, it also had systemic consequences. There was a significant scaling-up of the types of military action that conscripts were involved in, a consequence of which being that conscripts were required to

¹¹⁵ Hamann *Days of the Generals* p.64

¹¹⁶ Weaver "The SADF in Namibia" p.91

¹¹⁷ This is seldom alluded to in the literature, but several participants in this research have spoken about serving alongside Rhodesian police in Rhodesia while they were SADF conscripts. This came up sufficiently often for me to be convinced that it did take place.

¹¹⁸ Connell, M. *Prevalence Of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, And Coping Strategies, Among Former South African National Servicemen* Masters thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2011, pp.65,66

¹¹⁹ Vale "The Cold War and South Africa" p.34

¹²⁰ Diedricks, A. *Journey Without Boundaries: The Operational Life and Experiences of a South African Special Forces Small Team Operator* (Durban: Just Done Publications, 2007), p.8

participate in illegal incursions into neighbouring states without the knowledge or approval of the South African parliament.¹²¹ What had previously consisted primarily of patrols and relatively small-scale skirmishes with SWAPO shifted into full-scale bush war and a first encounter with the far greater military might of the Cuban forces that were supporting the MPLA in Angola.¹²² The political fallout from this campaign was significant; the United States decided against any further funding for South Africa,¹²³ the Organisation of African Unity declared its support for the MPLA,¹²⁴ and the South African government faced international humiliation and condemnation for its actions.¹²⁵ The result was an SADF withdrawal southwards to the Namibian border, which was completed by the end of March 1976,¹²⁶ a matter of months before the domestic uprisings that culminated in the shootings by police in Soweto during June 1976.¹²⁷

During 1976, conscripts who had been involved in combat in Angola were deployed in South African black townships,¹²⁸ resulting in a growing sense that the war was being fought on two “borders” – Namibia/Angola and other frontline states as well as domestically in the townships of South Africa.

What followed was a 15-year period of “intense guerrilla and semi-conventional warfare”¹²⁹ by the SADF and UNITA, its puppet ally in Angola. The majority of conscripts who were deployed in Namibia or Angola during this period stood a very strong chance of experiencing combat or at least witnessing extreme levels of violence.¹³⁰

¹²¹ Weaver “The SADF in Namibia” p.93

¹²² Grest “The South African Defence Force in Angola” p.116

¹²³ Gleijeses, P. *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, Pretoria* (Alberton: Galago Books, 1999), p.332

¹²⁴ Gleijeses *Conflicting Missions* pp.341ff

¹²⁵ Diedricks *Journey Without Boundaries* p.9 and Windrich, E. “Savimbi’s War: Illusions and Realities” in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.196

¹²⁶ Diedricks *Journey Without Boundaries* p.9; Grest “SADF in Angola” p.119

¹²⁷ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.36

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Diedricks *Journey Without Boundaries* p.9

¹³⁰ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* pp.42,43

The next significant phase in which major shifts took place began in 1984, when SADF troops were once again sent into the townships in South Africa to support the SAP in their efforts to quell the rapidly escalating protests and civil disobedience campaigns of the Mass Democratic Movement.¹³¹ One of the key differences between this period and the 1976 uprisings was that the endgame of the apartheid era was well (and evidently) under way, resulting in increasing levels of political, social and psychological pressure. Another was that, by this stage, conscripts' length of service was one of the greatest of all 76 countries in the world that utilised conscription at the time, and the penalties for refusing to serve were the harshest.¹³² Added to this was the fact that military operations simultaneously increased in Angola in the lead-up to the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale.

Over this period, stratifications in white South African society became increasingly strained and adversarial. Social and political groupings amongst conscripts were roughly divided into three categories: those who were fully committed to what conscription stood for, those who served but felt ambivalent about it and those who had strong enough misgivings or objections to take a stand or action of some kind. Conscripts who chose to object faced limited options; objecting to conscription could mean six years in prison, self-imposed exile outside the country¹³³ or being constantly on the run, living a twilight existence below the official radar within South Africa.¹³⁴ One statistic that demonstrates the stress and impact of these growing social and personal tensions is the official figures regarding the number of conscripts who committed suicide: 25 in 1985 and 429 in 1986.¹³⁵ The actual numbers might well have been higher, due to both the fact that suicides sometimes took place after men had returned home from military service and conscripts' allegations that suicides by men who were still serving were sometimes officially recorded as accidents or deaths in combat.

¹³¹ Nathan, L. "Troops in the Townships 1984-1987" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.67-78

¹³² Cock *Colonels and Cadres* pp.66,67

¹³³ The Committee on South African War Resistance in London suggested that 10 000 people left South Africa between 1978 and 1991 to avoid conscription – cited in Cock *Colonels and Cadres* p.82

¹³⁴ Edlmann, T. "Division in the (Inner) Ranks: The Psychosocial Legacies of the Border Wars" *South African Historical Journal* Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2012, 256-272

¹³⁵ van Zyl et al *The Aversion Project Report* p.73

The political negotiations brokered by the United Nations that led to the implementation of UN Resolution 435¹³⁶ brought the denouement of apartheid, and conscription, into effect. By the end of 1989 the SADF had completely withdrawn from Namibia and Angola.¹³⁷ Namibia officially became an independent state on 21 March 1990.¹³⁸ Once again, conscripts were profoundly affected by these developments. On the one hand, there was the sense that a withdrawal from Angola and Namibia meant that the SADF had lost the war (an issue that is still the subject of contestation).¹³⁹ On the other, a sense of disarray within the National Party and the SADF meant that increasing numbers of conscripts were disregarding their call-ups to the SADF with very little follow-up from the Military Police.¹⁴⁰

The pattern that emerges as these generations of conscripts are identified is that, while the military system that they participated in remained fairly constant, men were exposed to varying levels of violence and combat depending on when and where they served. This probably resulted in different psychological legacies for each generation, and for individuals within each generation of conscripts, depending on their levels of psychological resilience or vulnerability. Those who were called up in the first phases of conscription were subjected to the inevitable militarisation and indoctrination of an army, but experienced relatively low levels of active combat. From 1975 onwards, conscripts became involved in escalating waves of violence, both in neighbouring states and domestically, with the crescendo arguably being the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. Many of these conscripts would have taken part in or witnessed high levels of violence, leaving them more vulnerable to possibilities of lasting trauma-related legacies than their predecessors. From 1989 onwards, the levels of violence conscripts were exposed to abated. What did not abate, however were the ongoing forms of legal, ideological and social coercion¹⁴¹ that presented conscripts

¹³⁶ Manning, P. "Namibia's Independence: What has happened to Resolution 435?" in *Review of African Political Economy* No.44 1989, p.63

¹³⁷ Hamman *Days of the Generals* pp.41,42

¹³⁸ Diedricks *Journey Without Boundaries* p.9

¹³⁹ Baines, G. "Introduction: Challenging the Boundaries, Breaking the Silences" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.9

¹⁴⁰ Cock *Colonels and Cadres* p.81

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* pp.68-75

with the limited options of compliance, retreat into exile or challenge and resistance¹⁴² in response to the state's demand for them to do military service.

These variances in conscripts' experiences could therefore be described as resulting in four "sub-generations" of conscripts, within the generation that was called up over a period of 25 years. These can roughly be described as being those who served:

1. Between 1968 and the invasion of 1975 Angola,
2. From 1975 until the South African government's declaration of a state of emergency in 1984,
3. During the state of emergency and increasing hostilities in Angola until the withdrawal from Angola and Namibia in 1989,
4. From 1989 until the cessation of conscription in 1993.¹⁴³

Another factor that has yet to be reflected in the literature about conscription and the SADF is that these successive generations of conscripts, and the events that shaped their experiences, were profoundly influenced by the men who assumed office in the National Party over this period of time.

Patriarchy, Racism and Perceived Threats: The Influence of Political Leaders on Conscripts

The military and political changes and developments that took place during the 25 years conscription was in place were fuelled by changes within the apartheid state's political leadership of the time. The military and strategic shifts outlined in the previous section of this chapter were significantly influenced by these leaders. The discursive resources¹⁴⁴ that have informed conscripts' accounts of their experiences become very evident when one examines the men who were cultural icons and political role-models for the majority of

¹⁴² Ibid. pp.75-89

¹⁴³ I have used this framework of conscription in profiling the participants in this research. It has become a means for me to ensure that there has been some representation of all four generations' experiences in my analysis. Further discussion about this can be found in Chapter Five.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter Two for further discussion about this narrative social constructionist term.

white South Africans during the era of conscription. Understanding the character and influence of this masculine, militarised, racially exclusive leadership that acted with moral, political and military impunity is key to making sense of the psychological, social and political discursive resources at work in the lives and families of conscripts.

It is a matter of both public and private record that the leadership of the SADF felt controlled and dictated to by the National Party in ways that felt unfamiliar and often unpalatable for military leaders.¹⁴⁵ One figure who represents and illustrates the growing interconnectedness between the military and politics, and the ultimate total control of the military by politicians, is General Magnus Malan. He was appointed as Chief of the Army in 1973, during the premiership of B.J. Vorster, and became Chief of the Defence Force in 1976. During this time he became close to P.W. Botha, the Minister of Defence, who became Prime Minister in 1978. Malan was a key proponent of a “total strategy” to respond to the much-fêted “total onslaught”, and argued that this should include all possible avenues such as the military, politics, diplomacy, religious structures, culture, sport and propaganda campaigns.¹⁴⁶ In October 1980 Malan was appointed Minister of Defence in the National Party government, subsequently joining the National Party and becoming a Member of Parliament.¹⁴⁷ He thus came to embody the seamlessness with which the military and government operated.¹⁴⁸

Conscription into the SADF came into effect during the time that B.J. Vorster was Prime Minister of South Africa. The 12 years that he was in office saw dramatic escalations in racial conflict and a marked increase in detentions without trial.¹⁴⁹ It was Jimmy Kruger, the Minister of Police under his premiership, who responded to Steve Biko’s death in detention – as a result of injuries sustained while being tortured by police – with the words “His death

¹⁴⁵ Hamann *Days of the Generals* pp.47ff

¹⁴⁶ www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/malan-m.htm (accessed on 21 December 2011)

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Baines, G. “The life of a uniformed technocrat turned securocrat” My life with the SA Defence Force, Magnus Malan: book review in *Historia* 54,1, May 2009, pp 314-327

¹⁴⁹ www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/vorster-bj.htm (accessed on 28 December 2011)

leaves me cold.”¹⁵⁰ Maintaining the apartheid state’s policies regarding race was the primary focus of Vorster’s leadership; the focus on the Cold War and so-called communist threat was far more of a focus for P.W. Botha.¹⁵¹ However, the 1976 uprisings, which had such profound implications for many conscripts and for the political landscape of South African as a whole, also took place while Vorster was in office.

In 1978 Vorster was succeeded as Prime Minister by P.W. Botha, who had previously been Minister of Defence, and a close associate of Malan’s.¹⁵² One of the most significant shifts that he initiated was a drastic centralisation of power, which included replacing the 20 ad hoc cabinet committees that had been in place with four permanent ones. One of these was the State Security Council (SSC). Even under Vorster it had been the only cabinet committee with a permanent secretariat, but under Botha it evolved into becoming the government’s key decision-making body, eventually assuming an unprecedented level of impunity by superseding the power and authority of the parliamentary cabinet.¹⁵³

Prime Minister Botha (who later became President when the offices of Prime Minister and President were combined) presided over the SSC,¹⁵⁴ whose members included the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Law and Order, as well as the head of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), the chief of the SADF, the directors-general of Foreign Affairs and Law and Order and the Commissioner of Police. By 1983 eight ministers sat on the SSC along with the SADF service chiefs and the director of Military Intelligence (MI).¹⁵⁵ The values and ethos of this centralised system, and the cultural norms they created, reinforced the discursive resources of whiteness that had been such a focus of Vorster’s period in office.

¹⁵⁰ www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/onlinebooks/biko-no46/iv-biko-death.htm (accessed on 28 December 2011) and Hamann *Days of the Generals* p.50

¹⁵¹ Hamann *Days of the Generals* p.50

¹⁵² <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/botha-pw.htm> (accessed on 23 December 2011)

¹⁵³ De Kock and Gordon *A Long Night’s Damage* p.90

¹⁵⁴ Hamann *Days of the Generals* p.53

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.90

They also foregrounded gender and perceptions of threat as powerful canonical narratives or discursive resources¹⁵⁶ within the system.

By way of example, during P.W. Botha's presidency, a patriarchal Nationalist white identity was touted as the bastion of continued white supremacy in the face of the "total onslaught". The men serving in support of the "total strategy" were increasingly construed by Botha as virile and strong, in contrast to his portrayal of the Mass Democratic Movement, with which the End Conscription Campaign was associated, as weak and effeminate.¹⁵⁷ This was most apparent in the state's vitriolic reactions to the increasing numbers of conscientious objectors refusing to serve in the military.¹⁵⁸

What these dynamics at government level illustrate is the extreme levels of securitisation within the apartheid state, due largely to the ideological and political influence of the National Party leadership. A militarist culture was inherent to the ideologies of the time, ideologies that enabled patriarchal leaders to exercise authority with increasing levels of impunity.¹⁵⁹ The most evident example of this was the extent to which the state secret services carried out their duties domestically with extreme and sometimes gross violence, and the blatant lies told to both South African citizens and the international community regarding the SADF's presence and activities in neighbouring states.¹⁶⁰ They are also a powerful indicator of the levels of subterfuge, manipulation and disinformation that dictated political and social dynamics at every level of South African society.¹⁶¹ Conscripts found themselves completely caught up in this web because they were at the receiving end of the security establishment's power, with no claim to rights of any kind, while also being subjected to the intense political and social indoctrination of the system.

¹⁵⁶ Taylor, S. and Littleton, K. "Biographies in talk: A narrative-discursive research approach" in *Qualitative Sociology Review* 2006 Vol.2 Issue 1, 22-38, p.26

¹⁵⁷ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* pp.131ff

¹⁵⁸ Conway, D. "The Masculine State in Crisis: State Response to War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa" in *Men and Masculinities Volume 10 Number 4* June 2008, p.429

¹⁵⁹ Satchwell, K. "The power to defend: an analysis of various aspects of the Defence Act" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp.46,47

¹⁶⁰ Craig "Total Justification" pp.61-63

¹⁶¹ Norval *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* p.202

The psychological and social impact of the kinds of role models and leaders that were running the apartheid state should not be underestimated. Their influence, combined with the extreme levels of political and social “othering” that shaped the discourses of society at the time, arguably resulted in a generation of men for whom aggression in the face of an “other” or perceived threat of any kind was the norm. There is no doubt that conscription was a “legally prescribed rite of passage” in which the military was a “school of the nation”, resulting in boys becoming (particular kinds of) men.¹⁶² As with any dysfunctional system (including families) in which both overt (and extreme) or covert (and hidden) forms of violence are the norm, the fact that the ways in which the system functions feel normal and aspects of one’s life are enjoyable, does not mean that the system is conducive to psychological health or functionality, much less flourishing relationships.

Colonel Eugene de Kock, founder of the secret Vlakplaas centre for the security services during this period, had the following to say in the published version of his TRC submission:

At times, I wasn’t certain who was in control of the country. The politicians were completely dependent on the intelligence services for their information and were often manipulated. It became clear to me that, for all practical purposes, the National Party was kept in power by the SADF and the SAP. But this was, of course, the end result of the National Party’s policies.¹⁶³

In the midst of the manipulation outlined above, the key thread that links political leaders of the time and conscripts’ accounts of their experiences in the SADF is the ways in which whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat were constructed as contextual discursive resources. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The manner in which they perpetuated historical temporal narrative threads will also be discussed in Chapter Seven.

¹⁶² Myrtilinen, H. “Disarming Masculinities” in *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security Vol. 4*, 2003, p 38

¹⁶³ Ibid. p.119

Alternative Role-Models of Leadership

In contrast to the leaders described in the previous section of this chapter, there were many men in white South African society who provided contrasting frames of reference regarding discursive resources of race, masculinities and perceptions of threat, and became significant role models for men who resisted conscription.

One example is Douglas Bax, a Congregational Minister who proposed the motion at the 1974 South African Council of Churches (SACC) conference that catalysed the establishment of the Board for Conscientious Objection,¹⁶⁴ enabling some men to register as conscientious objectors rather than serving in the SADF. During his years as minister at the Rondebosch Congregational Church in Cape Town, he provided support and counsel to countless men seeking ways to avoid serving in the military and was given a special tribute at the End Conscription Campaign's 25th anniversary celebrations in 2009.¹⁶⁵

Bax's motion at the 1974 SACC conference was seconded by Beyers Naudé, a minister and leader in the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) who resigned from the church in protest against the ideologies and practices of apartheid. Subsequent to his resignation from the NGK, Naudé joined the Mass Democratic Movement and in 1985 succeeded Archbishop Desmond Tutu as Secretary General of the SACC.¹⁶⁶ It needs to be acknowledged, though, that most conscripts were too caught in the discursive *laagers*¹⁶⁷ that informed their contexts for alternative role models to impact on their lives in a personally meaningful way. (A note by way of clarification: a *laager* is the Afrikaans word for the defensive system of creating a circle of ox-wagons to protect early Dutch /Afrikaner settlers from attack. It is often used as a metaphor for a closed, defensive, adversarial mentality. In my paper in the South African Historical Journal,¹⁶⁸ I described a discursive *laager* as representing what people perceive to be discursively necessary when polarised

¹⁶⁴ The 1974 SACC conference will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

¹⁶⁵ www.saha.org.za/ecc25/vigil_philip_wilkinson_conscientious_objector_3.htm (accessed on 3 January 2012)

¹⁶⁶ www.sahistory.org.za/people/beyers-naud%C3%A9 (accessed on 3 January 2012)

¹⁶⁷ Edlmann "Division in the (Inner) Ranks" p.271.

¹⁶⁸ Edlmann "Division in the (Inner) Ranks"

beliefs, interpretations of history and ideological positions need to be defended against change or reinterpretation. The defensive and insular nature of these *laagers* represent the social and psychological narratives that are infused with an undifferentiated sense of the past and present, resulting in a narrative construct which builds towards a fractured and polarised future.)

South African Civil Society, the SADF and Conscripts

Bax, Naudé and others made clear stands against conscription. However, the extent to which South African civil society supported the political doctrines that informed the role of the SADF, and conscripts in particular, is the subject of some contestation.

Jacqui Thompson chose the title *An Unpopular War* for her ground-breaking 2005 compilation of conscripts' accounts.¹⁶⁹ Sales figures for her publication suggest that the title rang true for substantial numbers of South Africans – at least in the post-apartheid context. It provoked so much interest that there were eleven reprints in the three years following its publication.¹⁷⁰ Historian Gary Baines has challenged her assertion that the war was “unpopular”, claiming that conscription was “never unpopular amongst the majority of conscripts or with the white populace at large.”¹⁷¹ My view is that the complexity of South African society at that time, and the narrative repair that has taken place since 1994 regarding who really supported apartheid or not, make these difficult assertions to take up or argue either way. The point of focus in this research is that white men and their families were placed in a situation of having to navigate an onerous system of conscription, with wide-ranging levels of support and resistance taking place at different times and in different sectors of society.

¹⁶⁹ Thompson, J.H. *An Unpopular War: From Afkaka to Bosbafok – Voices of South African National Servicemen* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006)

¹⁷⁰ The edition used in this research was printed in the eleventh run, which was in 2009.

¹⁷¹ Baines, G. *Coming to Terms with the “Border War” in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (South African National Arts Festival, Winter School Lecture, 1 July 2008), p.5

While responses to conscription were far from homogenous, every sector of civil society had a direct and evolving relationship with the SADF and the escalating levels of militarisation in South African society during the time that conscription was in place. Kate Philip rightly asserts, in her contribution to *War and Society*, that one of the premises of the “total strategy” was that it was “20 percent military, and 80 percent social, economic and political,”¹⁷² indicating the prominence the apartheid leaders gave to ensuring that civil society’s active participation in the government’s campaigns.

An example of how this was resisted was the emergence of increasing organised and vocal opposition to conscription from churches and civil society. By 1984 the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) had been established, with growing numbers of conscripts taking public stands of resistance to conscription by applying for conscientious objector status, serving prison terms or speaking at public events about their refusal to serve should they be called up.¹⁷³ Proportionately, the ECC represented a very small percentage of men eligible for conscription, but their public profile was significant. Conscientious objectors and general members of the ECC were vilified as committing treason and betraying the kinds of hegemonic masculinity aspired to by those in power.¹⁷⁴ The effect for conscripts of these growing tensions within the ranks of white society were diverse. The debates around conscription catalysed by the ECC and the increasing number of public stands against serving (an example being the group of 771 men who made a collective public stand in 1989 about their refusal to serve)¹⁷⁵ heightened personal, social and political stresses for conscripts and all affected by their experiences.

These debates were heightened by the level of systematic support for or opposition to conscription from various sectors in South African society.

¹⁷² Philip, K. “The private sector and the security establishment” in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.202

¹⁷³ Nathan, L. “‘Marching to a Different Beat’: the history of the End Conscription Campaign” in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.310

¹⁷⁴ Conway “The Masculine State in Crisis” p.429

¹⁷⁵ Cock *Colonels and Cadres* p.90

The Relationship between Business and Conscription

White businesses benefitted enormously from the National Party's policies during the apartheid era. The fact that a special hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) explored this issue is testimony to this in itself.¹⁷⁶

While the TRC Report highlights the complex nature of the relationship between the business sector and the apartheid state, there are two issues directly relevant to the SADF, and conscripts in particular, that need to be highlighted here. As the TRC Report suggests, there were varying levels of engagement between businesses and the apartheid state, with the security and armaments manufacturing industry benefitting the most.¹⁷⁷ The TRC report points out, however, that there were more subtle levels of engagement and support through "implicitly collaborating with the state by doing business with it, paying taxes and promoting economic growth."¹⁷⁸

What is not mentioned explicitly in academic literature that deals with this issue is the extent to which business was directly affected by conscription through the delayed entry of young men into tertiary education and therefore also employment.¹⁷⁹ There has also been little analysis of their subsequent regular absence from work due to being called up for camps. This not only affected business but every sector of society – including the civil service, education, the media and religious institutions. It also had a profound effect on conscripts' education, careers and personal lives, because every personal decision had to be

¹⁷⁶ TRC Report Volume 4 available on

www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/Volume%204.pdf (accessed on 18 September 2011)

¹⁷⁷ Simpson, G. "The Politics and Economics of the Armaments industry in South Africa" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.217ff

¹⁷⁸ TRC Report Volume 4 p.23

¹⁷⁹ Morrell, R. "Pissed and Punching: Masculinity, Politics and the Extra-Curriculum at Rhodes in the 1970s" Paper presented at the Rhodes University History Department Centenary Colloquium on 17 September 2011, available on

www.ru.ac.za/historycentenarycolloquium/papers/Morrell_RhodesCentenary_Masculinity05Sept2011 (accessed on 18 September 2011)

made in the midst of planning around the substantial times in their lives that they were required to serve in the military.¹⁸⁰

Another aspect of the relationships between conscription and the business sector that has not been documented or researched is the special dispensations that were available to conscripts, such as special offers accorded to national servicemen by building societies and banks. Businesses also included supporting the Ride Safe Campaign and the Southern Cross Fund¹⁸¹ in their publicity campaigns as a way of demonstrating their support for the endeavours of conscripts, their families and the SADF.

Religious Institutions

Religious institutions had a uniquely intimate and sometimes fraught relationship with the issue of conscription. During most of the 1970s and 1980s, religious ministers from all Christian denominations served as military chaplains, which involved wearing military uniform, undergoing military training (including weapon and combat training), being paid by the SADF according to their rank and being subject to army discipline.¹⁸²

The issue of military chaplains came up in the TRC Special Hearing on Conscription in July 1995. Reverend Du Plooy of the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK),¹⁸³ the church most closely aligned with the National Party, said the following in his testimony to the TRC:

In order to understand the role of the military chaplain and the national servicemen in the SADF, one needs to keep in mind that, especially as far as the mainstream Afrikaans churches were concerned, the church ... co-operated fully with the SADF on issues of military and national service. The church accepted the advice of the leadership of the NP government and Defence Council as far as defence matters were concerned... Through the idea of the total onslaught, the church immediately became an ally in the war. The total onslaught concept assumed that only 20 per

¹⁸⁰ Blake, C. *Troepie: From Call-Up to Camps* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2009), pp.232-236

¹⁸¹ The Ride Safe Campaign and Southern Cross Fund will be discussed later in the chapter.

¹⁸² Blake *Troepie* p.335

¹⁸³ The English translation is Dutch Reformed Church (DRC).

cent of the onslaught was of a military nature and the other 80 per cent directed against the economical and spiritual welfare of the people. Therefore the chaplaincy and the church had to be involved in winning the hearts and the minds of the people. The Church's main task was to strengthen the spiritual defensibility of its members.¹⁸⁴

The relationships between other mainline churches and the SADF were less clear-cut than the scenario Reverend Du Plooy outlines above. One of the key debates was whether the Border War was a Just War, based on a well-established set of international principles.¹⁸⁵

The second, related, area of contestation and conflict revolved around the issue of conscientious objection. From as early as 1961, the Defence Act had made limited provision for Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Quakers and other small pacifist groups who did not allow their members to take part in any military institution, to serve as non-combatants.¹⁸⁶ Many members of these groups refused to even serve in this capacity, with the result that they were incarcerated in detention barracks (DB) for up to four years.¹⁸⁷ From 1972 onwards, this was reduced to 15 months¹⁸⁸ and from 1983 they could do community service if they adhered to the requirements of the newly established Board for Religious Objection.

The idea of a Board for Religious Objection grew out of a resolution taken at the 1974 conference of the South African Council of Churches. The resolution questioned the justification of the apartheid system's war and encouraged churches to call on their members to become conscientious objectors rather than acquiesce to their call-up to the SADF.¹⁸⁹ While this resolution was unanimously adopted by the SACC conference, it took several years for church and civil society groupings such as the Black Sash and the End

¹⁸⁴ TRC report Vol 4 Ch 8 p 229

¹⁸⁵ Winkler, H.E. and Nathan, L. "Waging peace: church resistance to militarisation" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.329. The concept of a Just War will be discussed in more detail in the section on Moral Injury in Chapter Three.

¹⁸⁶ Winkler and Nathan "Waging Peace" p324

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p.325

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p.325

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p.326

Conscription Campaign to mobilise enough support to pressurise the government into taking some action regarding conscientious objectors. The Board for Religious Objection (consisting entirely of military officers and chaplains) was established to assess the sincerity of objectors' applications based on two criteria: whether their objection was religious (rather than moral or political) and whether it was based on universal pacifism.¹⁹⁰ If their application was approved, conscientious objectors could serve the full number days they had been called up to serve in the military, on military pay rates, by working in a government department or institution.¹⁹¹

Afrikaans church bodies adopted a very different stance to the SACC and did not support the Board for Religious Objection. The 1982 General Synod of the NGK drafted an official position statement in which "neither the church nor individual Christians were allowed to challenge the state in the name of God or on the issue of an unjust war."¹⁹² However, by 1986 a document entitled *Church and Society: A Witness of the DRC* stated that the apartheid system "adversely affected human dignity" and "could not be accepted on Christian ethical grounds."¹⁹³ While this fell short of a full repudiation of apartheid, it was the precursor to an "unequivocal rejection" of apartheid by the NGK General Synod in 1989.¹⁹⁴

Given the very Christian ethos of South African society, these developments within the religious sector had a significant impact on many conscripts' lives. The church was as fractured as the rest of society in the face of apartheid legislation and the militarisation of society.¹⁹⁵ Both conscripts' support for and disagreement with the particular religious structure they belonged to had spiritual, psychosocial and political implications. Conscripts either identified with church institutions' positions or were alienated from institutions they

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. p.332

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p.333

¹⁹² Durand, J. and Smith, D. "The Afrikaner churches on war and violence" in C. Villa-Vicencio (ed.) *Theology and Violence: the South African debate* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1982), p.45 cited in Winkler and Nathan "Waging Peace" p.331

¹⁹³ Norval, A.J. *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), p.259

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Edlmann "Division in the (Inner) Ranks" p.260

might otherwise have participated in, and possibly ostracised by the way in which their beliefs or convictions conflicted with those of their family and their faith community.

While the majority of conscripts would probably have identified themselves in some way as Christians, another religious structure that was affected by conscription was the Jewish Board of Deputies. There was substantial discussion within the South African Jewish Board of Deputies about the way Jewish conscripts were treated in the SADF, and how the Board should respond to their needs. In most cases, both serving conscripts and conscientious objectors seem to have received pastoral support from the Jewish Board of Deputies and rabbis who were designated as Chaplains. However, the Board never took an official stand either in support of or in opposition to the system of conscription.¹⁹⁶ Laurie Nathan, who was national organiser of the ECC in 1985 and 1986, has been critical of the Jewish community for their “complete acquiescence” to the system of conscription and their lack of support for conscientious objectors.¹⁹⁷ David Bruce, a conscientious objector who was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment in July 1988, indicated in a published interview that he was visited by rabbis while in prison but that there was confusion in the official prison visitors’ mind as to what support he should offer Bruce.¹⁹⁸ It would appear that Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris visited conscientious objectors and supported ECC events in his own capacity rather than as a representative of the Jewish Board of Deputies.¹⁹⁹ It would also appear that some young Jewish men gathered together informally to support each other in thinking through their response to conscription.²⁰⁰ Overall, though, the Jewish community provided limited space for conscripts to think through their decisions regarding conscription or make sense of their experiences in the SADF.

¹⁹⁶ Correspondence between the author, David Saks and Naomi Musiker, South African Jewish Board of Deputies, January 2014.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Laurence Neill Nathan in Suttner, E. (ed.) *Cutting Through the Mountain: Interviews with South African Jewish Activists* (London: Viking, 1997), pp.180,181

¹⁹⁸ Interview with David Bruce in Suttner, E. (ed.) *Cutting Through the Mountain: Interviews with South African Jewish Activists* (London: Viking, 1997), p.175

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Personal correspondence between the author and Jonathan Ancer December 2013.

Tensions and debates within South African religious communities regarding conscription are a microcosm of the many other communities and groups that were affected by this system. The following section discusses the relationships between conscription and other sectors of white South African society.

“Supporting Our Boys on the Border”

While conscripts experienced varying levels of support and acknowledgment from religious institutions, there were significant political and social mobilisation exercises in other sectors of society aimed at maintaining morale amongst conscripts.

The government established what was called the “Ride Safe Campaign”, consisting of demarcated hiking spots in major centres and on main roads where soldiers could wait in uniform in the hope that sympathetic members of the public would give them a lift. Members of the public were encouraged through a wide-ranging media campaign to assist in transporting men in uniform between family or friends and their military bases. The use of songs with the following jingoistic lyrics drew on masculinities as discursive resources in constructing conscripts as innocent boys who were heroic, entertaining, manly men whom any admiring citizen would want as company in their vehicle:²⁰¹

He’s just a troopie, standing near the road.
He’s got a weekend pass and he wants to go home.
Pick him up, take him with.
He’s still got a long way to go,
That troopie who stands by the ‘Ride Safe’ sign,
His hair is short, his shoulders broad and strong,
And his arms are tanned brown,
With pride he does his national service,
Respected wherever he goes, he’s more than just a number,
He’s a man’s man...²⁰²

²⁰¹ Conway “Somewhere on the Border – of Credibility” p.78

²⁰² Frederickse, J. *South Africa: A Different Kind of War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), p.61 cited in Conway, D. “‘Somewhere on the Border – Of Credibility’: The Cultural Construction and Contestation of ‘the Border’ in White South African Society” in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.78

And

He's just a boy in uniform trying to get home
With heavy kitbag and
Not much hair to comb...
If you pick him up and talk to him
You'll find he's quite a man
And he'll tell you army stories like only a soldier can...²⁰³

As will be discussed further in the next chapter, gender was invoked as a discursive resource in bolstering and promoting the identities of conscripts as defenders of white South African society from outside threats. In this case, the youth and vulnerability of soldiers was used as a device to invoke the sympathy of travellers – probably old enough to be their mothers and fathers – who might be able to offer conscripts a lift as an act of civic duty. However, the lyrics also hinted at the physical prowess, special status and likely adventures of a soldier doing his “duty” as a way of setting this young man apart. The lyrics therefore socially constructed the relationships between conscripts and civilians as permitting family-type bonds and conversations, but also having important delineations of gender and power that set the conscript apart from the rest of society.

Another example of these morale building campaigns was the South African Broadcasting Corporation's radio broadcasts of *Forces Favourites* and *Fun with the Forces*, in which messages from SADF soldiers and their families were read out on air and popular songs were played.²⁰⁴ Again, family and romantic relationships became a political tool in promoting the heroism of conscripts as protectors of white South African society against the perceived threats of communism and African nationalism. Some conscripts I interviewed mentioned how frequently they would listen to *Forces Favourites*, because the motherly presenter and the messages she brought from home enabled a sense of comfort when they felt far away. This highlights the way in which narrating the legacies of a military system

²⁰³ Matt Hurter 'Ride Safe' (Gallo 1980) cited in Drewett, M. "The Construction and Subversion of Gender Stereotypes in Popular Cultural Representations of the Border War" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.100

²⁰⁴ Drewett "Construction and Subversion of Gender Stereotypes" p.98.

requires tracing both the deeply personal and often fragile dimensions of lives that were being shaped by the social systems and contextual dynamics of the period of politics and history through which they lived.

Women and the SADF

Esmé Euverard and Pat Kerr's voices on *Forces Favourites* radio programmes were not the only instance in which women's gender roles were invoked in buttressing the activities of the SADF through their support of conscripts. The apartheid government actively set campaigns in motion to draw women into the social system of conscription, using them as sources of "ideological legitimation and support".²⁰⁵

A women's organisation called the Southern Cross Fund (SCF) provided gift packs for SADF soldiers, inside which were placed notes containing the words "The Southern Cross Fund Thanks Our Men at the Border".²⁰⁶ Women were thus cast as a geographically and socially confined support group who could contribute to morale-building for the men who were their shields and protectors.²⁰⁷ Women were also increasingly drawn into civil defence initiatives through being trained in "traffic control, fire-fighting, first aid, drill, field craft, crowd control, identification of explosives, weapon training, roadblock routines, anti-riot procedures, and lectures on internal security."²⁰⁸

In addition to being drawn into practical aspects of the social system that was at work in buttressing the system of conscription, Norval highlights the way in which the system "interpellated" women and children into the discourse of the total onslaught. They were constructed as partners in an ongoing system of surveillance aimed at "exposing the enemy

²⁰⁵ Cock, J. "Manpower and Militarisation: Women and the SADF" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), p.56

²⁰⁶ Conway "Somewhere on the Border – Of Credibility" p.79

²⁰⁷ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.124

²⁰⁸ Cock "Manpower and Militarisation" pp.52,53

within.”²⁰⁹ Norval cites the example of a document entitled “Women Our Silent Soldiers”²¹⁰ which was compiled by wives of members of cabinet at the time. In it, women were described as “‘indispensable soldiers’ and an ‘invisible weapon’ in the fight against the ‘psychological-propagandistic onslaught’ on South Africa.”²¹¹ Women were therefore incited to monitor and inform on those closest to them, particularly their children and domestic workers. In doing so, they were asked to educate their children regarding the total onslaught, avoid organisations that sought to undermine the state and monitor their domestic workers.²¹²

Of course, women’s responses to conscription were far from homogenous. Many women were involved in both overt and covert efforts to resist and subvert the system of conscription. Perhaps the most prominent example of this is the number of white women who participated in organisations such as the Black Sash, ECC and ANC.²¹³

Families, Civilians and Conscripts

The schisms between military and civilian life are difficult for any soldier and their family to manage.²¹⁴ The effects of taking on the identity of a soldier result in significant personal and social shifts.²¹⁵ Judith Herman made the following statement about soldiers from the United States, but her description could just as well have been made about SADF conscripts:

Too often, this view of the veteran as a man apart is shared by civilians, who are content to idealize or disparage his military service while avoiding detailed knowledge of what that service entailed. Social support for the telling of war stories, to the extent that it exists at all, is usually segregated among combat veterans. The war story is closely kept among men of a particular era, disconnected from the broader society that includes two sexes and many generations. Thus the fixation on

²⁰⁹ Norval *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* p.202

²¹⁰ The Federal Council and the National Party of South Africa, ‘Women Our Silent Soldiers’, August 1978/79, p.6 cited in Norval *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* p.202

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Norval *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* p.203

²¹³ Cock “Manpower and Militarisation” p.63

²¹⁴ Marlantes, K. *What it is like to go to War* (London: Corvus, 2012)

²¹⁵ Boudreau, T. *Unpacking Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2008)

the trauma – the sense of a moment frozen in time – may be perpetuated by social customs that foster the segregation of warriors²¹⁶ from the rest of society.²¹⁷

In the case of South African society, high levels of media censorship²¹⁸ meant that conscripts were fighting a hidden war about which South African society knew very little. This secrecy was further maintained by the Official Secrets Act,²¹⁹ which all conscripts were required to sign. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, it was arguably also sustained by the willed ignorance of most members of society in opting for comfortable myths rather than the reality their own sons tried to convey or felt unable to voice.²²⁰ This had profound implications for conscripts and their families, as suggested by Karen Batley:

Following the SADF withdrawal from Angola/Namibia, it seems that not a great deal of listening was done by South African society at large. Civilians did not, for various reasons, want to hear ‘Border stories’, which tended consequently to be shared with other ex-combatants.²²¹

These comments point to the way in which silences function as constructed spaces in the narration of experiences. Far from being spaces of forgetting, silences are often potent arenas in which experiences, emotions and dynamics that are unsayable, beyond the realm of the spoken, reside.²²² Sometimes this is because the challenge of translating and narrating experiences in the military – often in a distant place – into language that civilians back home will understand is an overwhelming task for a soldier. Other times it is because the nature and purposes of silences also change over time – especially when there are dramatic political changes such as those South Africa has witnessed in the last twenty years.

²¹⁶ The notion of a soldier as warrior, and the possible effects of trauma in relation to these identity constructs, will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

²¹⁷ Herman, J. *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 2001), p.67

²¹⁸ Gibson, D. “‘The *Balsak* in the Roof’: Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts” in Kapteijns, L. and Richters, A. (eds.) *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), p.218

²¹⁹ The Official Secrets Act of 1965 prohibited a signatory from speaking about anything to do with the military and its work. See Gibson “The *Balsak* in the Roof” p.213, for some discussion about this.

²²⁰ Gear, S. “Wishing Us Away: Challenges Facing ex-combatants in the ‘new’ South Africa” in *Violence and Transition Series, Vol. 8, 2002*, p.133

²²¹ Batley, K. “‘Documents of Life’: South African Soldiers’ Narratives of the Border War” in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.192

²²² Winter, J. ‘Thinking About Silence’ in Ben-Ze’Ev, E., Ginio, R. and Winter, J. *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.4

In many cases, the way in which silences have been constructed in relation to conscription into the SADF defy the assumption that talking about experiences will result in healing and positive change. In a system as complex as this, simple assumptions about what is said and what is silenced are inappropriate. As will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three, experiences of trauma can also result in “narrative wreckage”²²³ and realms of experience for which there are no words or narrative coherence.²²⁴

Whatever the reasons for the gaps in understandings and the silences that existed in the social systems that supported conscription, they were a political, social and phenomenological reality for most conscripts and their social communities. As will be discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Six, silences of various kinds have been significant features of the narrative terrain that conscripts negotiate in establishing how they can or cannot account for the legacies of their experiences in the SADF.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide an historical context of the social system that will form a backdrop for the discussions that will follow. As was stated at the beginning of the chapter, it is AN history rather than THE history of the period,²²⁵ intended to provide a combination of historical detail and a sense of the discursive resources that will inform the discussion in the chapters that follow. It has also provided some background on the ways in which conscription functioned as a social system, influencing both conscripts and white South African society at large.

The chapter that follows will discuss the theoretical frameworks of a social constructionist narrative based approach as a means to articulate the legacies of this social system. In doing

²²³ Crossley, M. *Introducing Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma and the Construction of Meaning* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), p.56

²²⁴ Andrews, M. *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.12,13

²²⁵ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.8

so, it will also discuss race, gender and perceptions of threat as discursive resources in accounting for the legacies of conscription into the SADF.

CHAPTER TWO

RACE, GENDER AND PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT AS DISCURSIVE RESOURCES IN CONSCRIPTS' NARRATIONS OF IDENTITY

Introduction

This chapter will outline the social constructionist narrative-based framework that has shaped this research, with a particular focus on Michele Crossley, Molly Andrews and Stephanie Taylor's work. Using Taylor's synthetic approach, three key discursive resources that have been alluded to in the previous chapter will be outlined – viz. masculinities, whiteness and perceptions of threat – to provide a theoretical framing for later discussions about the narrative terrain which conscripts' negotiate in accounts of the legacies of their experiences in the SADF.

Social Constructionism and Narrative Approaches

The broad definition of social constructionism used in this research works from the premise that social and personal realities are not fixed or pre-determined but are rather constantly in the process of evolving and emerging. The minds, values and perspectives of individuals emerge from the collective discursive realm in which they are situated. Conversely, the external, relational social worlds of people, groups and relationships are also in a constant process of being constructed by means of an outward expression of the "inner" meaning made of contexts.²²⁶

The paradigm of social constructionism is very broad, with a range of approaches and research options to choose from. These seldom belong to discrete sets of theory or areas of

²²⁶ Gergen, K. *The Saturated Self* (USA: BasicBooks, 1991); Gergen, K. *Social Construction in Context* (London: Sage, 2001); Hetherington, K. *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); Holzman, L. & Morss, J. (eds.) *Postmodern Psychologies, Societal Practice, and Political Life* (New York: Routledge, 2000); McAdams, D. *Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1993); Sarup, M. *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988); Wetherell, M. (ed.) *Identities, Groups and Social Issues* (London: Sage Publications, 1996)

work, so picking and choosing needs to be done carefully and with the interests of the research in mind. What is important is to be consciously choosing and constantly critically reflecting on the approaches that are used, and their validity at a particular moment in a research process.²²⁷

Social constructionism brings to a narrative approach the premise that social and personal realities or subjectivities are not fixed or pre-determined but rather constantly and interdependently evolving.²²⁸ This process of evolution is the result of the emerging practices and narratives which shape the lives of those living in a context and particular place.²²⁹ The narratives, values and perspectives of individuals are thus understood to emerge from the constructed social and relational discursive spaces in which they live.²³⁰ Individuals' narratives are produced by – and reproduce – “cultural metanarratives”.²³¹ Conversely, the external social worlds of people, groups and relationships are also in a constant process of being reconstructed by means of an outward expression of the “inner” meaning made of contexts.²³²

As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, every conscript's life story has unfolded around and within a number of powerful collective identity constructs, or cultural resources. And yet each person is also understood to have undergone a unique process of

²²⁷ With grateful thanks to Professor Garth Stevens of the Wits University Psychology Department for his input on the importance of articulating these issues while he was visiting the Rhodes University Psychology Department in October 2011.

²²⁸ Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (London: Sage, 1987), p.109 ; Willig, C. “Reflections on the Use of a Phenomenological Method” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 4:209-25, 2007, 209-225

²²⁹ Gergen, K. “The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology” in *American Psychologist* 40(3):266-75, 1985, p.276 cited in Taylor, S. *Narratives of Identity and Place* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.27,28

²³⁰ Gergen, K. *The Saturated Self* (USA: BasicBooks, 1991)

²³¹ Squire, C. “Narrative and Culture: Introduction” in Andrews, M., Day Sclater, S., Squire, C. and Treacher, A. (eds.) *Lines of Narrative: Psychosocial Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.13

²³² Gergen *The Saturated Self*; Gergen, K. *Social Construction in Context* (London: Sage, 2001); Hetherington *Expressions of Identity*; Holzman, L. & Morss, J. (eds.) *Postmodern Psychologies, Societal Practice, and Political Life* (New York: Routledge, 2000); McAdams, D. *Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1993); Wetherell, M. (ed.) *Identities, Groups and Social Issues* (London: Sage Publications, 1996)

negotiating their identity and the meanings of their experiences, through a sometimes complex process of association, interpellation and internalisation²³³ over time. Particular contextual and group identities, which have emerged over generations, are simultaneously contextually informed and experienced, while also being interpreted and expressed in unique and very personal ways.²³⁴

The personal and contextual interplay involved in this way of framing and interpreting experiences is key in understanding the ways in which identities (or subjectivities) are constructed.²³⁵ This dynamic is also key to understanding the influence of contextual identity constructions on people's choices, both in the past and the present. Narratives are therefore constantly and dialectically both personal and coded by the social norms of which they form a part.²³⁶

A consequence of this is that people's agency is not exercised in a vacuum or with unconditional freedom. Choices are constrained and shaped in multiple ways, and are infused with values and understandings of convention or normality.²³⁷ A person's notions of self emerge out of "being subjected, and subjecting oneself, to what is known, believed, valued and what *makes sense* in the larger social and cultural contexts in which (one) live(s)."²³⁸ Conforming to or resisting social norms or expectations both involve exercising agency. This agency is exercised in response to contextual influences, in line with the

²³³ Woodward, K. "Concepts of Identity and Difference" in Woodward, K. (ed.) *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Nation* (London: Routledge in association with The Open University, 2000), pp.16-18

²³⁴ Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.28

²³⁵ Phoenix, A. "Analysing Narrative Contexts" in Andrews, M., Squire, C., and Tamboukou, M. *Doing Narrative Research* (London: Sage, 2008), pp.71,72

²³⁶ Andrews, M., Day Sclater, S., Squire, C. and Treacher, A. "Introduction" in Andrews, M., Day Sclater, S., Squire, C. and Treacher, A. (eds.) *Lines of Narrative: Psychosocial Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp.8,9

²³⁷ Taylor, S. and Littleton, K. "Biographies in talk: A narrative-discursive research approach" in *Qualitative Sociology Review* 2006 Vol.2 Issue 1, 22-38, p.23

²³⁸ Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.28

dialectic that understands identity constructions both to define an individual's identity and influence their context in some way.²³⁹

For conscripts in the SADF, personal choices made in response to receiving their call-up had profound social and political ramifications. The legacies of those choices are individual and contextual, personal and political. It is the complex narrative terrain of these legacies that this research seeks to understand.

Before outlining the theoretical frameworks that will be used to explore conscripts' accounts, the following section will give some background to narrative theory within social constructionism. Following this, the work of three key narrative theorists whose work I have drawn on significantly will be discussed.

Narrative Theory

We as people tell stories, and then tell new and evolving stories to explore the meanings of previous stories. Narrative accounts and narrative texts are as old as humanity itself. Stories, both lived and told, are the means through which we construct knowledge, understanding, relationships, identities and communities.²⁴⁰ Narratives have taken many forms over the centuries, but it is only in the last few decades that what is referred to as the "narrative turn" has begun to shape narrative methods (also known as narrative approaches or narrative inquiry) as a theoretical and methodological focus within qualitative research.²⁴¹ While social constructionist narrative psychology is the theoretical frame for this research, it is necessary to trace some of the historical traditions within which narrative has been used

²³⁹ Taylor, S. "A Place for the Future? Residence and Continuity in Women's Narratives of their Lives" *Narrative Inquiry* 13(1):193-215, 2003, p.31

²⁴⁰ Clandinin, D.J. and Rosiek, J. "Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions" in Clandinin, D.J. (ed.) *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage, 2007), p.35

²⁴¹ Riessman, C.K. *Narrative Methods of the Human Sciences* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage, 2008), p.14; Andrews et al "Introduction" p.9

as a way of understanding how stories, accounts and texts have been structured and constructed.

A History of Narrative Inquiry

Riessman traces the earliest articulation of narrative form back to Aristotle's definition of Greek tragedy. The basic elements of this dramatic form, which find echoes in defining research-based narrative theory, are:

- There is a *representation of events*, experiences and emotions (*mimesis*);
- The narrative is understood to form a *whole*, something that reaches completion in the course of a performance;
- It has a sense of *sequence and structure*, with a beginning, middle and end;
- Events are presented with a sense of order through the *plot*, which is what drives the heart of the story;
- The plot is enacted, given shape and life, by *characters*;
- What makes the plot interesting for the audience is the fact that there is a disruption of the expected nature and circumstance of the characters' lives (*peripeteia*) that awakens an *emotional reaction and moral questions*.
- It is the quest for a *resolution* of this breach that carries and sustains the passion and pathos of the drama.²⁴²

These themes of representation, coherence, structure, character, plot, emotions, moral questions and resolution have remained strong defining elements within literary and theatrical understandings of narrative.

The formulation and analysis of these elements of narrative theory in social, psychological and historical research only began to emerge in the twentieth century, however.²⁴³ The 1950s and 1960s saw a proliferation of work in qualitative research methods, including

²⁴² Riessman *Narrative Methods* p.4

²⁴³ Webster, L. and Mertova, P. *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method: An Introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p.25

narrative inquiry, which began to explore the implications for research of political, social, technological and cultural shifts.²⁴⁴

Sociolinguists Labov and Waletzky produced a seminal work²⁴⁵ in the late 1960s that outlined a structural approach to analysing narratives about personal experiences.²⁴⁶ The methods they developed included long-term participant observation and interviews with individuals, the transcriptions of which were then analysed in terms of how they comprised sequences of verbal acts.²⁴⁷ Their articulation of the components of a fully formed narrative is one of the foundational frameworks, or “touchstones,”²⁴⁸ of narrative based approaches to research. They argue that there are six elements to a fully formed narrative, although not all accounts contain all these elements, and they may occur in varying sequences:

...an abstract (summary and/or point of the story); orientation (to time, place, characters, situation); complicating action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis or turning point); evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotions – the “soul” of the narrative); resolution (the outcome of the plot); and a coda (ending the story and bringing action back to the present.²⁴⁹

However, it was in the 1980s that narrative methods came into their own as a distinct field of inquiry.²⁵⁰ Polkinghorne’s publication in the 1980s made a significant contribution to understanding the interdisciplinarity of narrative theory by tracing the development of theories about narrative as separate disciplinary threads within history, literature and

²⁴⁴ Riessman *Narrative Methods* pp.14,15

²⁴⁵ Labov, W. and Waletzky, J. “Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience” in Helms, J. (ed.) *Essays in the Verbal and Visual Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1967)

²⁴⁶ Patterson, W. “Narratives of events: Labovian Narrative Analysis and its Limitations” in Andrews, M., Squire, C., Tamboukou, M. *Doing Narrative Research* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage, 2008)

²⁴⁷ Riessman *Narrative Methods* pp.81-85

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p.84

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p.84

²⁵⁰ Riessman *Narrative Methods* pp. 14,15

psychology. He outlines how historians use narrative approaches to describe human activity and events of the past,²⁵¹ highlighting the work of Ricoeur in this regard:

Ricoeur has deepened the examination of narrative and, instead of simply considering narrative as a special historical explanatory mode, has found it to be a life form that has functioned as part of human existence to configure experience into a unified process. For this reason, narrative needs to be included in the human disciplines when they study the human realm.²⁵²

Polkinghorne later summarises narrative within literary theory in the following way:

Literary theory has moved through a series of studies of narrative. These have involved concern for underlying story lines and for historically evolved responses to human problems and needs. In its move toward a more “scientific” approach, literary theory borrowed the methods of structural linguistics in an attempt to uncover a narrative grammar that would generate all possible narratives... Attention is no longer given exclusively to the structure of the text. The writer and reader now function as parts in a whole communication event that occurs when the created narrative text is taken up to be understood by different individuals.²⁵³

Polkinghorne’s articulation of narrative approaches within psychology are a very early motivation for the use of narrative alongside psychodynamic and quantitative approaches to psychology and will therefore not be included in this research.²⁵⁴ As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, narrative research within psychology has grown and developed significantly since Polkinghorne’s early formulations and motivations.

Narrative based research has also significantly influenced other disciplines, most notably education in the areas of teaching, learning and curriculum design.²⁵⁵ However, as the focus

²⁵¹ Polkinghorne, D.E. *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p.71

²⁵² Ibid. p.69

²⁵³ Ibid. p.99

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p.123

²⁵⁵ Bold, C. *Using Narrative in Research* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012); Clandinin, D.J. (ed.) *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications 2007)

of this research is social psychology, the following section will provide some background to this specific focus area within social constructionist narrative theory.

Origins of Narrative Theory in Psychological Research

Narrative theory within western social and psychological research formed part of the “narrative turn” referred to earlier, coming into its own from the 1950s onwards.²⁵⁶ Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou argue that this emergence had two strands, the first being a humanist response to positivist empiricism and the second a response to emerging structuralist, post-structuralist, postmodern, psychoanalytic and deconstructionist approaches within the humanities.²⁵⁷ These different (and contrasting) theoretical emphases have led to tensions within narrative research. These tensions include debates about whether to engage with narratives as primarily about individuals’ experiences, or whether to see these narratives as event-based as opposed to experience-centred. Another alternative is to focus primarily on dialogues in which narratives are seen as co-constructed and fundamentally social in ethos.²⁵⁸

Tensions and debates concerning narrative as a theoretical framework for research continue to evolve. For example Hyvärinen, Hydén, Saarenheimo and Tamboukou have recently published a collection of papers that challenges the Aristotelian-based understandings of narrative as being inherently coherent.²⁵⁹

The use of narrative theory in research has evolved over time in terms of what narrative is understood to be. Definitions and understandings of narrative have also come to be seen as

²⁵⁶ Squire, C., Andrews, M. and Tamboukou, M. “What is Narrative Research?” in Andrews, M., Squire, C., Tamboukou, M. *Doing Narrative Research* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage, 2008), p.3

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Squire et al “What is Narrative Research?” p.5

²⁵⁹ Hyvärinen, M., Hydén, L-C., Saarenheimo, M. and Tamboukou, M. *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010)

existing within diverse forms of story-telling, writing, music, artworks, audio and visual material, and organisational documents.²⁶⁰

Social constructionist narrative theory provides space for the relationship, or dialectic, between contrasting views on narrative to be negotiated.²⁶¹ It further allows for a considered negotiation of the analysis of narrative texts.

There are inevitable gaps in the way a narrated story can be analysed in a research project. As has already been mentioned, there is a performative element to self-narratives or biographical talk in interviews as well as other texts that can act as a constraint.²⁶² The stories being analysed are also incomplete due to the subjectivities and nuances of a story of any kind never being fully expressible by a speaker through language.²⁶³ Narrating experiences of violence and possible combat is particularly challenging.²⁶⁴ As Andrews points out, the silences in a spoken (or written) narrative are as much part of the narrative as the spoken word; they are a threshold between the spoken word and the “unsayable and unsaid”.²⁶⁵

Indeed, as will be discussed later in this chapter, recognising the limitations of language is crucial to research of this nature. Some of the most potent and memorable moments in the interviews I undertook came across as empty silent spaces in the voice recording (and transcriptions). In many cases, those silences occurred because research participants were weeping or because they appeared to be struggling – sometimes with agitated body

²⁶⁰ Riessman *Narrative Methods* p.4

²⁶¹ Bold *Using Narrative in Research* p.23

²⁶² Conway, D. *Masculinities, Militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign: War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), p.9

²⁶³ Squire et al “What is Narrative Research?” p.9

²⁶⁴ This idea has synergies with Caruth’s idea of the latency of trauma. See Caruth, C. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

²⁶⁵ Andrews, M. “Beyond Narrative: The Shape of Traumatic Testimony” in Hyvärinen, Hydén, Saarenheimo and Tamboukou *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010), p.161

language, and contorted or pensive expressions on their faces – to give words to intense physical or emotional experiences. The challenge for a researcher is to find appropriate ways to make sense of both the spoken and unspoken, phenomenological and contextual, elements of what Taylor describes as ‘biographical talk.’²⁶⁶

It is therefore necessary to discuss bridging phenomenology and context in undertaking narrative research.

Phenomenology and Context in Narrative

Crossley’s theories about narrative challenge some of the social constructionist elements of narrative psychological theory, focusing rather on the phenomenological aspects of narratives in research.²⁶⁷

Central to her approach is the idea that “human life can be characterised as bearing within it a ‘narrative structure’”,²⁶⁸ that gives coherence to contexts and accounts of personal experiences which might otherwise be seen as fragmented and inchoate.

While Crossley’s phenomenological focus and critique of social constructionism²⁶⁹ has in turn been critiqued,²⁷⁰ her approach to narrative theory has significantly informed this research. In spite of her research having a different focus area, focusing primarily on people living with serious illness, it has kept alive in my mind the need to sustain a

²⁶⁶ Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk” p. 23

²⁶⁷ Crossley, M. *Introducing Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma and the Construction of Meaning* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000); Crossley, M. “Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity” *Theory Psychology* 2000 10: 527; Crossley, M. “Narrative Analysis” in E. Lyons and A. Coyle (eds) *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007)

²⁶⁸ Crossley “Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity” p.528

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ See for example Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* pp.30,31

phenomenological thread in relation to narrative in my research. Every interview I conducted was primarily about what it was *like* to be called up, serve in the military and live with the consequences of being a conscript. Conscripts' discussion about contextual issues or a more analytical aspect of their experiences came later, if at all. Similarly, many of the biographical texts that were used in the analysis for this research had a strong phenomenological element.

Crossley's focus on the implications of a person choosing one narrative about experiences over another is significant, particularly, in the case of this research, for conscripts. Her theorisation of narrative suggests that narrations of conscription provide important clues as to a person's understandings of self, and their sense of responsibility and morality.²⁷¹ Focusing on the phenomenological dimensions of narrations also enables reflection on both a person's current and desired identities.²⁷² It allows space for an acknowledgement of the delicate personal negotiations each person has made in the midst of powerfully political and militarised contexts – both historically and in the present.

While Crossley's ideas about narrative structure and coherence have been helpful in some senses, they are also in danger of over-simplifying rather more complex aspects of narrative.

The focus on an individual's capacity to develop a central narrative does not sit easily with accounts and experiences as complex as those of SADF conscripts. Nor does the idea that the "narrative wreckage"²⁷³ of trauma occurs in relation to a single coherent narrative, without the possibility of iterating wreckages through ongoing traumatic experiences.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Crossley "Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity" p.21. The issue of morality will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter with regard to moral injury.

²⁷² Crossley "Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity" p.21

²⁷³ Crossley *Introducing Narrative Psychology* p.56

²⁷⁴ See Kaminer and Eagle *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* pp.48,49. The place of trauma in this research will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Valuable as aspects of Crossley's theories have been, it is more appropriate for research of this nature to speak of people as having multiple coexisting narrative structures. Even if there is a level of coherence within a person's narrative, their stories do not emerge from the implied unitary identity or sense of self that Crossley's work is based on. Narratives emerge from the complexities of experiences and constantly positioned and repositioned identities of often convoluted and complex articulations of lived experience. The relationship between the contexts of these experiences and their narration is central to making sense of narratives, beyond the realm of arguing for the possibilities of narrating a central, coherent sense of self.

What Crossley also does not address is how the contextual and socio-political shifts as a result of the passage of time were reflected in conscripts' personal narratives. This has been an important aspect of temporality in this research, and one which Crossley addresses inadequately for my purpose. Molly Andrews' work, emerging out of far more overtly political work, provides a useful counterpoint to Crossley's arguments about narrative.

History, Biography and Politics in Narrative Inquiry

Molly Andrews' theories about narrative provide a useful counterpoint to Crossley's for the purposes of this research. Andrews' work has included researching social justice activists in England, the rise of patriotism in the United States of America post the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre, East German responses to the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the experiences of people who testified as victims of gross human rights violations at the South African TRC.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ And overview of Andrew's work is provided in Andrews, M. *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

In contrast to Crossley's argument for narrative coherence, Andrews highlights the ways in which stories are about many selves, shaped by the contexts of which people are part but also constantly and simultaneously resisting those contexts.²⁷⁶ Certain aspects of people's identities come to the fore at certain times and in various circumstances as they negotiate, perceive and engage with narrative and identity-related constraints and possibilities.²⁷⁷ Andrews also argues that a narrative approach is helpful when researching political identities, because what a person or community choose to tell about themselves is "intricately tied" to how they have constructed their political identities.²⁷⁸ Given the dialectic between the individual and context in a narrative approach, it also needs to be borne in mind that stories are not always heard in the same way as a narrator might intend.²⁷⁹ The careful construction of delineated political identities during apartheid and post-apartheid periods of history is a prominent feature of conscripts' narrations of their experiences. Given the fractured nature of South African society, and the intensely adversarial political system that gave rise to the system of conscription, these negotiations are particularly fraught exactly because of conscripts' concerns about how their narrations will be interpreted by people whose social positioning and political views might be different to theirs.

Narrations of political identities are integral to negotiations about the meaning of history.²⁸⁰ Andrews cites Dienstag in this regard: "Human beings fight over history because they conceive their pasts to be an essential part of who they are. And they are right."²⁸¹ However, in negotiating the meanings of histories through the way they are narrated, it needs to be borne in mind that political identities are always relational and collective,

²⁷⁶ Andrews, M. "Narrative Research" in Seale, C., Silverman, D., Gubrium, J. and Gobo, G. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2004), p.22

²⁷⁷ This idea mirrors the work of Hetherington, K. *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), pp.21-25

²⁷⁸ Andrews *Shaping History* p.11

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. p.10

²⁸¹ Dienstag, J.F. *'Dancing in Chains': Narrative and Memory in Political Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p.206

shaped by the cultures and societies of which they form a part.²⁸² While I agree with Andrews' view on this, I would add that narrations are also shaped by social "othering" and an uneasy negotiation of opposing socio-political identities that are perceived as a threat or a challenge to the intentions of a particular narration. It is these social and group cultures that shape Bruner's notion of the "canonical narratives" which occur in narrations of history,²⁸³ and which require negotiation, revision or reinforcement in negotiating the complex narrative terrain of political shift and change.

As will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, Andrews' understandings of trauma and narrative also have particular relevance for this research. Firstly, she challenges the Aristotelian notion of coherence when narrating trauma.²⁸⁴ She also challenges the notion of temporality and narrative coherence, arguing that linear time and trauma time are very different.²⁸⁵ Finally, she argues that speaking (or testimony) about traumatic experiences constantly places a person on a threshold of language and silence.²⁸⁶

Given the highly political nature of conscription into the SADF, Andrews' theories provide valuable lenses through which to read the cultural texts of conscripts' accounts. The following section of this chapter will outline how I have used Taylor's narrative-discursive synthetic approach as a bridge between a primarily phenomenological narrative approach on one hand and a primary political narrative approach on the other.

²⁸² Tilly, C. *Stories, Identities and Political Change* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p.61; Polletta, F. "Plotting Protest: Mobilizing Stories in the 1960 Student Sit-Ins" in Davis, J. (ed.) *Stories of Change: Narrative and Social Movements* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002) p.34 cited in Andrews *Shaping History* pp.12,13

²⁸³ Bruner, J. "Life as Narrative" *Social Research* 54: 11-32, 1987 cited in Andrews *Shaping History* p.15

²⁸⁴ Andrews, M. "Beyond Narrative: The Shape of Traumatic Testimony" in Hyvärinen, M., Hydén, L-C. Saarenheimo, M. and Tamboukou, M. *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010), p.152

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.155. See later section on temporality in this chapter for more on this issue.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p.161

Taylor's Synthetic Narrative-Discursive Approach

Taylor's formulation of a synthetic narrative-discursive approach enables an exploration of the relationship between what she calls a person's "biographical talk" and the contextual "master narratives"²⁸⁷, "discursive regimes"²⁸⁸ or "cultural resources"²⁸⁹ that inform biographical talk. Her work therefore provides something of a bridge between the phenomenological focus of Crossley and the primarily contextual and political focus of Andrews. For this reason, I will be drawing extensively on her formulations of a narrative approach, particularly the idea of discursive resources, in the rest of this chapter.

For Taylor, whose work has focused on Western women's experiences of migration, narrative is a key element in the meaning-making and development of coherence in both personal and political arenas.²⁹⁰ It is for this reason that Taylor's approach has been used as primary framework for this research, with Crossley's and Andrew's theories being drawn on in order to deepen and expand the discussion. This is because Taylor's theory acts as something of a bridge between Crossley's phenomenological approach and Andrew's more overt focus on context and political identities.

What Taylor's synthetic approach does is to allow space for an exploration of both the way in which a person's identity narratives are positioned by others and the ways people actively position themselves. In this narrative-discursive framework identities are "both conferred and actively claimed and contested."²⁹¹ This has proven the most resonant approach to narrative in analysing conscripts accounts of their experiences.

²⁸⁷ Mishler, E.G. *Storylines: Craftartists' Narratives of Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) cited in Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.32

²⁸⁸ Carabine, J. "Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis" in Wetherell, M., Taylor, S. and Yates, S.J. (eds.) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (London: Sage, 2001) cited in Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.32

²⁸⁹ Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.32

²⁹⁰ Taylor, S. "A Place for the Future?" p.196 cited in Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place*, p.31

²⁹¹ Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk" p.25

Taylor develops this synthetic approach further with the following definition of biography and narrative as a part of a person's process of constructing identities:

“We understand this use of biography (to be) a situated construction, produced for and constituted within each new occasion of talk but shaped by previously presented versions and also by understandings which prevail in the wider discursive environment, such as expectations about the appropriate trajectory of a life.”²⁹²

This begins to address some of the tensions identified earlier in this chapter, about whether a person's narrative is understood to reflect a series of personal experiences or events, or whether it demonstrates constructions that need to be explored and analysed with more than a phenomenological focus.²⁹³ In similar fashion, Somers has argued that narrative identity needs to be understood as functioning within a relational setting in which time, as well as place and power, inform recursive narrations of identity.²⁹⁴

Taylor argues that the relational setting in which narrative takes place is social.²⁹⁵ This is primarily because narrative is situated.²⁹⁶ Biographical talk and the identities at work within biographical talk take place within a conversation, interview or text but they are simultaneously reciprocally shaping and shaped by “social and cultural frameworks of interpretation,”²⁹⁷ namely the relational, social and cultural meanings and assumptions that inform and shape the speaker or writer's society and culture.

²⁹² Ibid. p.23

²⁹³ Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.31

²⁹⁴ Somers, M. “The Narrative Construction of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach” *Theory and Society*:604-659, 1994, pp.620,1

²⁹⁵ This is a summary of Taylor and Littleton's “Biographies in talk” discussion on pages 26, 27

²⁹⁶ Billig, M. *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) cited in Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk” p.26

²⁹⁷ Mishler, E.G. (1999) *Storylines: Craftartists' Narratives of Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.18 cited in Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk” p.26

Secondly, narrative is social because it uses a common language made up of accrued ideas and associations that have built up over time.²⁹⁸ Taylor argues that these ideas and associations draw on established interconnections. These established, but often unacknowledged interconnections, form the basis of Taylor's idea of discursive resources in narrative work – an idea that draws on Potter and Wetherell's interpretative repertoires²⁹⁹ and Bruner's canonical narratives³⁰⁰ – that have proven central to the theoretical framing of this research.

However, in the midst of the relatedness of these interconnections and discursive resources, constraints also operate on biographical talk. This is because there is an onus to be coherent in narratives and identity work, and to conform to what is generally recognised and expected. This leads to another significant concept in Taylor's work – the idea that unexpected associations or connections, disruptions in the relationships between discursive resources and spoken biographical talk, become a source of "trouble".³⁰¹ This idea of "trouble" within the narration of identities is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Contextualising Discursive Resources and "Trouble"

As has been outlined in the previous chapter, this research seeks to make sense of the discursive resources that have shaped the narrations of SADF conscripts' experiences decades after they served in the military. The research therefore sits in the rather uncomfortable, and in itself "troubled", interface of the past and present, the "macro" and "micro", the personal and socio-political.

²⁹⁸ Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk", pp.26,27

²⁹⁹ Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. *Discourse and Social Psychology* (London: Sage, 1987) cited in Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk" p.26

³⁰⁰ Bruner, J. "Life as Narrative." *Social Research* 54: 11-32, 1987 cited in Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk" p.26

³⁰¹ Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk" p.26

This section of this chapter will reflect on three key discursive resources that have emerged in the course of this research which articulate how this research works at the interface of socio-political and personal dimensions to conscripts' accounts. They will be used as the foundation for the theoretical scaffolding around which later chapters will be structured.

Race, gender and perceptions of threat are aspects of identity any South African engages with in some way, almost inevitably with a sense of contestation and of significant narrative negotiation being required. This is a consequence of personal narratives being constrained, disrupted and challenged in multiple, folded ways over time. Given their prominence and contestation in identity constructions for conscripts, race and gender are more easily identifiable as domains within which identity-related negotiations of phenomenology and the historical, economic and social relations take place.³⁰² As will be discussed later in this chapter, perceptions of threat were both the political motivation which led to the implementation of the military system that gave rise to conscription, and they have formed an ongoing dimension of conscripts' narrations of their personal identities. It is for this reason that perceptions of threat have been placed alongside race and gender in defining the discursive resources that emerge in conscripts accounts of the legacies of conscription.

As has been outlined in Chapter One, being designated white according to the Population Registration Act of 1950 was one of two fundamental biological, social and political factors that designated a conscript eligible for a compulsory call-up to the SADF. The second was being male. Thirdly, conscripts were called upon by the apartheid state to act as bastions of the status quo in the face of the perceived threats of communism and African nationalism. Thus race, gender and perceptions of threat are on a par in the "trouble" every conscript grappled with in their identity narratives.

³⁰² Fine, M. and Weis, L. "Compositional Studies, In Two Parts: Critical Theorizing and Analysis on Social (In)Justice" in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008)

The identification of these three discursive resources builds on Plummer's argument that certain stories "take off" in a culture because they "slot easily" into the most accepted narratives of that society: the dominant ideological codes.³⁰³ In this case the ideological codes emerged out of discursive resources regarding whiteness, maleness and perceptions of threat that informed both the government's institution of conscription and white South African society's largely acquiescent acceptance of the call-up.³⁰⁴ The narrative "trouble" emerged out of the complexities and contestations in South African society and conscripts' own lives regarding these discursive resources, both during the apartheid era and after the cessation of conscription.

Temporality and Narrative Inquiry

The discursive resources of race, gender and perceptions of threat that form the foundations of this research emerged out of the historical dynamics of colonialism and apartheid. These historic periods and the current South African context are significantly characterised by violence, meaning that both soldiers and civilians are highly likely to have had potentially traumatic experiences over a period of time, and across generations.³⁰⁵ The historical dimension of temporality is an important aspect of this research, and a contributing factor to the narrative "trouble" that conscripts experience.

In terms of the theorists whose writing this research has drawn on, Michele Crossley's work describes the relationships between past, present and future as having a form of phenomenological structure and coherence in stories. The temporality within narrative is

³⁰³ Plummer, K. *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.115 cited in Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.17

³⁰⁴ Steyn, M. and Conway, D. "Introduction: Intersecting Whiteness, Interdisciplinary Debates" *Ethnicities* 2010 10(3) 283-291, p.287; Epstein, D. "Marked men: Whiteness and Masculinity" *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 14:37, 49-59, 1998, p.50

³⁰⁵ Kaminer and Eagle *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* pp.48, 49

therefore structured in relation to a person's articulation of their past, present and future sense of self.³⁰⁶

Molly Andrews alludes to various aspects of temporality within narrative work at different stages of her writing. Her early work emphasises the shifts within stories over time, sometimes showing "progressive" and sometimes "regressive" dimensions.³⁰⁷ Andrews' research with English social activists also highlights an historical dimension to stories in understanding activism as part of the "long-term movements of history itself."³⁰⁸ Her later work focuses on temporality within narratives relating to trauma, which she summarises in the following statement: "Linear time and trauma time are different. Trauma time is constantly in the present. Linear time imposes a structure."³⁰⁹ However, as Andrew goes on to explain, the "present" of trauma time in personal narrations (and silences) is "locked in the past" and the domain of memories.³¹⁰ As the next chapter will show, this research has drawn extensively on Andrews' formulations of temporality in narrative theory. However, they fall short of clearly articulating the role of historical temporality that has been identified in conscripts' accounts.

Stephanie Taylor's work also stops short of overtly articulating this aspect of narrative inquiry. Her writing focuses primarily on a person's sense of place in narrations of identity. She and Karen Littleton highlight a temporal dimension to identity work in the following statement about their narrative-discursive approach to biographical talk:

³⁰⁶ Crossley, M. *Introducing Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma and the Construction of Meaning* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), pp.12,13

³⁰⁷ Andrews, M. "Narrative Research" in Seale, C., Silverman, D., Gubrium, J. and Gobo, G. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2004), pp.21,22

³⁰⁸ Andrews, M. *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.65,66

³⁰⁹ Andrews, M. "Beyond Narrative: The Shape of Traumatic Testimony" in Hyvärinen, M., Hydén, L-C. Saarenheimo, M. and Tamboukou, M. *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010), p.155

³¹⁰ Ibid. p.156. See also Edkins, J. *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.230 for more on this issue.

(Our approach) considers a person-in-situation but not a personal biography in the sense of connections between the series of temporally-linked situations which constitute an individual's unique experience. Our argument is that an expanded, discursive and narrative focus is needed to explore the possibilities and constraints which speakers bring to an encounter from their previous identity work, or, in other words, how they are positioned by who they already are.³¹¹

These statements do acknowledge the relationship between temporality and context in how the positioning that takes place over time can be seen in biographical talk. What is implied rather than overtly stated in Taylor's articulation of discursive resources, however, is that the emergence of discursive resources in the interplay of personal narrations and contextual dynamics also takes place over long periods of time. The discussion in this chapter will focus on and extrapolate this dimension to Taylor's narrative-discursive approach, which will be discussed in more detail in the Chapters Three and Six in relation to Lomsky-Feder's theories of memory and memory fields.

As was highlighted in the Introduction, this research bridges social history and social psychology. Its focus is the imprints and legacies of historical events in personal narrations of apartheid-era conscription. In focusing on these long-term imprints and legacies, I will use the term temporal threads to highlight the historical dimensions of the narrative terrain which conscripts negotiate.

The following sections of this chapter will discuss the discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat as key features of the historical and contemporary narrative terrain identified in this research.

³¹¹ Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk" p.25

Whiteness as a Discursive Resource in the Context of this Research³¹²

Deterministic and essentialised dynamics of whiteness as race played out in systematic ways in the context of apartheid-era South Africa, particularly for conscripts. Whiteness could therefore be described as having been a discursive resource in narrating identity during the apartheid era and in post-apartheid South Africa.

Whiteness Studies: A Brief Background

The field of whiteness within studies of racial identities came to the fore in the 1990s as academics responded to Dyer's essay³¹³ elucidating the ways in which discussions about race tended to focus on blackness as "other", with whiteness inscribed as an invisible and uninterrogated norm.

The following definitions of whiteness were also prominent within this early framing of the field of whiteness studies: "White" is a marked racialised identity whose precise meanings derive from national racial regimes. Whiteness as an identity that conventionally exists only in so far as other racialised identities, such as blackness, Asianness, etc., exist. Whiteness has been conceptualised over the century or so since this term was first used, as terror, systematic supremacy, absence/invisibility, norms, cultural capital, and contingent hierarchies.³¹⁴ Whiteness is also a problematic, or an analytical perspective: that is, a way of formulating questions about social relations. The invocation of white identities may suspend

³¹² The three discursive resources outlined in this chapter were presented in a paper entitled *A Reflection on Discursive Resources and Memory Fields in Narrative-Based Research with South African Defence Force Conscripts* at the Cultural Psychiatry and Global Mental Health conference held at VU University, Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 31 May 2013 and the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Conference held at Rhodes University 9-11 July 2013.

³¹³ Dyer, R. *White* (London: Routledge, 1997) cited in Steyn, M. "Rehabilitating a Whiteness Disgraced: Afrikaner white talk in post-apartheid South Africa" *Communication Quarterly* 52:2, 143-169, 2004, p.144

³¹⁴ Garner cites his paper "The uses of whiteness: what sociologists working on Europe can learn from North American work on whiteness" *Sociology* 40(2):257-275 with regard to this point.

other social divisions and link people who share whiteness to dominant social locations, even though the actors are themselves in positions of relative powerlessness.³¹⁵

Whiteness studies have emerged as a means to interrogate and disrupt some of the constructions outlined above. The aim of whiteness studies can be described as rendering the perceived normality of race abnormal in some way, exposing and unpacking the “trouble” within discursive resources concerning race and whiteness. Steyn and Conway describe elements of whiteness studies as

“Making ‘visible’ racial privilege, the assumptions, the taken-for-grantednesses, the identities and ‘raced’ subjectivities, and unmasking the strategic manner in which whiteness masks its operations...”³¹⁶

Melissa Steyn further describes how studies in whiteness have

... exposed the extent to which the racial order imperceptibly functions around the comfort, convenience, affirmation, solidarity, psychological well-being, advantage, and advancement of whites, and that despite the way in which white people experience their social space as culturally neutral and individually determined, whiteness has definite cultural content, characterized by assumptions, belief systems, value structures and institutional and discursive options that frame white people’s self-understanding.³¹⁷

This approach to making sense of racial identity constructs necessarily directly challenges the racially-based logic of the apartheid system and its ontological constructions of racial identities. It demands reflexive engagement with the ways of being white in the world that have been implicit and the basis from which racial identities have been constructed over significant periods of time for research participants, and myself as the researcher.

³¹⁵ Garner, S. *Whiteness: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp.2,3

³¹⁶ Steyn and Conway “Introduction: Intersecting Whiteness, Interdisciplinary Debates” p.285

³¹⁷ Steyn “Rehabilitating a Whiteness Disgraced” p.144

The logic and hierarchical ethos of apartheid were always ambiguous and subject to shifts in their “inclusionary and exclusionary strategies”³¹⁸ both before and after the apartheid government was in power. Hegemonic discourses are based on binaries, giving rise to constructs of splitness, which means that they are inevitably an uneasy attempt to live in denial of the multiply fractured realities they cannot or will not acknowledge.³¹⁹

SADF conscripts were called on to serve in a military system which had the specific aim of preserving a system that privileged and entrenched the power of white South Africans. One of the paradoxes that they lived with, however, was that this military system comprised soldiers identified as both black and white.³²⁰ After 1994, conscripts experienced a period of socio-political change, in which discursive resources regarding whiteness went through a time of significant change and contestation. Therefore, while it is important to interrogate the systemic and contextual discursive resources regarding race that characterised the apartheid era, it is equally important to recognise the complexities, “trouble” and efforts at repair³²¹ that these resources invoke – both about the past and the present.

Whiteness and Ethnicity

In addition to the systematic fracturing and “othering” of identities for black and white people under apartheid, one of the other fractured realities during this period was that white people were far from being an homogenous ethnic or ideological group.

South African history and politics have been characterised and deeply affected by tensions between white South Africans who have claimed the ethnic identities of being English or Afrikaans. As Conway has discussed in some detail, the National Party used a militarised

³¹⁸ Norval, A.J. “Social ambiguity and the crisis of apartheid” in Laclau, E. (ed.) *The making of political identities* (London: Verso, 1994), pp.115ff.

³¹⁹ Epstein “Marked Men” p.51

³²⁰ Williams, D. *On the Border: The White South Africa Military Experience 1965-1990* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2008), p.19

³²¹ Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.117

construction of white masculinity to paper over these “intra-white” and “intra-elite” fractures in the interests of fighting a perceived common enemy.³²²

However, conscripts’ narratives about their experiences reveal both the significance of discursive resources relating to being constructed as English or Afrikaans and the “trouble” or conflict identifying with these intra-white fractures gave rise to. Steyn rightly highlights the difficulty of these ambiguities for researchers; any claim regarding race requires some kind of ethnic qualification about the extent to which it applies to English and/or Afrikaans white South Africans.³²³ This has certainly been a factor in conscripts’ accounts – while being white was an identity shared by all conscripts, being English or Afrikaans often led to conflicts and power dynamics within the SADF that eclipsed any commonalities or shared sense of identity.

Shifts in Whiteness as a Discursive Resource Post-1994

The emergence of a new South African system of government in 1994 meant that the previous founding premise of race as the basis for social order was disrupted. Over the period of a few years, white men who had been conscripted had to adapt to very different negotiations of power in relation to their race and gender. The old conception of racially determined separateness based on spatial and political order through segregation was subjected to radical change.³²⁴

However, changes to formal, public systems and policies of government have not necessarily completely changed the old racial discursive resources. As Durrheim and Dixon

³²² See, for example, Conway, D. “‘Somewhere on the Border – Of Credibility’: The Cultural Construction and Contestation of ‘the Border’ in White South African Society” in Baines, G. & Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008) and Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC*

³²³ Steyn “Rehabilitating a Whiteness Disgraced” p.149

³²⁴ Durrheim, K. and Dixon, J. *Racial Encounter: the Social Psychology of Contact and Desegregation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p.208

have outlined in their research on racially desegregated spaces, apartheid era racial ontologies have persisted in the midst of epistemological adaptations in the post-apartheid era.³²⁵ This will be explored in more detail with regard in the case studies discussed in Chapter Six.

Gender as a Discursive Resource in the Context of this Research

While gender is the second discursive resource to be discussed in this chapter, it was inextricably linked to the issues of race for conscripts in the SADF. This is because it was both their whiteness and sex that led to men being conscripted, the consequence of a paradoxical situation that both privileged and discriminated against them.³²⁶

Conway describes conscription as an institution which used conflated constructions of masculinity and (in the case of the SADF, white) citizenship as a founding premise.³²⁷ He goes further to state:

Both conscription and objection to military service are therefore performances in the public realm and performances that are generative of gendered political identities. These performances, understood in Butler's terms that "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results",³²⁸ are generative not only of individual subjectivity, but also of wider societal norms. Conscription is a powerful institutional means of defining "acceptable" practices of masculinity and citizenship and of defining the boundaries of the public realm itself.³²⁹

³²⁵ Ibid. p.209

³²⁶ Vale, P. "The Cold War and South Africa: Repetitions and Revisions on a Prolegomenon" in Baines & Vale (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.35

³²⁷ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.17

³²⁸ Butler, J. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999) p.33 cited in Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.4

³²⁹ Ibid.

While Conway's comments regarding conscription into the SADF are consistent with conscripts' accounts in this research, the temporal and generational aspects of this conflation of masculinities and citizenship need to be highlighted.

Generations of White South African Men in the Military

Many conscripts were the last of successive generations of families that lived through military training and service. Their great-grandfathers, grandfathers and fathers experienced warfare of different kinds in different contexts – whether by fighting in wars or participating in acts of resistance and refusal to serve.³³⁰

Building on this legacy, conscription into the SADF was constructed as a canonical narrative regarding masculinities, duty and citizenship.³³¹ Deterministic understandings of race and hegemonic, heterosexualised understandings of masculinity were systematically imposed on young white South African men from their childhood.³³²

A militarised identity is intrinsically linked to issues of masculinity, as Jacklyn Cock outlines in the following statement:

Militarisation - the mobilisation of resources for war - is a gendering process. It both uses and maintains the ideological construction of gender in the definitions of "masculinity" and "femininity". Women are widely cast in the role of "the protected" and "defended", often excluded from military service and almost always - whether in conventional or guerrilla armies - excluded from direct combat. This division - separating the protector from the protected, defender from defended - is crucial to both sexism and militarism.³³³

³³⁰ Ibid. p.47

³³¹ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* pp.56ff.

³³² Morrell, R. "The Times of Change: Men and Masculinity in South Africa" in R. Morrell (ed.) *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press; London and New York: Zed Books, 2001), p.8

³³³ Cock, J. *Women, the Military and Militarisation: Some Questions Raised by the South African Case* (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 1992), p. 1

An inherent factor in becoming part of a military space and lifestyle is that one inevitably becomes subsumed in a world of weaponry and violence,³³⁴ characterised by perceptions of threat. Weapons and violence become the literal and symbolic means by which a man (in this case) is socialised and initiated into an adversarial belief system in which they are “privileged” by serving as soldiers.³³⁵

As Epstein has pointed out, this means that South African masculinities have historically been “implicated in forms of interpersonal and institutional violence. They have both shaped it and been shaped by it.”³³⁶ For the young white men who participated in these activities, sport and the system of cadets at school inculcated canonical narratives in which aggressive masculinities as discursive resources prepared them to be soldiers later in life.³³⁷

Participating in the institution of conscription, with all the violence and weaponry with which it was associated, was therefore constructed as the “logical” thing for a young white man to do³³⁸ in eliminating perceived threats to his way of life, family and community.

Resistance and Identity “Trouble”

It is important to emphasise that conscripts did not form an homogenous group which uncritically subscribed to these models of masculinity. Up to 90% of those arrested and sentenced to army detentions in 1984 were men attempting to get out of SADF related

³³⁴ Myrntinen, H. “Disarming Masculinities” in *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security* Vol. 4 2003, pp.37-46

³³⁵ Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* p.57

³³⁶ Epstein *Marked Men* p.50.

³³⁷ Cock, J. “Gun Violence and Masculinity in Contemporary South Africa” in Morrell, R. (ed.) *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001), p.51; Conway *Masculinities, Militarisation and the ECC* pp.71,72

³³⁸ Morrell “The Times of Change” p.17

duties, a figure which Cawthra suggests might be a fair representation of other years that conscription was in place.³³⁹

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, increasing numbers of men made public stands against serving in the SADF during the 1980s. As I discuss in some detail in an earlier paper,³⁴⁰ the issue of conscientious objection³⁴⁰ was an act of resistance against both serving in the military and the discursive resources regarding masculinities and citizenship in the SADF with which serving in the military required compliance. Objection was an act of narrative repair in the face of the fractured and fracturing phenomenology and identity constructs of the military system of their time.

Homosexuality and Identity “Trouble”

Another aspect of masculine identity that was significant during this period was the SADF’s treatment of homosexual men. Self-identifying or being identified as a homosexual man resulted in identity “trouble” and contestations of masculinities in the face of the ontological constructions of masculinities at the time of apartheid.

In spite of the fact that homosexuality had been removed from the psychiatric DSM manuals as a disorder and aversion therapy practices discredited as a possible ‘cure’ for homosexuality,³⁴¹ the SADF incarcerated men assumed to be deviant from prescribed norms (i.e. homosexuality, drug use, conscientious objection and recognised clinical psychological disorders) in especially assigned psychiatric wards. Homosexual men in particular were

³³⁹ Cawthra, G. *Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine* (London: International Defence & Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF), 1986), p.45, cited in Gear, S. “‘Now that the War is Over’ Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence: A literature review” in *Violence and Transition Series* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002), p.83

³⁴⁰ Edlmann, T. “Division in the (Inner) Ranks: The Psychosocial Legacies of the Border Wars” *South African Historical Journal* Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2012, 256-272

³⁴¹ van Zyl et al *Aversion Project Report* p.49

subjected to aversion therapy, which sometimes took the form of electric shock therapy.³⁴² This was clearly in contravention of the Hippocratic Oath and the Tokyo Declaration (which banned doctors from participating in torture, and to which South Africa was a signatory), an issue the SADF seems to have circumvented by insisting that medical officers were under military jurisdiction and could not disobey a direct command.³⁴³

Being homosexual was illegal in South Africa under the Immorality Act Amendment of 1968, meaning that men suspected of being homosexual could have been handed over to the police for legal prosecution. I have not come across any record of the SADF doing this. Another option was to disqualify homosexual men from serving in the SADF, as was the case with permanent force members, but this policy was not officially applied to conscripts.³⁴⁴

With regard to gay conscripts, the SADF dealt with matters on its own terms, although their policies seem not to have been clearly articulated or coherent, resulting in men being treated in arbitrary and often punitive ways.³⁴⁵ Whatever the policy and legal frameworks were, the experience of being in the military seems to have been complex and frequently very difficult for men who were identified, or self-identified, as homosexual. Some were incarcerated, others were discharged by their commanding officers. The majority seem to have negotiated their way through their period of service to greater or lesser degrees of invisibility.³⁴⁶ More than one research participant that I spoke to alluded to the fact that officers would sometimes protect gay men from violence or punishment.³⁴⁷

³⁴² Ibid. p.49

³⁴³ Ibid. p.48

³⁴⁴ Ibid. p.55

³⁴⁵ Ibid. p.54

³⁴⁶ Andre Carl van der Merwe's book *Moffie: A Novel* (Hermanus: Penstock Publishing, 2006) is a particularly interesting book in this regard. Written as a novel so as to legally protect himself from prosecution by his family, it provides a subtle and moving narrative of a gay man's experience of conscription and South African society at large. It was used as the basis for a contemporary dance piece by the same name which was performed at the 2012 South African National Arts festival, choreographed by Young Artist of the Year winner for Dance, Bailey Snyman.

³⁴⁷ This is discussed in some detail in the interview with Greig Coetzee in the video documentary *Property of the State*, Dir. Gerald Kraak, (DVD, Out in Africa, 2003).

Because of their deviance from (and defiance of) the heterosexualised norm within the military and South African society in general, and because conscripts signed away all rights the moment they reported for military duty, homosexual men were uniquely vulnerable to the whims of the military system. They were also vulnerable and subject to the prejudices and violent persecution of other soldiers serving alongside them. As a consequence, there are records of rape, beatings, and a number of gay men committing suicide.³⁴⁸

While masculinities and whiteness have been relatively overt discursive resources, perceptions of threat as a discursive resource forms a less obvious pattern within narrations of conscription. The following section of this chapter will discuss perceptions of threat as a discursive resource in narrating conscription.

Perceptions of Threat as a Discursive Resource in Narrating Conscription³⁴⁹

Perceptions of threat have been placed alongside whiteness and masculinities as a discursive resource in this research for two reasons.

Firstly, the stated guiding principle behind the apartheid state's "total onslaught" ideology was a perception that there was a communist threat. This perception was a key motivation in the state's response, of which conscription to the SADF formed a part, leading to the deployment of troops in both neighbouring states and the townships of South Africa. Secondly, perceptions of threat have remained a significant pattern in post-apartheid narrations about the legacies of conscription and in conscripts' narrations of their identities. Responses to perceptions of threat as a discursive resource have also informed conscripts'

³⁴⁸ van Zyl et al *Aversion Project Report* p.67

³⁴⁹ Thanks to participants in the SANPAD seminar held at Rhodes University on 8 August 2011 for helping me identify and unpack this issue within the research.

post-apartheid narrative negotiations, an issue that will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

Perceptions of Threat and “Total Onslaught”

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the apartheid state’s efforts to ensure the perpetuation of white political power and privilege was achieved through the development of what the National Party’s Ministry of Defence called a “total strategy”. This ideology was put in place in response to the perceived threat of a “total onslaught”, allegedly primarily from communist forces. It was a wide-ranging and comprehensive campaign. All aspects of civil and military life fell under the control and auspices of the state in its social, economic, political and military efforts to resist the various (and conflated) perceived threats that it faced.³⁵⁰

Norval describes the apartheid state’s discourse on communism as part of a “total onslaught” as a “social imaginary”.³⁵¹ This imaginary discourse was built on the foundation of constructions of equally imaginary identity frontiers in which racialised “others” were “excluded from the domain of the legitimate, the self, the inside” into “naturalised forms of identification” which needed to be protected and defended.³⁵² Besides the racial basis of apartheid, a key “other” in this social imaginary was communism, about which Norval has the following to say:

The various facets of the discourse on communism, in fact, drew together a great many elements of other discourses which informed the apartheid imaginary. It is interesting to note, at this point, that certain changes occurred in the NP discourse on communism. Throughout the apartheid era “communism” remained central to the NP discourse. However, the meaning of this term became vaguer as the years went by. Whereas the discourse on communism in the late 1940s and 1950s was characterised by a certain specificity as to “communist doctrine” and whereas it

³⁵⁰ Craig, D. “ ‘Total Justification’: Ideological Manipulation and South Africa’s Border War” in Baines, G. & Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.58

³⁵¹ Norval *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* p.54

³⁵² Ibid.

displayed some knowledge of divisions in the communist world, the later treatment of communism was increasingly without referent, designating more generally as “an enemy”, an enemy which came to be defined by its opposition to apartheid ... The more apartheid came to be not a specific policy but a general horizon in terms of which all facets of the social world could be understood, the more communism lost its specificity.³⁵³

Norval’s discursive theoretical framing of the apartheid state’s ideological and political constructions resonate strongly with the theoretical framing of this research. What Norval might describe as an imaginary has been described elsewhere by van der Merwe as a “Grand Narrative”:

During the height of apartheid, the core of the government’s Grand Narrative could be summed up as “a total defence against the total onslaught of godless terrorists.”³⁵⁴

Both Norval and Van der Merwe focus on the total onslaught itself as a discourse or a grand narrative. However, when using a synthetic narrative-discursive approach, the focus needs to be the accrued ideas and associations which give rise to particular patterns or discursive resources across narrations of identity.³⁵⁵ It is for this reason that this research chooses to regard the apartheid state’s ideology, imaginary or grand narrative of “total onslaught” as part of a pattern of perceived threats forming a discursive resource.

As has been discussed in Chapter One, political leaders played a key role in this strategy of infusing perceptions of threat as a discursive resource into apartheid era South African society. Their influence, combined with extreme levels of political and social “othering” shaped both military culture and discourses of society at the time. The outcome has been a

³⁵³ Norval *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* p.138

³⁵⁴ Van der Merwe, C.N. “Literature as Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Examples from Afrikaans Literature” in Gobodo-Madikizela, P. and van der Merwe, C. (eds.) *Memory, Narrative and Forgiveness: Perspectives on the Unfinished Journeys of the Past* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p.284

³⁵⁵ Taylor and Littleton “Biographies in talk” pp.28-29

generation of men for whom aggression in the face of an “other” or perceived threat of any kind was (and for some, still is) the norm.

Perceptions of Threat in Post-Apartheid South Africa

It is striking how apartheid era discourses focused on the “total onslaught” as the primary perceived threat in white South Africa, both in research and in cultural texts. While the threat of communism might continue in discussions amongst ex-conscripts,³⁵⁶ research in post-apartheid South Africa has shifted completely in this regard. As will be discussed further in the rest of this section, post-apartheid research in South Africa has tended to focus on continued racial “othering” and emerging perceptions of racial threat that shape narrations of identity “trouble” and social relations of power in post-apartheid South Africa. The idea of a “total onslaught” has become an historical reference in post-apartheid research, although the very notions of racialised perceptions of threat that they regard as current realities have their roots in colonial and particularly apartheid era notions of perceptions of threat. It is for this reason that perceptions of threat is being treated as a pervading discursive resource in narrations of conscription, with a recognition that the expressions and articulations of this discursive resource have shifted from being ideological to racial over time.

The term “perceptions of threat” has featured in a number of post-apartheid publications. A selection of these will be outlined in the section that follows by way of exploring post-apartheid framings of perceptions of threat as a discursive resource.

³⁵⁶ See Chapter Seven for further discussion about this.

Racial Perceptions of Threat

In a paper published in 1998 entitled “‘Racialised’ discourses: understanding perceptions of threat in post-apartheid South Africa”³⁵⁷ South African psychologist Garth Stevens highlights two formulations of racialised perceptions of threat which are worth highlighting with regard to perceptions of threat in this research. The first is the Manichean view, described by Bulhan as being necessary for racist oppression to exist.³⁵⁸ Key to this theory is the idea of racial identities being constructed as irreconcilable opposites, with the oppressive group being attributed largely positive characteristics and the oppressed being attributed negative characteristics. The maintenance of racialised oppressive social relations is dependent on continued racial polarisation.³⁵⁹ Based on this theory, it is understandable that the apartheid state, and the majority of white South Africans, perceived African nationalism as a threat. As was to be proven largely correct in 1994, majority rule in South Africa would result in significant disruption of racial superiority precipitating significant identity “trouble”.

The second theory cited by Stevens is Ashmore and Del Boca’s conception of perceived racial threat.³⁶⁰ Their argument is that societies in social transition from systems that have been founded on racism develop the fear-threat based syndrome called perceived racial threat in which both historically oppressed and oppressive groupings feel threatened by each other in the recalibration of power dynamics during a time of transition.

A significant feature of Stevens’ paper is fear of a racialised other, which leads to perceptions of threat. Stevens highlights discourses emerging from research in which black

³⁵⁷ Stevens, G. “‘Racialised’ discourses: understanding perceptions of threat in post-apartheid South Africa” *South African Journal of Psychology* December 1998, Vol. 28 Issue 4, 204-215

³⁵⁸ Bulhan, H.A. *Frantz Fanon and the psychology of oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985) cited in Stevens “‘Racialised’ discourses” p.205

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ashmore, R.D. & Del Boca, F.K. “Psychological approaches to understanding intergroup conflict” in Katz, P.A. (ed.) *Towards the elimination of racism* (New York: Pergamon, 1976) cited in Stevens “‘Racialised’ discourses” p.205

people are perceived to be “physically powerful, aggressive, threatening and violent”,³⁶¹ more violent than white people,³⁶² and a threat to white people’s economic positions and personal safety.³⁶³ Perceptions of threat thus continue to prevail in white post-apartheid South African society, but the focus has shifted from a primarily external threat from “communists” to people who are in reality citizens of the same society: racially “othered” South Africans.

In a paper published a year after Stevens’, Brewer draws on “Realistic Conflict Theory of intergroup relations”³⁶⁴ in focusing on the “reciprocal relationship between ingroup cohesion and outgroup hostility (which) may be limited to conditions in which groups are in competition over physical resources or political power.”³⁶⁵ Whether actual or imagined, this perception of threat leads directly to fear and hostility from each group towards the other.³⁶⁶

Finally, a third example is a paper published in 2002, in which Korf and Malan discuss the relationship between social change and threat.³⁶⁷ In more recent years, perceptions of

³⁶¹ Rattansi, A. (1992) “Changing the subject? Racism, culture and education” in Donald, J. and Rattansi, A. (eds) *Race, culture and difference* (London: Sage, 1992), pp.11-48; van Dijk, T.A. *Prejudice in discourse* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1984) and van Dijk, T.A. *Elite discourse and the reproduction of racism* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1991) cited in Stevens “‘Racialised’ discourses” p.205

³⁶² Ashmore, R.D. & Del Boca, F.K. “Psychological approaches to understanding intergroup conflict” in Katz, P.A. (ed.) *Towards the elimination of racism*, pp.73-123 (New York: Pergamon, 1976) and Maykovitch, M.K. “Reciprocity in racial stereotypes: white, black and yellow” *American Journal of Sociology*, 77, 876-897, cited in Stevens p.205

³⁶³ Ashmore, R.D. & Butsch, R.J. *Perceived threat and the perception of violence in biracial settings: towards an experimental paradigm* (Boston: Eastern Psychological Association, 1972) and Donnerstein, E., Donnerstein, M., Simon, S. and Ditrachs, R. “Variables in interfacial aggression: anonymity, expected retaliation and a riot” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 22, 236-245, 1972 cited in Stevens p.205

³⁶⁴ Brewer, M.B. “The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?” in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 1999, pp.429–444

³⁶⁵ Brewer “The Psychology of Prejudice” p.435

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Korf, L. and Malan, J. “Threat to Ethnic Identity: The Experience of White Afrikaans-Speaking Participants in Post-apartheid South Africa” *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 2002, 142(2), 149–169

threat have been transferred to non-South Africans and given rise to sometimes extreme xenophobic violence.³⁶⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the social constructionist narrative-discursive framework that has shaped this research. I draw on Taylor’s synthetic approach, mainly to bridge Michele Crossley’s focus on phenomenology and Molly Andrews’ insights into political identities and contexts. In so doing, I identify and discuss the three key discursive resources – viz. masculinities, whiteness and perceptions of threat – that inform my analysis of conscripts’ narratives. Special attention is paid to how these resources are disrupted, or “troubled”, and shift in different temporal settings, especially in the post-apartheid present that continues to shape personal and political narratives.

The following chapter will outline the relationship between these framings of narrative theory and the fact that this research deals with memories of violence and possible trauma.

³⁶⁸ Crush, J. “The Dark Side of Democracy: Migration, Xenophobia and Human Rights in South Africa” in *International Migration* Vol. 38 (6) SI 2/2000

CHAPTER THREE:

NARRATING MEMORIES OF VIOLENCE, TRAUMA AND MORAL INJURY IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

This chapter builds on the foundation of the previous chapter's formulation of the narrative-discursive theoretical frameworks that this research has drawn on. Due to the fact that this research focuses on the post-apartheid legacies of military conscription, this chapter will explore theoretical frameworks for narrative inquiry regarding memory work and trauma.

Edna Lomsky-Feder's concept of memory fields will form the primary theoretical framework for this aspect of the research. Following this, a history of theories concerning war trauma and the emergence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a psychiatric diagnosis will be discussed. The responses of researchers who are also practitioners (primarily Judith Herman, Jonathan Shay and Edward Tick) to theories concerning PTSD will then be used as the basis for identifying themes that can be applied to understanding narrations of the legacies of violence and war trauma. The final section of the chapter weaves narrative approaches into the theorisation of violence and war trauma which will form the basis of the discussion in Chapters Six and Seven.

Memory and Biographical Talk

Narratives in the form of stories or biographical talk are inevitably about memories. This is not a straightforward statement, however. For example, each of the three narrative theorists whose work was discussed in the previous chapter understands the narration of memories in different ways.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Crossley regards phenomenology as primary, and the narrative coherence of an individual's accounts of their own experiences as being legitimate on its own terms. Taylor would argue that individuals' accounts, or biographical talk, arise out of a personal biography but that these are sometimes complex and "troubled" through being part of a particular context, with narrations thus simultaneously drawing on and shaping discursive resources. Andrews' view is that narrative is about personal experience, but is constantly engaging with and infused by the effects of contextual flux and change, with the result that narratives may contain multiple rather than unitary truths. She also emphasises the relationship between silence, story-telling and trauma.³⁶⁹

Conceptualising a narrative approach to research, particularly when dealing with an historical context defined by violence and possible trauma, is therefore complex and requires managing a number of tensions. One of these tensions is the relationship between biographical accounts and the post-conflict, post-apartheid socio-political context in which the texts that are the focus of this thesis occur.

The Construction of Memory Fields in Narrating War

In her research with Israeli ex-conscripts, Edna Lomsky-Feder describes the contested and "troubled" social spaces in which narratives about war are constructed as "memory fields".³⁷⁰ There are significant correlations between Taylor's use of the term discursive resources and Lomsky-Feder's use of the term memory fields. Both understand personal narrations and constructions of meaning to have a reciprocal relationship with contextual constructions of memory, meaning and identity. The key difference is the way in which Lomsky-Feder's work focuses on the constructions of social memory spaces, while Taylor's narrative-discursive approach could be said to look very specifically at speakers' biographical talk within and in relation to those memory fields.

³⁶⁹ See Chapter Two for more detailed discussion about Crossley, Taylor and Andrews.

³⁷⁰ Lomsky-Feder, E. "Life Stories, War and Veterans: On the Social Distribution of Memories" in *Ethos* 32(1):82-109, 2004, pp.82ff.

Lomsky-Feder's description of the way in which Israeli conscripts remember and account for their experiences of war applies equally to SADF conscripts:

The personal memory of war is not homogenous but, rather, multicoloured: Some remember the war as a traumatic experience and others as an heroic event; some recall it as an experience that obstructs personal development, and others as an empowering and fortifying one. War veterans, even from the same social group, remember the war in different ways, but all reminiscences are shaped within a memory field that is socially constructed.³⁷¹

This social construction of memories is regulated by cultural models that frame these memories, whether they are traumatic, normalising or heroic, resulting in a level of social control of the meaning given to personal recollections. Accessibility to "models of memory" are determined by what Lomsky-Feder calls "distributive criteria" that determine what is remembered, and who is entitled to remember.³⁷² In the context of Lomsky-Feder's work, remembering takes place in mnemonic communities, such as families, local communities or amongst comrades. (In the context of this research, the media³⁷³ and online or cyberspace communities³⁷⁴ would need to be added to this list.) These communities may be shaped by generational changes or organisational recollections by military structures. Mnemonic communities and the memory fields that they construct are also shaped by, but different from, what she calls "national memory" which is used in the service of national and political metanarratives.³⁷⁵

Thus, Lomsky-Feder argues, a personal account of war requires an individual to "converse" with a range of cultural models in order to create his/her own version. This may require adopting, rejecting or creating alternatives to cultural models and memory fields. A narrator

³⁷¹ Lomsky-Feder "Life Stories, War and Veterans" p.82

³⁷² Ibid. p.83

³⁷³ See Chapter Six for discussion about the role of the media in shaping post-apartheid memory fields regarding SADF conscripts.

³⁷⁴ See Baines, G. "Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation? White Conscripts Reassess the Meaning of the 'Border War' in Post-Apartheid South Africa" in *InterCulture* 5.3 October 2008, p.223 for some background to the nature and role of cyberspace networks for SADF conscripts.

³⁷⁵ Ibid. p.84

is thus an agent of his/her own story in creating an account of the past which consists of both a unique structuring of experiences, events and meaning, while also being embedded in time, place and culture.³⁷⁶ She argues that a soldier's accounts of war are a "cultural text" that weave personal experiences and the collective representations which constitute the memory fields of a particular war.³⁷⁷

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, I have drawn extensively on this notion of conscripts' accounts as cultural texts in this research. As such, conscripts' accounts of their experiences can also be read as maps of the memory fields that have shaped them, the discursive resources on which they have drawn and the contextual temporal threads that inform their narrations of identity. This in no way disregards or dismisses the uniqueness of each conscript's experiences, nor does it diminish the significance of the phenomenology of narratives. Instead, it allows a researcher to surface the common threads that each narration negotiates³⁷⁸ and to act as an agent in initiating a communal response that allows South Africans who were not necessarily part of the military to become part of the conversation.

The purpose of this approach to narrative is to avoid developing a form of hegemonic remembrance,³⁷⁹ and rather to allow for an exploration of the complexities, contradictions and inconsistencies of personal narratives as cultural texts regarding conscription. The intention is to create a flexible space that can make sense of the delicate, courageous, fragile, often fraught negotiations conscripts have needed to make in constructing accounts of the legacies of conscription.

One of the factors that needs to be considered, therefore, is how these narrations might be affected by the post-apartheid South African context's construction of hierarchical memory fields.

³⁷⁶ Ibid. p.85

³⁷⁷ Ibid. p.85

³⁷⁸ See Taylor and Littleton "Biographies in talk"

³⁷⁹ Lomsky-Feder "Life Stories, War and Veterans" p.86

Hierarchies of Memories and Memory Fields

Diana Gibson's research into the experiences of what she calls SADF "Bush war veterans" uses Lomsky-Feder's concept of memory fields in discussing the memory spaces available to conscripts in post-apartheid South Africa.³⁸⁰

She describes parameters of the memory fields available to conscripts in narrating their experiences as being "defined by power".³⁸¹ During the apartheid era, this parameter-defining power rested with the "dominant" political and military versions of conscription and the perceived threats that the SADF was fighting against.³⁸² In the post-apartheid context, former SADF soldiers are "perceived and politically represented as having fought on the 'wrong' side, i.e. that of the apartheid state."³⁸³

Gibson does acknowledge that there have been some shifts in how these memory fields have functioned in more recent times, and cites Sasha Gear's seminal research as an illustration of this.³⁸⁴ But, she correctly points out, there is still a canonical narrative requiring soldiers not to discuss the fact that they not only "lost" the war, but that it may also have been unjust.³⁸⁵ I also agree with Gibson's assessment that the current South African memory field regarding the "Bush war" and the role of the SADF during the apartheid era in general is "somewhat hegemonic/authoritative and has hierarchies."³⁸⁶ The implications of this will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

³⁸⁰ Gibson, D. "'The *Balsak* in the Roof': Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts" in Kapteijns, L. and Richters, A. (eds.) *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010)

³⁸¹ Gibson "Balsak in the Roof" p.218

³⁸² Ibid. p.215

³⁸³ Ibid. p.214

³⁸⁴ Gear, S. "The Road Back: Psycho-social strains of Transition for South Africa's Ex-combatants" in Baines, G. & Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008)

³⁸⁵ Gibson "Balsak in the Roof" p.215

³⁸⁶ Ibid. p.213

This idea that memory fields determine the way in which memories of war and possible trauma can be narrated needs to be examined further. LaCapra's notions of historical and structural trauma will be outlined in the next section of this chapter, in order to unpack the tensions between hierarchies of memory fields and unhelpful appropriation of narrations of victimhood in contexts of possible trauma.

“Writing History, Writing Trauma”

As discussed in the Introduction, this research focuses not only on the psychosocial aspects of SADF conscripts' experiences but also on accounting for a history that is defined by violence and the possibility of trauma. Dominick LaCapra's work is significant in relation to this research for two reasons. Firstly, as was discussed in the Introduction, because of the way he articulates the challenges of researching a history and context of trauma.³⁸⁷ Secondly, because of the tensions and identity “trouble” that his differentiation between structural and historical trauma³⁸⁸ give rise to.

LaCapra's work focuses on the Holocaust of the Second World War (also known as the Shoah), which witnessed a scale of violence far in excess of the history being discussed here, over a far shorter period of time than either conscription or the post-apartheid era that this research is dealing with. However, his theorisation of notions of victors and vanquished as well as perpetrator and victim are significant in that they “trouble” some of the memory fields outlined in the previous section.

LaCapra identified historical trauma as occurring when the victims and perpetrators of trauma are clearly identifiable. This arises out of the need for a respectful and appropriate

³⁸⁷ LaCapra, D. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp.38-41. See discussion about this in the Introduction.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p.76

kind of victim consciousness, rather than regarding “all history as trauma”³⁸⁹ in which inappropriate symbolic capital is generated out of the experiences of victims.³⁹⁰

Structural trauma, on the other hand, is “trans-historical” and can be experienced by anybody as either victim or perpetrator, or possibly both. When structural trauma is applied to the context of war, “there is no ultimate difference between victors and vanquished.”³⁹¹ This notion of there being little difference between those who win or lose a war flies in the face of the hierarchical memory fields of post-apartheid South Africa. However, as I will outline in the final chapter of this thesis, it is a concept that is key to disrupting impunities of power, knowledge and identity in the narrative terrain of post-apartheid South Africa.

LaCapra makes very specific links in his writing between his formulation of the trauma of Shoah and the trauma of apartheid.³⁹² His concern is about being clear regarding the need for victims of both the Shoah and apartheid to deal with their “historical losses” on their own terms rather than being “obfuscated or rashly generalised.”³⁹³ In doing this, he shifts trauma from being primarily psychological to simultaneously being political.³⁹⁴

The “troubling” aspects of this argument for SADF conscripts in narrating their identities – especially those who have experienced traumatic stress – are complex. This is because the narrative terrain within which possible personal experiences of trauma can be narrated is contested and at times intractable in the light of the fact that conscription has been described as positioning them as both victims and perpetrators.³⁹⁵ The challenge that arises is how to find language and appropriate spaces to make sense of both their own

³⁸⁹ LaCapra *Writing History, Writing Trauma* p.64

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.65

³⁹¹ Levy, D. and Sznajder, N. “The politics of commemoration: The Holocaust, memory and trauma” in Delanty, G. (ed.) *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory* (London and New York” Routledge, 2006), p.294

³⁹² LaCapra, D. “Trauma, Absence, Loss” *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 25, No. 4 (Summer, 1999), pp. 696-727; LaCapra *Writing History, Writing Trauma* pp.43ff.

³⁹³ *Ibid.* p.64

³⁹⁴ Levy and Sznajder “The politics of commemoration” p.291

³⁹⁵ See discussion in Chapter Six about the TRC Special Hearing on Conscription for more on this notion of conscripts being both victims and perpetrators in the apartheid era.

experiences and the positioning and political appropriateness of their trauma. Can they legitimately claim to be a victim of the system of military conscription? Does the subject positioning that arises out of their whiteness and maleness pre-empt any possibility of a claim to being a victim, and in fact lead to them being positioned as a perpetrator? Or does a conscript rather understand their trauma as being structural in nature, and therefore no different to a traumatised SWAPO, Cuban or uMkhonto weSizwe soldier? If so, how is this possible in practice, given that the pervading memory fields of post-apartheid South Africa remain defined by polarised discursive resources of race, gender and perceptions of threat which are influenced by confusing identity constructs of both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras?

These questions will be discussed in more detail in the closing sections of this chapter, and also in Chapters Six and Seven. For now, it is necessary to place these political framings of violence and trauma alongside some historical background to the growing, although not unproblematic, interest of recent times in psychiatric constructions of war and trauma.

Some Background to Theories of Trauma and the Military

Much has been written about the psychological effect of modern warfare, with literature about Vietnam War veterans having some resonance with this research.³⁹⁶ While warfare and battle are phenomena that date back to the origins of human history, the advent of modern warfare seems to have precipitated unprecedented effects and legacies.³⁹⁷ Increased mechanisation and the new types of warfare they have given rise to would appear to have resulted in corresponding increases in psychological stress and the likelihood of trauma for combatants.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ Shay, J. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Unfolding of Character* (New York: Atheneum, 1994); Shay, J. *Odysseus in America* (New York: Scribner, 2002); Tick, E. *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 2005)

³⁹⁷ Tick *War and the Soul* pp.22,23

³⁹⁸ Binneveld, H. *From Shellshock to Combat Stress: A Comparative History of Military Psychology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), p.31

Efforts to address the effects of war date back centuries. Jungian orientated authors such as Hillman, Shay and Tick would argue that war belongs to the realms of myth, archetype and soul.³⁹⁹ Ancient cultures have understood war to be a rite of passage and developed mechanisms to address the effects of war.⁴⁰⁰ In Western culture, the nature and function of war has shifted, with increasing levels of sophistication and mechanisation resulting in successive attempts at making sense of the psychological effect of these developments on soldiers.

Various terms and diagnoses have been used over the centuries to make sense of the sometimes overwhelming nature of war and combat. In the seventeenth century there was the diagnosis of “nostalgia” among Swiss soldiers, while German and French doctors diagnosed what they understood to be a form of homesickness as *Heimweh* and *maladie du pays*. Spanish doctors diagnosed *estar roto*, “to be broken.” Civil War Americans described the syndrome as soldier’s heart, irritable heart, or nostalgia. In World War I it was called shellshock; largely because psychologists attributed it to a physical cause, viz. the “concussive effects of exploding shells”. Over time, psychologists acknowledged that the symptoms of shell shock were due to psychological trauma.⁴⁰¹ Later, in World War II and Korea, it was described as combat fatigue.⁴⁰² However, the focus of research continued to be the actual experience of combat, rather than its legacies. This focus only shifted in 1980, as the American Psychiatric Association (APA) grappled with diagnosing the psychologically damaging effects of war and combat for American veterans of the war in Vietnam.

Psychiatric Classifications of Trauma: The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

In 1952, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) published its first classification system, known as DSM I (“The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” Volume I). In

³⁹⁹ Hillman, J. *A Terrible Love of War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), p.9ff; Tick *War and the Soul* pp.28-30; Shay *Achilles in Vietnam* p.xx

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. Hillman, Shay, Tick

⁴⁰¹ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.20

⁴⁰² Tick *War and the Soul* p.99

the light of experiences of Second World War veterans, a mental illness called “catastrophic stress reaction” was identified as “overwhelming fears of death on the battlefield”.⁴⁰³ However, in the DSM II, published in 1968, all reference to the effects of war were removed, including “catastrophic stress reaction”.⁴⁰⁴

During the 1970s American Vietnam veterans and psychiatrists Robert Jay Lifton and Chaim Shatan became actively engaged in addressing veterans’ suffering, demanding that the consequences of war be addressed in some way.⁴⁰⁵ As a result, emphases in discussions about the trauma caused by combat shifted from making sense of what happened during experiences of war to the long-term after-effects.⁴⁰⁶ The DSM III manual published in 1980 finally responded to pressure from veterans and activists in the USA,⁴⁰⁷ defining PTSD as a stress disorder.⁴⁰⁸ The criteria for PTSD have been revised in subsequent editions of the DSM, with the DSM IV defining PTSD as an anxiety disorder rather than a stress disorder.⁴⁰⁹ Currently, the DSM V, which was published in May 2013, places PTSD in a chapter with far broader parameters entitled “Trauma and Stress or Related Orders”.⁴¹⁰

In diagnosing PTSD, multiple symptoms are placed in three categories: hyperarousal (resulting from a persistent expectation of danger), intrusion (resulting from an indelible imprint of the traumatic moment) and constriction (broadly described as a numbing response of surrender).⁴¹¹

While there have been shifts, changes and developments within diagnostic framework of PTSD, the broad parameters have remained constant. As Nigel Hunt emphasises, PTSD

⁴⁰³ Turnbull, G. *Trauma* (London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Bantam Press, 2011), p.56

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Herman, J. *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora 1997, 2001), pp.26,27

⁴⁰⁶ Binneveld *From Shellshock to Combat Stress* p.203

⁴⁰⁷ Turnbull *Trauma* p.56

⁴⁰⁸ Tick *War and the Soul* p.102

⁴⁰⁹ www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx (accessed on 2 January 2014)

⁴¹⁰ www.dsm5.org/Documents/PTSD%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf (accessed on 2 January 2014)

⁴¹¹ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.35

outlines the “characteristic symptoms” that arise from “exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor”⁴¹² rather than more commonplace experiences of everyday stress or possible traumatic stress. These include “war, rape, sexual abuse, exposure to natural or man-made disasters, and other forms of extreme stress.”⁴¹³ The diagnostic criteria for PTSD are:

Criterion A: The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

1. The person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others.
2. The person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror.

Criterion B: The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in at least one of the following ways:

1. Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts or perceptions.
2. Recurrent distressing dreams of the event.
3. Acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur upon waking or when intoxicated).
4. Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.
5. Physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

Criterion C: There is persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by at least three of the following:

1. Efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings of conversations associated with the trauma.
2. Efforts to avoid activities, places or people that arouse recollections of the trauma.
3. Inability to recall important aspects of the trauma.
4. Markedly decreased interest or participation in significant activities.
5. Feeling of detachment or estrangement from others.
6. Restricted range of affect (e.g. unable to have loving feelings).
7. Sense of foreshortened future (e.g. does not expect to have a career, marriage, children or a normal life span).

Criterion D: There are persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), indicated by at least two of the following:

⁴¹² Hunt, N. *Memory, War and Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.52

⁴¹³ Ibid.

1. Difficulty in falling or staying asleep.
2. Irritability or outbursts of anger.
3. Difficulty in concentrating.
4. Hypervigilance.
5. Exaggerated startle response.

Criterion E: Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, D, and E) is more than 1 month.

Criterion F: The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

It must be specified whether the duration is of less than 3 months, in which case it is classified as 'acute', or 3 months or more, in which case it is 'chronic'. It is classified as 'delayed onset' if the onset of symptoms occurs at least 6 months after the event.⁴¹⁴

One of the new developments in DSM V is that it addresses the historic failure of the APA to recognise the subtleties and differences between traumatic experiences as victim, perpetrator and witness⁴¹⁵ with the following criteria being listed:

The diagnostic criteria for the manual's next edition identify the trigger to PTSD as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violation. The exposure must result from one or more of the following scenarios, in which the individual:

- directly experiences the traumatic event;
- witnesses the traumatic event in person;
- learns that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend (with the actual or threatened death being either violent or accidental); or
- experiences first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event (not through media, pictures, television or movies unless work-related).⁴¹⁶

The factsheet about PTSD on the DSM V website, published by the APA, also acknowledges debate within psychiatry about the usefulness of PTSD when applied to military contexts:

Certain military leaders, both active and retired, believe the word "disorder" makes many soldiers who are experiencing PTSD symptoms reluctant to ask for help. They have urged a change to rename the disorder posttraumatic stress injury, a

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. pp.52,53

⁴¹⁵ Binneveld *From Shellshock to Combat Stress* p.59

⁴¹⁶ www.dsm5.org/Documents/PTSD%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf (accessed on 2 January 2014)

description that they say is more in line with the language of troops and would reduce stigma.

But others believe it is the military environment that needs to change, not the name of the disorder, so that mental health care is more accessible and soldiers are encouraged to seek it in a timely fashion. ... In DSM-5, PTSD will continue to be identified as a disorder.⁴¹⁷

As can be deduced from the APA's response to the issue of trauma in the military, the significance and helpfulness of PTSD as a diagnostic category – in this case especially for soldiers – is mixed.⁴¹⁸

Nevertheless, the field of military-orientated PTSD studies within academia has spawned a vast and multi-faceted array of research, with any online search for papers on related themes producing tens of thousands of results. While most research adopts the PTSD model, some research suggests that a diagnosis of this nature can be constricting and possibly victimising. Increasingly, researchers are exploring ways in which trauma also leads to resilience and post-traumatic growth.⁴¹⁹ This growing interest in shifting constructions of trauma away from being a “disorder” are a response to the way in which Western psychiatry and psychology have used the model of PTSD to create primarily negative perceptions of the social and psychological consequences of traumatic stress.⁴²⁰ In fact, as Hunt outlines in the following statement, a relatively small proportion of people who experience trauma show evidence of traumatic stress or the more extreme diagnosis of PTSD:

Most people who go through traumatic or stressful situations are not traumatised. They come out unscathed, somewhat changed but easily able to cope, or having learned something about life. There should be a focus on more positive aspects of change that occur as a result of being exposed to massively traumatising stimuli, change which may take place immediately but which is more likely to take much

⁴¹⁷ www.dsm5.org/Documents/PTSD%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf (accessed on 2 January 2014)

⁴¹⁸ Gibson *Balsak in the Roof* p.227

⁴¹⁹ Hunt *Memory, War and Trauma* pp.94,95; Agaibi, C.E. and Wilson, J.P. “Trauma, PTSD, and Resilience: A Review of the Literature” *Trauma Violence Abuse* 2005 6: 195-216; Bracken, P.J., Giller, J.E. and Summerfield, D. “Psychological Responses to War and Atrocity: The Limitations of Current Concepts” *Social Science and Medicine*, 1995, 40(8):1073-1082; Bonanno, G.A. “Resilience in the Face of Potential Trauma” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* Vol. 14, No. 3 (Jun., 2005), pp. 135-138

⁴²⁰ Edkins, J. *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.3ff.

longer, perhaps years. This positive focus can teach us a lot about the normal psychological processes that come into play during traumatic situations...”⁴²¹

Jenny Edkins also highlights the way in which what could be described as the PTSD “industry” has constructed potentially traumatic experiences in primarily negative ways:

Events of the sort we call traumatic are overwhelming but they are also a revelation. They strip away the diverse commonly accepted meanings by which we lead our lives in our various communities. They reveal the contingency of the social order... They question our settled assumptions about who we might be as humans and what we might be capable of. Those who survive often feel compelled to bear witness to these discoveries.⁴²²

Thus, while PTSD has rapidly gained significant traction as a psychiatric construct that assists with naming and addressing some symptoms relating to extreme traumatic stress, it is by no means uncontested or universally applied.⁴²³ In addition to the theoretical challenges outlined above, other research in the last few years suggests that some people develop what is called “appetitive aggression” in situations of combat, rather than exhibiting classic symptoms of PTSD.⁴²⁴ Gordon Turnbull, who has worked primarily with the British military in dealing with trauma, points out the PTSD has limited application because is a term used primarily by the American military and is used less in other Western contexts such as Britain.⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ Hunt *Memory, War and Trauma* p.81

⁴²² Edkins *Trauma and the memory of Politics* p.5

⁴²³ Bracken et al “Psychological Responses to War and Atrocity” p.1088

⁴²⁴ See Weierstall, R. and Elbert, T. “The Appetitive Aggression Scale-development of an instrument for the assessment of human’s attraction to violence” *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 2011, 2: 8430; Weierstall, R., Schalinski, I., Crombach, A., Hecker, T. and Elbert, T. “When combat prevents PTSD symptoms—results from a survey with former child soldiers in Northern Uganda” in *BMC Psychiatry* 2012 12:41; Weierstall, R., Bueno Castellanos, C.P., Neuner, F. and Elbert, T. “Relations among appetitive aggression, post-traumatic stress and motives for demobilization: a study in former Colombian combatants” in *Conflict and Health* 2013 7:9. Grateful thanks to Dr Martin Connell for bringing this research to my attention. This is an approach to making sense of violence and aggression that could well be used alongside Foster et al’s discussion about the factors that lead to acts of violence. See Foster, D., Haupt, P. and De Beer, M. *The Theatre of Violence: Narratives of Protagonists in the South African Conflict* (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2005).

⁴²⁵ Turnbull *Trauma* p.57

Judith Herman: “Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”

Judith Herman’s work, particularly with ex-combatants and survivors of sexual violence, has been seminal in broadening the APA’s rather narrow definitions of PTSD.⁴²⁶ Given her focus on the effects of prolonged experiences of trauma over time, and the relevance of this notion to this research, her work will be discussed in some detail.

In line with Kaminer and Eagle’s assessment of the South African context,⁴²⁷ she contends that many people’s experiences of trauma are “prolonged” and “repeated”, resulting in the need to recognise a “spectrum” of conditions that can best be described as “complex post-traumatic stress disorder.”⁴²⁸ This allows for the fact that people’s experiences and responses range from “a brief stress reaction that gets better by itself and never qualifies for a diagnosis, to classic or simple post-traumatic stress disorder, to the complex syndrome of prolonged, repeated trauma.”⁴²⁹

The following is Herman’s tabulated summary of complex post-traumatic stress disorder:

1. A history of subjection to totalitarian control over a prolonged period (months to years). Examples include hostages, prisoners of war, concentration-camp survivors, and survivors of some religious cults...
2. Alterations in affect regulation, including
 - Persistent dysphoria
 - Chronic suicidal preoccupation
 - Self-injury
 - Explosive or extremely inhibited anger (may alternate)
 - Compulsive or extremely inhibited sexuality (may alternate)
3. Alterations in consciousness, including
 - Amnesia or hypermnesia for traumatic events
 - Transient dissociative episode

⁴²⁶ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.67

⁴²⁷ Kaminer and Eagle *Traumatic Stress in South Africa*

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* p.119

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* p.119

- Depersonalisation/derealisation
 - Reliving experiences, either in the form of intrusive post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms or in the form of ruminative preoccupation
4. Alterations in self-perception, including
 - Sense of helplessness or paralysis of initiative
 - Shame, guilt and self-blame
 - Sense of defilement or stigma
 - Sense of complete difference from others (may include sense of specialness, utter aloneness, belief no other person can understand, or nonhuman identity)
 5. Alterations in perception of perpetrator, including
 - Preoccupation with relationship with perpetrator (includes preoccupation with revenge)
 - Unrealistic attribution of total power to perpetrator
 - Idealisation or paradoxical gratitude
 - Sense of special or supernatural relationship
 - Acceptance of belief system or rationalisation of perpetrator
 6. Alteration in relationships with others, including
 - Isolation and withdrawal
 - Disruption in intimate relationships
 - Repeated search for rescuer (may alternate with isolation and withdrawal)
 - Persistent distrust
 - Repeated failures of self-protection
 7. Alterations in systems of meaning
 - Loss of sustaining faith
 - Sense of hopelessness and despair⁴³⁰

Whatever its level of severity, Herman advocates three phases to a healing process from trauma. These are not necessarily discrete and there is no predicting how long each will take, but each is necessary in some form and at some stage. As with other elements of PTSD-related models, this model of recovery is based on an assumption that talking and healing are synonymous – what is commonly referred to as the notion of a “talking cure”.⁴³¹ As will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven, this is an assumption about healing and the possibilities of narrative repair that remain outside the realms of many SADF conscripts’ lived realities. However there are conscripts for whom this model of healing has proven helpful.

⁴³⁰ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.121

⁴³¹ Kaminer and Eagle *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* p.32

In terms of Herman's model, the first stage of healing is the need to establish a sense of emotional and physical safety,⁴³² after which a process of remembering and mourning of losses needs to take place.⁴³³ What she calls "reconnection" then follows, which includes learning to fight for and regain a moral sense of oneself and the world, reconciling with oneself, reconnecting with others, finding a survivor mission and resolving the impact and legacies that the trauma has left in a person's life.⁴³⁴

If this process can be undertaken in some way, Herman argues, a person who has experienced trauma will have few illusions and continue to regard life as tragic in some way, but there will be an element of gratitude and a cherishing of laughter that is restorative. The legacies of traumatic experiences can include a clear sense of what is important in life (and what is not), and a commitment to embracing what is understood to be good (rather than the evil of what caused the trauma).⁴³⁵ It needs to be noted that people who have had traumatic experiences without necessarily being traumatised by them often experience similar legacies of those experiences – because of their capacity for resilience and traumatic growth rather than their experience of PTSD.

Finally, Herman makes a statement about the dialectic between personal and contextual trauma that has resonance with aspects of this research:

In many countries that have recently emerged from dictatorship or civil war, it has become apparent that putting an immediate stop to the violence and attending to basic survival needs of the affected populations are necessary but not sufficient conditions for social healing. In the aftermath of systemic political violence, entire communities can display symptoms of PTSD, trapped in alternating cycles of numbing and intrusion, silence and re-enactment. Recovery requires remembrance and mourning ... Like traumatised individuals, traumatized countries need to remember, grieve and atone for their wrongs in order to avoid reliving them.⁴³⁶

⁴³² Herman *Trauma and Recovery* pp.153-174

⁴³³ *Ibid.* pp.175-195

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.* pp.196-213

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.* p.213

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.* p.242

Her description certainly resonates with my experience of some research interviews and the research process as a whole. My sense is that some of the men I spoke with were indeed traumatised, and that in some instances the communalisation of trauma that our brief interview consisted of enabled a moment of grieving that they needed in some way.⁴³⁷ As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the notion of atonement also resonates with the findings of this research – as a form of narrative repair, and as a necessary dimension to shifting the narrative terrain in which experiences of the apartheid era wars are negotiated.

However valuable the links she builds between context, repetitive trauma and healing, Herman's very personal and overtly emotional focus in describing this outline can be problematic for SADF conscripts. Psychological language and frameworks are sometimes at odds with the language soldiers and military culture use in describing experiences.

Herman's idea of societies being trapped in cycles of "silence and re-enactment" resonates with how memory fields shape conscripts' narrations and performances of identity in the post-apartheid context. Narrative enactments and re-enactments that would fit this description, based on discursive resources of masculinities, whiteness and perceptions of threat, will be the focus of discussion in Chapter Six.

The next section of this chapter will focus on the extent to which language about trauma, including PTSD, has been a reference point in research about SADF conscripts.

PTSD and SADF Conscripts

Both during the period that conscription was in place and subsequently, PTSD as a diagnostic category has been relatively inaccessible to SADF conscripts. As the brief

⁴³⁷ See the Introduction and Chapter Four for more on this aspect of the research process.

overview in the previous section of this chapter has indicated, the term PTSD was only officially introduced into the psychiatric and psychological lexicon in 1980: more than halfway through the period that conscription into the SADF was in place. It is therefore not surprising that it gained limited traction as a way of dealing with the traumatic effects of violence and combat for conscripts at the time. However, it has also gained limited traction in the post-apartheid context as well.

The possible traumatic effects of serving in the SADF did enter the white South African lexicon with the development of the colloquial term *bosbefok* (bush-fucked or bush-mad) to describe the behaviour of some conscripts.⁴³⁸ This term was invoked by Jacqui Thompson in her 2005 collection of conscripts' accounts⁴³⁹ which had the sub-title *Van Afkak tot Bosbefok*. However, both during the period of conscription and afterwards, there appears to have been scant and erratic recognition of the significance of possible traumatisation for conscripts as a result of military training and/or combat experience,⁴⁴⁰ with occasional but inadequate provision of debriefing and counselling support.⁴⁴¹

For those that have received formal psychological support or had access to literature about PTSD and war trauma, it would seem that having access to language for experiences that are difficult to articulate is helpful and there is a sense of relief that some of the negative consequences of their experiences have a name.⁴⁴² Clive Holt's account of coming to terms with the trauma of his experiences of combat as a conscript in Angola is perhaps the best articulated example of this.⁴⁴³ However, the majority of conscripts have not had access to

⁴³⁸ Conway *Masculinities, Militarism and the ECC* p.114

⁴³⁹ Thompson, J.H. *An Unpopular War: Voices of South African National Servicemen: Van Afkak tot Bosbefok* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006)

⁴⁴⁰ Gear, S. "'Now that the War is Over' Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence: A literature review" in *Violence and Transition Series* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002), p.15

⁴⁴¹ Kaminer and Eagle *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* p.84

⁴⁴² Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.159

⁴⁴³ Holt, C. *At thy call we did not falter: A frontline account of the 1988 Angolan War as seen through the eyes of a conscripted soldier* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005)

formal psychiatric or psychological care, making the language and theorisation of PTSD of limited use.⁴⁴⁴

Research, SADF Conscripts and Trauma

Partly in response to the escalating levels of political violence and awareness about its effects at the time, there was some post-graduate research with conscripts in the 1980s and 1990s in which clinical psychologists worked with SADF conscripts to make sense of the trauma they had experienced as a result of their military service.⁴⁴⁵ In many cases, this was an attempt by young psychologists to make sense of the behaviour they saw in friends and colleagues of their own age group who had been conscripted. Gary Koen's Clinical Psychology Masters research led to him later being asked to testify at the TRC Special Hearing on Conscription, where he made the following statement about traumatic stress for conscripts:

Guerrilla warfare, the type of war fought on the South African borders for the past twenty years, contains many unique features not seen in conventional warfare. These include hit and run tactics, surprise ambushes, extensive use of landmines and booby traps, as well as the stress experienced by people who are primarily town dwellers fighting a bush war. Unpredictability characterises this type of environment and the uncertainty of either attack or safety leads to a high level of anxiety and hyper-arousal in anticipation of the next attack. Whilst the majority of the South African troops were not involved in actual firefighting, a significant number were exposed to the conditions outlined above. It is these soldiers who have been most likely to suffer the effects of such stress.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ Kaminer and Eagle *Traumatic Stress in South Africa* p.85

⁴⁴⁵ Davey, D. *A phenomenological explication of problems in intimacy experienced by the returned conscript, as a result of military experiences in the South African Defence Force* Honours Thesis, Rhodes University, 1988; Sandler, D. "The Psychological Experiences of white conscripts in the black townships" in Cock, J. and Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989); Price, L. *A documentation of the experiences of military conscripts in the South African Defence Force* Masters in Social Science thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1989; Koen, G. *Understanding and Treating Combat-Related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Soldier's Story* Masters in Clinical Psychology thesis, Rhodes University, 1991; Draper, C. *Psychological Experiences of Military Conscription in South Africa during the 1970's and 1980's* Psychology Honours paper, University of Cape Town, 1999

⁴⁴⁶ TRC Vol 4 Ch 8 p. 239

Roughly ten years after the cessation of conscription, Sasha Gear of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation also highlighted issues relating to the prevalence of trauma amongst veterans of the apartheid era conflicts.⁴⁴⁷

While the works cited above allude to various aspects of trauma and PTSD, there has to date been only one quantitative study that specifically focuses on working with the analytic framework of PTSD diagnoses in order to establish levels of trauma and resilience in a sample group of SADF conscripts. Martin Connell's 2011 Masters thesis⁴⁴⁸ is a quantitative analysis of the responses received from the pupils who were in his Matric year at a Johannesburg high school who received their SADF call-up papers at the same time that Connell himself did.⁴⁴⁹ The sample in this research was small, making Connell's findings an important contribution to the documentation of the legacies of conscription but one that is in need of further research in order to validate or develop his findings.

The construction of PTSD has proven a significant diagnostic framework in understanding the effects of trauma as a disorder, particularly in military and combat-related situations. There are other ways of framing the effects of violence for soldiers, however, some of which go some way towards widening and enriching understandings of narrations about conscription.

⁴⁴⁷ Gear, S. "'Now that the War is Over' Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence: A literature review" in *Violence and Transition Series* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002); Gear, S. "Wishing Us Away: Challenges Facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa" in *Violence and Transition Series, Vol. 8, 2002* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002); Gear, S. "The Road Back: Psycho-social strains of Transition for South Africa's Ex-combatants" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008)

⁴⁴⁸ Connell, M. *Prevalence Of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, And Coping Strategies, Among Former South African National Servicemen* (University of Witwatersrand, Unpublished Masters thesis, 2011). This research has recently been published: Connell, M.A., Omole, O., Subramaney, U. and Olorunju, S. "Post traumatic stress disorder and resilience in veterans who served in the South African border war" in *African Journal of Psychiatry*, November 2013.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid pp.65-67

Jonathan Shay: Understanding Combat Trauma

American psychiatrist Jonathan Shay's work with Vietnam veterans and his later publications⁴⁵⁰ are seminal texts in Western literature about the trauma of war.⁴⁵¹ His work has resonance with this research because of the ways in which he has focused specifically on the trauma of combat without remaining tied to the diagnostic model of PTSD. Instead, he has drawn on Greek mythological texts in articulating the complexities of life as a soldier and experiences of combat. Given his focus on militarism and trauma, his inclusion of narrative theory in his work and the early articulations of moral injury that he provided, his work will be discussed in some detail in this section.

Edward Tick's work with Vietnam veterans is of a similar genre and was published a decade after Shay's.⁴⁵² His book is not reflected in much of the literature about war trauma, however. I was first introduced to his work by Professor Roger Brooke when I interviewed him in the early stages of my research.⁴⁵³ Because of the similarities in their approaches, Tick's expansion of some of Shay's ideas will be included in this exploration of myth, story and combat trauma.

The third theorist whose work will be further included in this section is Judith Herman. This is because of her extensive work with veterans, and the fact that she and Shay would be described as part of a similar generation of practitioners resulting in numerous references to each other's work and common approaches to their theoretical framing of trauma.

The following section of this chapter will outline key themes in Shay, Tick and Herman's work that have particular relevance to this research and the ways in which some SADF

⁴⁵⁰ Shay, J. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Unfolding of Character* (New York: Atheneum, 1994)
Shay, J. *Odysseus in America* (New York: Scribner, 2002)

⁴⁵¹ Hunt *Memory, War and Trauma* p.162

⁴⁵² Tick, E. *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 2005)

⁴⁵³ Interview with Professor Roger Brooke, Pittsburgh PA, USA, 13 July 2009

conscripts' narrations of the legacies of violence and trauma indicate signs of traumatic stress and suffering.

The Impact of Trauma on Relationships

An aspect of Herman, Shay and Tick's work that has particular resonance with this research is their articulation of the impact trauma has on a person's relationships:

Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis.⁴⁵⁴

The consequence of this can be a complex and, at times, contradictory pattern of handling relationships. Survivors of trauma "oscillate between uncontrolled expressions of rage and intolerance of aggression in any form. Trauma impels people both to withdraw from close relationships and to seek them desperately."⁴⁵⁵ This breaching of trust has a paradoxical effect of inducing feelings of shame, guilt and inferiority that cause a person to withdraw, especially from intimate relationships, while the terror of memories of the traumatic event(s) simultaneously propel a person towards what they perceive to be protective relationships and attachments.⁴⁵⁶ This dialectic of isolation and clinging is a feature of the way returning soldiers speak of their difficulties with intimacy and aggression.⁴⁵⁷

Herman argues that these relational disruptions are not a secondary effect of trauma, but part of the disruptions of a person's "structures of the self" that trauma induces.⁴⁵⁸ They damage a sense of being safe in the world, of having positive value and of there being a

⁴⁵⁴ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.51

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.56

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.56

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.63

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

sense of order in creation.⁴⁵⁹ Traumatic events can also compromise or violate a sense of bodily integrity, and the control of bodily functions: "...in the folklore of combat... this loss of control is often recounted as the most humiliating aspect of the trauma."⁴⁶⁰ The particularity of the intensity of war and combat therefore needs to be understood in its effects on a person's relationship with themselves, those who are close to them and the contexts of which they are a part.

The phenomenological dimensions of these descriptions resonate with and help to frame descriptions of combat in several of the texts this research has drawn on. I have found it helpful to place these descriptions alongside the texts that this research has analysed, because of the phenomenological frame they provide to my narrative-discursive approach. As has been outlined in Chapter Two, I have found it necessary to hold respect and sensitivity for the phenomenology of research participants' experiences at the centre of my research, and to be cognisant of the complexities they have grappled with in their personal relationships.

Military Culture, War and Trauma

Tick's description of the social system that gives rise to "making war" is very similar to the background to conscription outlined in Chapter One:

In simple terms, the process of making war comprises two parts: First we dehumanise the people involved, both our antagonists and our own population; then we place "them" and ourselves in a kill-or-be-killed situation...In order to create soldiers willing to kill and a citizenry willing to tolerate it, we must first depersonalise and demonise the other... The process of depersonalisation begins long before combat, and political leaders of all persuasions have used the same techniques.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Ranoff-Bulman, R. "The Aftermath of Victimization: Rebuilding Shattered Assumptions" in Figley, C. (ed.) *Trauma and Its Wake* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1985) pp.15-35 cited in Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.51

⁴⁶⁰ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.53

⁴⁶¹ Tick *War and the Soul* pp.81,82

While most literature refers to “combat trauma”, Tick highlights the way in which the harshness of basic training (or boot camp, as it is called in the American military) can be just as traumatising as experiences of combat. “The impact of basic training cannot be overstated. There is a direct relationship between the dehumanisation of our troops and what happens in the combat zone.”⁴⁶²

While Tick’s accounts can at times err on the side of hyperbole, and are specific to the context of American soldiers who fought in Vietnam, they provide an important qualitative framing of any military system – including the SADF. Conscripts’ accounts of training in the SADF in interviews I conducted would certainly confirm this. Which is why Herman’s description of combat needs to be extended to include all aspects of military training and military life when she describes combat as a “paradigmatic form of trauma for ... men” which acts as a “complementary social rite of initiation into the coercive violence at the foundation of adult society.”⁴⁶³

This is not to diminish the intensity and extremes of actual combat, as described by Tick:

After dehumanisation, the second essential component for making war is constructed around one very simple rule: kill the other before he kills you... On the front lines, war is not about politics, it is about staying alive. And it is a situation from which there is almost no way out.... But there is another motive to kill that can be even more compelling than the will to survive. Countless veterans and survivors have declared it is loyalty to friends, families, and foxhole mates that can most impel people, whether the aim is to protect one’s comrades or to avenge them.⁴⁶⁴

The development of discursive resources of perceptions of threat and the phenomenology of “othering” the so-called enemy sets soldiers apart from civilians for the rest of their lives. As does the intensity of the relationships they form. For some, the intense emotional bonds they establish in the midst of the constant threats of danger and mortality are the deepest

⁴⁶² Ibid. p.86

⁴⁶³ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.61

⁴⁶⁴ Tick *War and the Soul* p.87, 88

relationships they ever experience – in many cases lasting a lifetime “and beyond death.”⁴⁶⁵ Negotiating the place of these relationships in civilian life can prove complex, precipitating narrative and identity “trouble”.

An aspect of this narrative and identity “trouble” revolves around the process of “coming home” from military training and possible combat. More than the physical return, there is the challenge of “learning to feel again”. And yet doing so requires awakening to the humanity of dead former enemies which produces an anguish that Tick argues may in itself become an impediment to healing.⁴⁶⁶ In contrast, Shay would argue that acknowledging and “restoring honour” to the enemy is an essential step in recovering from militarism and trauma.⁴⁶⁷ This notion will be discussed further in Chapter Seven, particularly with regard to narrative repair in conscripts’ negotiations of the post-apartheid context.

At the same time that a soldier needs to come to terms with narrating constructions and deconstructions of the enemy, there is also the challenge of coming to terms with the way being part of the military has changed them. Tick argues that when a military or combat consciousness becomes an “eternal present” and a soldier is unable to “heal” from the inner divisions between civilian and military life, then what he calls a “frozen war consciousness”⁴⁶⁸ develops. Again, this resonates with the occasional nostalgia for military life I observed in interviews with research participants, and the ways in which some conscripts narrated experiences as being ever in a form of present-tense, rather than memories of something from the past.

Shay also attributes what he calls “damaging personality changes” to prolonged, severe trauma in the military.⁴⁶⁹ Karl Marlantes⁴⁷⁰ and Tyler Bourdreau,⁴⁷¹ US Marines who served

⁴⁶⁵ Tick *War and the Soul* p.89, Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.62

⁴⁶⁶ Tick *War and the Soul* p.92

⁴⁶⁷ Shay *Achilles in Vietnam* p.115

⁴⁶⁸ Tick *War and the Soul* pp.98,99

⁴⁶⁹ Shay *Achilles in Vietnam* pp.169ff.

⁴⁷⁰ Marlantes, K. *What it is like to go to War* (London: Corvus, 2012)

⁴⁷¹ Bourdreau, T. *Unpacking Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2008)

in Vietnam who have become prominent advocates of moral injury as a way of framing war trauma, write in detail about the overwhelming challenge of returning home from military deployment, especially extreme experiences of combat.

In relation to this, Herman writes about the way in which civilians sometimes exacerbate a soldier's sense of alienation and being set apart by either idealising or disparaging a soldier's military service and avoiding any genuine engagement with or understanding of what his military service entailed. This results in soldiers often turning to each other for social support and the telling of war stories, leaving them as segregated from society as ever.⁴⁷² It is also one of the possible explanations for the pervading discursive *laagers* that shape SADF conscripts' narrations of conscription in the post-apartheid context.⁴⁷³

Dealing with Shame and Guilt

There is general consensus between Shay, Herman and Tick that shame and guilt are prominent reactions to traumatic experiences, whether the person is a victim, a witness or an agent of violence. However, Shay and Tick tend to focus on shame and guilt in relation to moral injury, which will be discussed later in this section.

According to Herman, a witness is haunted by a "burden of conscience" regarding what they could have done and what they did not do, including witnessing the death of a comrade in combat.⁴⁷⁴ The moral dilemmas of being an active participant in violence are particularly acute for soldiers.⁴⁷⁵ However, it is important not to generalise the nature of a soldier's shame or guilt.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷² Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.67

⁴⁷³ Edlmann "Division in the (Inner) Ranks"

⁴⁷⁴ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.54

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p.54

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.68

Guilt and shame are highly contested aspects of narrating the legacies of conscription, given the equally contested nature of whiteness as a discursive resource in the post-apartheid context. The controversy around South African philosophers Anton van Niekerk and Samantha Vice's views on this issue will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Moral Injury and Moral Repair

The concept of moral injury as a way of explaining combat related trauma that can act as a model for healing for soldiers first arose in Shay's work. In the opening sections of *Achilles in Vietnam* he says the following:

Any army, ancient or modern, is a social construction defined by shared expectations and values... All together, these form a moral world that most of the participants most of the time regard as legitimate, "natural" and personally binding. The moral power of an army is so great that it can motivate men to get up out of a trench and step into enemy machine-gun fire... When a leader destroys the legitimacy of the army's moral order by betraying "what's right," he inflicts manifold injuries on his men.⁴⁷⁷

A few years later, in 1981, Peter Marin published an essay called "Living in Moral Pain" in which he outlined the particularity of military veterans' trauma and the need to "see through" the moral journey they began in Vietnam.⁴⁷⁸

What has followed is a wide-ranging field of research and literature in which understanding the moral dimensions of war is regarded as key to healing from trauma. Tyler Boudreau, an ex-Marine officer and leading advocate of moral injury and moral repair as a healing model, describes military training as delivering a soldier to the "threshold of war", after which the moral dilemmas and choices he faces are uncharted territory which he has to navigate

⁴⁷⁷ Shay *Achilles in Vietnam* p.6

⁴⁷⁸ Marin, P. "Living in Moral Pain" first published in *Psychology Today*, 1981. Anthologized in *Freedom and its Discontents: Reflections on Four Decades of American Moral Experience* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 1995) 119-136, cited in *Tick War and the Soul* p116

largely on his own.⁴⁷⁹ Brett Litz et al summarise their findings on moral injury in the following terms:

In our view, the critical elements to moral injury are the inability to contextualize or justify personal actions or the actions of others and the unsuccessful accommodation of these potentially morally challenging experiences into pre-existing moral schemas, resulting in concomitant emotional responses (e.g., shame and guilt) and dysfunctional behaviors (e.g. withdrawal). The inability to contextualize, justify, and accommodate acts is likely to lead to longlasting impairment (i.e., moral injury) due to the lack of built-in and contextual salutogenic factors and the presumed inapplicability of current treatments.⁴⁸⁰

Thus moral injury becomes a nexus of three things. Firstly, the individual as an agent of the betrayal of their own moral codes through their actions under military orders. Secondly, the overwhelmingly physical and emotional nature of the military context in which this betrayal takes place, making the moral injuries difficult to verbalise. Thirdly, the way in which society fails to provide soldiers with adequate moral “schemas” to deal with experiences that induce these reactions. An approach that explores this kind of nexus in thinking about the particularity of trauma and the military has resonances with narrative-based approaches to trauma. This is due to the way in which moral repair begins with narrations of the experiences that led to the moral injury while also creating space to explore the dialectic between these experiences and the context within which they took place. Notions of moral and narrative repair are therefore closely linked.

Another narrative-based component to addressing moral injury is inviting a communalisation of both the moral injury and moral repair. An example is the work of Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, both women who have been faced with the trauma of war in their own families. They have published a book that enables families and

⁴⁷⁹ Boudreau *Unpacking Inferno* p.98

⁴⁸⁰ Litz, B., Stein, N., Delaney, E. Lebowitz, L., Nash, W.P., Silva, C. Maguen, S. “Moral injury and moral repair in war veterans: A preliminary model and intervention strategy” in *Clinical Psychology Review* Volume 29, Issue 8, December 2009, 695-706, p.705

communities to talk about and begin to address their own responsibility for the moral injury of wars in the American context.⁴⁸¹

Having provided an overview of some theories of the potentially traumatising effect of violence and war, the next section of this chapter will explore conceptual links between these theories and the narrative-based approaches that this research has used.

Framing Trauma and Narrative Inquiry in the Context of this Research

Talk, “Narrative Wreckage” and Trauma

When personal narratives are intruded on by experiences of systematic and personal violence that induce traumatic stress, the violent past is ineffably infused in narratives of the present, creating what Crossley calls an effect of “narrative wreckage.”⁴⁸² Trauma can be a catalyst in shattering (and silencing) agency and coherence in the narratives that shape people’s identities and sense of belonging and connection, creating identity “trouble”. Ideas of conventional Aristotelian configurations and coherence in narratives are therefore not necessarily applicable in describing experiences of trauma.⁴⁸³ The courage and psychological resources required to reconfigure coherent personal narratives in the face of a context and society that remain deeply fractured should not be diminished or disregarded.

However, Shay’s alignment to a “talking cure” leads him to argue that finding ways to narrate traumatic experiences is key to enabling a survivor of war and trauma to “rebuild the ruins of character”.⁴⁸⁴ He emphasises that the aim of narrative is to “transform involuntary re-experiencing of traumatic events into memory of the events, thereby re-

⁴⁸¹ Brock, R.N. and Lettini, G. *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury After War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012)

⁴⁸² Crossley *Introducing Narrative Psychology* p.56

⁴⁸³ Andrews, M. “Beyond Narrative: The Shape of Traumatic Testimony” in Hyvärinen, M., Hydén, L-C. Saarenheimo, M. and Tamboukou, M. *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010), p.152

⁴⁸⁴ Shay *Achilles in Vietnam* p.188

establishing authority over memory.”⁴⁸⁵ He defines the task of narrating as being to remember and to grieve the losses of personal innocence, human life, relationships that existed prior to becoming a soldier, and the sense of moral and social order soldiers had before joining the army.

The issue of who listens to a soldier, when and how, is key to the way in which narrations of trauma take place. Shay highlights the need for compassion in this regard, which very few civilians are able to provide, because it requires the ability to hear stories of injury without themselves being overwhelmed, without denying what is being narrated and without blaming the narrator.⁴⁸⁶ As Herman states, though, there is a central dialectic in psychological trauma between the will to deny horrible events and the will to speak them in public. This is heightened by the “emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner” in which experiences of trauma are often narrated, thereby undermining their credibility. Truth-telling as a process is key to narrative and moral repair, but too often the story of a traumatic event is treated at face value, becoming a symptom of trauma rather than a narration of possible repair.⁴⁸⁷

Tick describes a story as comprising a “map for the soul” in which one preserves one’s individual history while also defining one’s place in the “larger flow of events”. The telling of a story also recreates collective histories because it “transforms actors and listeners alike into communal witnesses.”⁴⁸⁸ In this way, Tick argues, narrating experiences has a hologram-like effect:

A personal war story is always about everyone who participated in the war, as well as their family members, their friends and their communities. War stories are about the earth and the damage done to it. They are about the nations who wage war and the histories and politics, beliefs and values that lead up to them.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid. p.192

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid. pp.188,9

⁴⁸⁷ Herman *Trauma and Recovery* p.1

⁴⁸⁸ Tick *War and the Soul* p.217

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid. p.218

Herman, Shay and Tick's framing of the possible trauma of violence and war are particular to their context and the "talking cure" industry of which they are part, which leads to theories implying "being cured" as an imperative. However, some of the complexities of narrating experiences of trauma need to be acknowledged alongside these discussions.

As Molly Andrews argues, the challenge of speaking about trauma is that the narration of experience sits on and moves between constant (and, I would argue, shifting) thresholds of language and silence.⁴⁹⁰ For conscripts, these thresholds are all the more marked because of the ongoing contextual silences that have exacerbated a sense of being silenced by hegemonic and hierarchical memory fields. While trauma narratives certainly have the potential to act as a bridge between the private and public worlds,⁴⁹¹ the complexities of the relationships between silences that represent the ineffable and the process of talking should always be borne in mind. The imposition of a need to articulate experiences of trauma using a traditional narrative structure potentially compromises the attempt to speak the unspeakable.⁴⁹² This can lead to the silences imposed by a system or an event operating in contradictory spaces in which traumatic experiences "defy and demand" witness, and yet remain inherently latent.⁴⁹³ This highlights the isolation of living with a traumatic narrative. The need for that silence to shift in some way is understandable, however it seems this is only authentically possible as and when acts of narrative reinforcement and repair become possible over time.⁴⁹⁴

Temporality and Trauma

The issue of temporality is also significant in narrations of trauma and the shifting of silence. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, Andrews emphasises the ways in which linear time and trauma time are different. Linear time has an Aristotelian structure with a

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid. p.161

⁴⁹¹ Ibid. p.164

⁴⁹² Ibid. p.156

⁴⁹³ Caruth, C. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.5 & p.17

⁴⁹⁴ See Chapter Seven for more on narrative repair and narrative reinforcement.

beginning, middle and end (even though linear time is always continuous). Trauma time exists in the ever-present.⁴⁹⁵ Shay adds to this by linking the tensions of temporality and trauma with contemporary Western family culture in the following statement:

Narrative time is built into the very structure of the family of languages to which English belongs. This may form part of the enormous difficulty that many survivors of severe trauma have in putting their experiences into words; their experience is ineffable in a language that insists on “was” and “will be.” The trauma world knows only *is*.⁴⁹⁶

Temporality within a narrative approach is not only relevant to the phenomenology of narrative. Temporality has contextual relevance as well. Stories about the past shift and change because story-tellers have inevitably come to see themselves in new and possibly contrasting or conflicted ways, and have been influenced by the ways in which their context and the world around them have changed – not least politically.⁴⁹⁷ Narrations of experience are by nature interactive, fluid and changeable over time as they seek to negotiate personal and contextual contradictions, conflicts and change. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the memory fields within which narrations of trauma take place therefore also shift and change over time.

As has been alluded to before, conscripts who participated in this research were narrating experiences from the apartheid past and their current effect subsequent to the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa. Research participants’ personal identities and subject positions had therefore shifted in the twenty to thirty years since they were in the military. They were older and more mature, and there had been radical social and political shifts in South Africa in the intervening time period between their experiences in the military and the time of taking part in this research. The intersections of personal and historical temporalities in their lives and accounts of the legacies of conscription need to be borne in mind, particularly with regard to finding appropriate ways to articulate memories of violence and possible trauma.

⁴⁹⁵ Tick *War and the Soul* p.155

⁴⁹⁶ Shay *Achilles in Vietnam* p.191

⁴⁹⁷ Andrews, M. “Never the last word: Revisiting data” in Andrews et al *Doing Narrative Research* p.95

Conclusion

Accounting for possible trauma and moral injury caused by experiences of violence in the military – whether they involved combat or not – is a complex and challenging task, and yet one that is ultimately necessary for narrative and moral repair to be possible.

Narrative and moral repair for conscripts require not only an individual process of healing, but a recognition of the shifts in South African society, and the challenges this society faces in its own process of social moral repair. The implications of managing these tensions will be discussed further in the chapters that follow. Chapter Five will discuss various texts that focus on the legacies of conscription. Chapter Six will discuss three case studies that illustrate some complexities in narrating the legacies of conscription in the post-apartheid context. Chapter Seven will discuss the patterns of narrative reinforcement and narrative repair that emerge in conscripts' personal negotiations of the post-apartheid narrative terrain.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACCOUNTING FOR NARRATIVE-BASED METHODS AND APPROACHES IN THIS RESEARCH

Introduction

The first three chapters of this thesis have provided historical and theoretical frameworks for this research. The aim of this chapter is to outline the process and praxis of this research, in preparation for the discussions of texts relating to the legacies of conscription in the chapters that follow.

Given that the praxis of the research shifted and changed as a result of the reflexive approaches that were used, a brief overview of the process will be outlined first. The purpose of this is to provide a sense of how the praxis was clarified and consolidated over the five years that this research took place. Following this, narrative-based theory will be outlined in relation to the process of this research.

Aim and Goals of the Research

The overall aim of this research has been to use qualitative, narrative-based approaches in exploring the psychosocial legacies of conscription into the SADF.

Within those parameters, the goals of the research have been threefold. Firstly, to investigate the extent to which conscripts' experiences have influenced their narrations of identity in post-apartheid South Africa, with particular attention paid to how conscripts have dealt with the multiple identities of being participants in the apartheid regime's "total strategy" and becoming citizens in an emerging democracy in the post-1994 context. Secondly, to explore the dialectics between conscripts' personal narrations and contextual dynamics in both the apartheid era and the post-apartheid era. Thirdly, to explore the

discursive resources, memory fields and temporal threads that have informed narrations of conscription and facilitated conscripts' negotiations of post-apartheid narrative terrains.

The realisation of these goals was initially intended to emerge out of a series of interviews that I conducted with conscripts. As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, the interview process raised a number of issues and generated some complex questions about the method and approach that was best suited this research. The end result was that the interviews I conducted with conscripts were placed alongside other texts to enable a more wide-ranging narrative-discursive analysis.

Research Participants and Interview Process

Interviews with Conscripts

The first phase of fieldwork in this research process consisted of 22 semi-structured interviews with conscripts, and a further seven interviews with people who had knowledge or experience relevant to this research.⁴⁹⁸

Research participants were recruited using a variety of snowballing methods. Some were public: a notice was circulated through the End Conscription Campaign email listserv and a short piece appeared in a local Grahamstown community newsletter. Most participants were recruited through referrals from colleagues, friends and conversations at social and professional gatherings. There was no attempt to screen participants or to specify particular groups in this process; my interest was to listen to any conscript that wanted to participate in this research and felt they had something to say. The only times I declined to interview men was when close friends expressed in interest in participating in the research, because I felt this was ethically inappropriate.

⁴⁹⁸ Details of these interviews can be found in the References section.

All interviews were conducted in English, although six of the research participants would have either self-identified as Afrikaans-speaking or came from families that identified themselves as being Afrikaner.

Each person signed consent forms regarding participating in the research and having the interviews recorded.⁴⁹⁹ Included in the discussions I had with research participants was an indication that counselling was available if the interviews raised issues that were emotionally distressing and created a need for psychological support. (As will be discussed later in more detail, no participants took up this offer.) Recordings and transcripts of interviews were stored on an external hard drive in a secure cupboard.

The SANPAD funding that supported this research enabled me to travel to a range of centres in South Africa. I was therefore able to conduct interviews with conscripts in variety of centres:

Grahamstown	6
East London	4
Pietermaritzburg	2
Johannesburg / Pretoria	4
Cape Town	3
Plettenberg Bay	1
Port Elizabeth	2

Of those interviewed, the following work backgrounds were represented:

Teacher	3
Journalist	2
Health Professional	2
Business / Management	3
Academic / Researcher	2
Environmentalist	1
Priest / Minister / Religious	3
Architect	1
Unemployed	1
Technician / Operations	1
Civil servant	1

⁴⁹⁹ See Appendices I and II for blank samples of these forms.

In terms of the contrasting experiences of different sub-generations of conscripts as outlined in Chapter One, the research participants I interviewed were conscripted in the following years:

1968-1974 (from the inception of conscription until just before the invasion of Angola)	6
1975-1983 (from invasion of Angola until just before the first state of emergency in South Africa)	8
1984-1988 (the lead-up to the withdrawal from Angola and Namibia, and during the states of emergency in South Africa)	7
1989-1993 (from the withdrawal from Angola and Namibia until the cessation of conscription)	1

While every effort was made to invite and select as broad a range of research participants as possible, the emphasis was on identifying people who could fulfil the two key criteria of having been conscripted and being able to provide an insightful analysis of the issues being explored. These characteristics, rather than statistical criteria or details such as whether they went into the SADF straight from school or after tertiary education, were primarily used in identifying potential research participants. As has been highlighted in the Introduction, the issue of whether research participants regarded themselves as suffering from traumatic stress was not a criterion that affected their participation in this research one way or the other. The priorities was whether research participants felt able to tell me about the legacies of their experiences. This is because the narrative based method of this research required participants who had developed the language needed to critically reflect on their own narratives. They also needed to be able to articulate aspects of the complex relationships between their own stories and the shifting cultural and historical contexts within which these narratives unfolded. Within this identified group of people, every effort was made to select as ideologically, socially and geographically diverse a range of research participants as possible, to avoid the analysis becoming simplistic or inappropriately biased.

Emerging Complexities in the Interview Process

Even with the intention of drawing diverse voices and views into the research, however, the very nature of the research resulted in the exclusion of some participants and did not include as many as was originally intended. There were several reasons for this.

In a few cases, the fact that I was a woman and had been involved in the anti-apartheid movement proved an obstacle for some conscripts with whom I had preliminary contact about being research participants. In other cases, conscripts indicated to me that they found preparatory conversations about what an interview would require too emotionally demanding, and they decided to withdraw. In two cases, unanticipated family and work issues meant that scheduled interviews were not able to take place, and there was not an opportunity to follow up. In one case, a conscript who is a businessman indicated that he wanted to participate but felt it could potentially ruin his career. His perception was that if the workers' unions at his work place discovered that he was in the apartheid military, this information might be used against him in labour negotiations and have devastating consequences for him and his business. This was in spite of the option available in the consent form for research participants to choose to remain anonymous. In the end, I have changed the names of all but one of the research participants' names to ensure equal anonymity for all participants. The one exception is Paul Morris, whose experiences and writing are already in the public domain.

The number of participants interviewed was also smaller than originally intended. The reasons for this were personal, ethical and methodological.

At a personal level I found the interviews emotionally harrowing, to the extent that my health was affected. In the process of following up on interviews with research participants, I came to realise that several conscripts had also struggled with the emotional toll that interviews had taken – and yet not one of them had decided to take up the clear offers of

counselling support that had been made. The emotional toll that interviews took on participants was a possible reason for the limited feedback I received when I sent them copies of the interview transcripts. Another possible reason is the evident struggle to find words for experiences that had seldom been articulated to a listener such as myself – a woman who had no experience in the military. Two participants contacted me after receiving the transcripts of their interviews. In both cases they wanted to clarify factual information they had spoken about in the interview, such as the correct spelling of details or sequences of events. One of these participants offered some limited reflections on what reading the transcripts meant for him. Another asked to post the transcript on his blog. For the rest, there was a silence that was difficult to address or take forward in the research.

Clarifying a Way Forward

What transpired during the interview process in 2010 meant that wide-ranging reflection was needed on the direction the research should take, particularly regarding the wisdom of pursuing individual interviews as an appropriate method in this research. It had become clear that the potential psychological risks for me and some of the research participants were too great, and the possible benefits of me as an “outsider” interviewing people with such specific experiences were proving limited. The way in which the process had unfolded also suggested that it would be inappropriate to pursue the original research plan of gathering research participants into small groups for follow-up dialogues which would have enabled a group-based analysis of what had emerged in the interviews.

Finding the right “fit” between theory and method is crucial in qualitative research, and often requires something of a quest until the ‘ah-ha!’ moment that enables the process to move forward.⁵⁰⁰ The issues outlined above made it clear that I needed to shift my theoretical framework in the light of the methodological issues that had emerged. In doing

⁵⁰⁰ Mertz, N.T. and Anfara, V.A. Jr. “Conclusion: Coming Full Circle” in Anfara, V.A. Jr and Mertz, N.T. *Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2006), p.191

so, I needed to unpack and revisit my assumptions about how to approach interviews with conscripts in this research.

The major shift that took place was from a primarily phenomenological focus to the narrative-discursive framework outlined in Chapter Two. In addition, as discussed in Chapter Three, I shifted from seeing conscripts' accounts as being personal texts to being cultural texts, within which narratives of the social system of conscription could be read. As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, this enabled me to analyse transcripts of interviews I had carried out alongside other texts that were in the public domain.

Analysis of Interviews

In the course of the reflexive process described in the previous section, transcripts of the 22 interviews that I had conducted went through two very different processes of analysis. These will be outlined below, as a way of using this research as a case study of a reflexive approach in qualitative research that enables incremental layers of texts to be identified and deepening interpretations of those texts to be explored. It will also form the basis for later sections of this chapter that reflect on the praxis in this research.

First Analysis Process: Attride-Stirling's Thematic Networks Approach

The first process of analysis used a thematic networks approach in analysing only the transcripts of interviews I had conducted, based on the method developed by Jennifer Attride-Stirling.⁵⁰¹ This is not a unique approach, using principles common to most qualitative hermeneutic systems of analysis. It uses a web-like network, which could also be

⁵⁰¹ Attride-Stirling, J. "Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research" *Qualitative Research* 2001 1:385-405

described as a mind map, as its key organising principle and means of representation. There are three phases to the analysis process.⁵⁰²

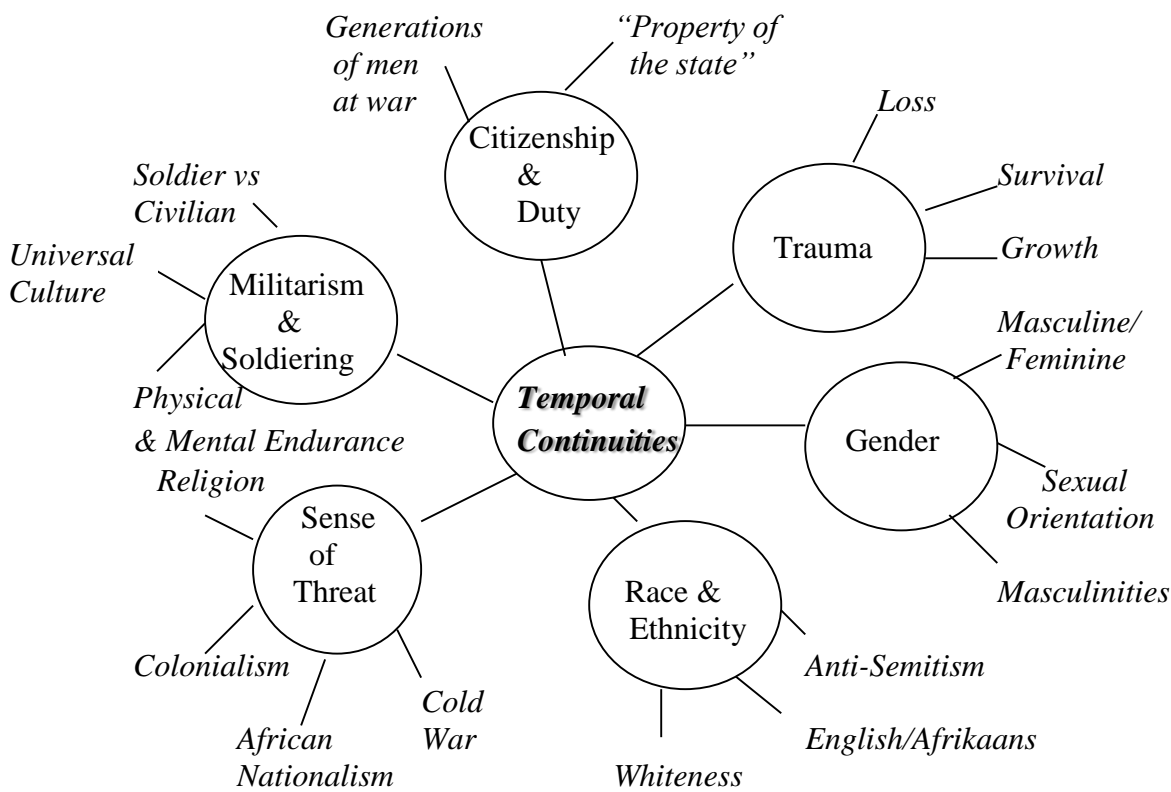
1. Identifying *basic themes*: these are issues that emerge directly from the interview texts. On their own, they reveal very little, but their meaning begins to emerge when they are grouped together with other basic themes and linked to an organising theme.
2. Creating clusters of *organising themes*: these are middle-order themes around which the basic themes are clustered. They summarise the main interpretations of the groups of basic themes, and are therefore more abstract in unpacking what the interview texts reveal.
3. Establishing *global themes*: these are what Attride-Stirling calls “super-ordinate themes that encompass the principal metaphors in the data as a whole.”⁵⁰³ These themes therefore encapsulate the findings of the research, consisting of both a summary of the basic themes and a summary of the key interpretations. Each global theme constitutes the central point of a thematic network or mind-map.

As will be seen in the diagram that follows on the next page, the thematic matrix contains many ideas and issues that have surfaced in the research. The shift from a primarily phenomenological narrative focus within a thematic network approach to a narrative-discursive focus meant that the foregrounding, framing and connections between the various issues shifted fundamentally. Thus the focus shifted from phenomenological details to underlying discursive resources, memory fields and identity “trouble”.

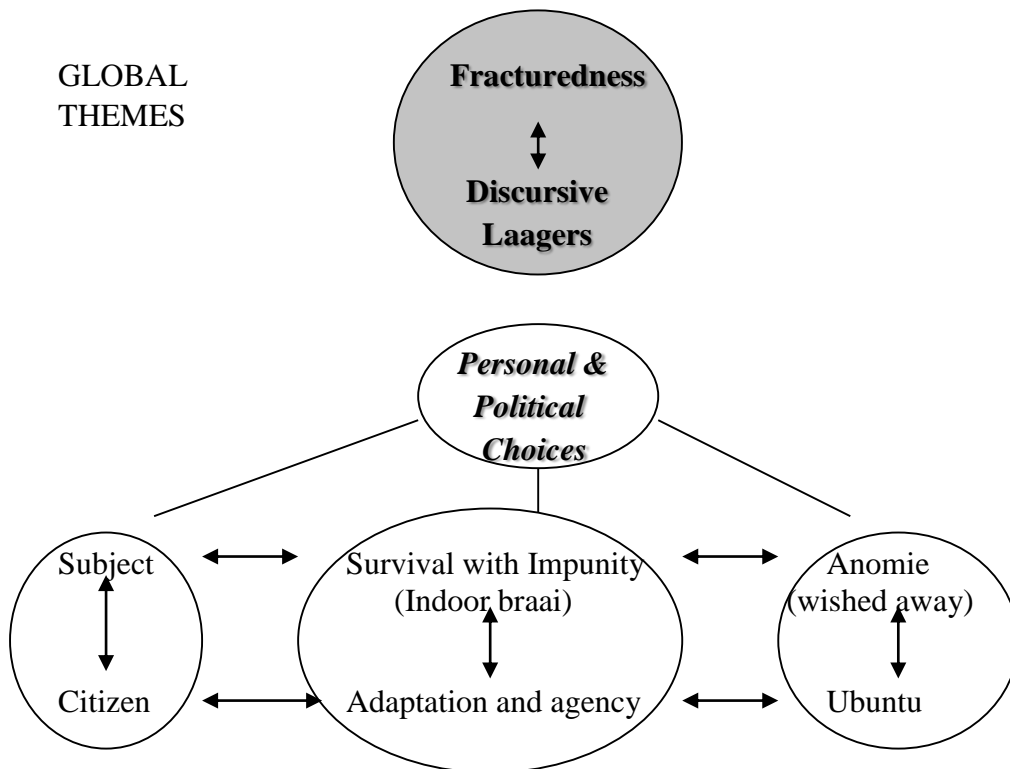
⁵⁰² Ibid. pp.338,339

⁵⁰³ Ibid.p.390

Summary of Thematic Networks



GLOBAL THEMES



Phenomenological and Relational Ethos: Managing Tensions

The global themes of “fracturedness” and “discursive *laagers*” that are in the centre of the thematic matrix on the previous page were discussed in some detail in a paper that was published in 2012⁵⁰⁴ and another later piece of work that was presented at a conference.⁵⁰⁵ However, in the later stages of the analysis for this thesis they shifted into becoming background issues that could be included in the discussion about this research but were no longer central, because other issues had come to the fore in the second, narrative-discursive, analysis.

Second Analysis Process: A Narrative-Discursive Approach Incorporating Additional Texts

Stephanie Taylor suggests that narrations of identities should consider work done across “multiple interactions” in order to address the aggregated constructions and resources that narrations inevitably draw on.⁵⁰⁶ Given the difficulties that arose in the interviews that I conducted, a series of interviews with each research participant, or even the intended follow-up focus groups with some research participants had proven unviable. Drawing in additional interviews and other texts therefore provided an additional resource with which to explore multiple interactions that enabled this analysis to proceed.

For this phase of analysis, the interviews conducted specifically for this research were supplemented by 32 transcripts of interviews conducted with people involved in the SADF by Michael Cadman, under the auspices of the Missing Voices Project at the Wits Historical Papers Archive.⁵⁰⁷ Michael Cadman was conscripted and served in the SADF, so the interviews cover similar themes to the ones I conducted, but with a different level of focus and discussion given that less by way of military culture, historical detail and contextual nuances needed to be explained by the interviewees. This broadened the scope of the research in constructive ways, particularly because the focus of my analysis had shifted from

⁵⁰⁴ Edlmann, T. “Division in the (Inner) Ranks: The Psychosocial Legacies of the Border Wars” *South African Historical Journal* Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2012, 256-272

⁵⁰⁵ “Accounting for Courage, Collusion and Contradictions: Reflecting on the legacies of conscription into the apartheid state’s military system” presented at the International Congress of Psychology held in Cape Town 22-26 July 2012

⁵⁰⁶ Taylor, S. “Narrative as construction and discursive resource” in *Narrative Inquiry* 16:1 (2006) 94-102, p.98

⁵⁰⁷ Details of these interviews can be found on www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventory.php?iid=6489

looking for the phenomenological aspects of interviews to seeing interview transcripts as cultural texts.

The shift in focus and analytical lens that this stage of the research process comprised also led to a range of other texts being incorporated into this analysis process. These were texts in the public domain, all with a narrative or storied focus on conscription and combat, which reflected on the legacies of conscription. They included memoirs, video documentaries, photographic exhibitions, blogs and newspaper articles.

As has been outlined in the previous two chapters, the second phase of analysis in this research focused on discursive resources that were not necessarily overtly named in the texts but formed continuities in how experiences were articulated. The role of memory fields in narrating the legacies of conscription also became a focus of the analysis. The relationships between the identified discursive resources were investigated in texts, with a related exploration of the silences or identity “trouble” that they revealed.⁵⁰⁸

Riessman highlights the key focus areas of narrative analysis as being intention and language, rather than only content. She lists the questions that need to be explored as: firstly, the purpose and intention behind the construction of a story, secondly the cultural resources at play within a story, thirdly, what the plots and sub-plots reveal about the storyteller and their context, and lastly whether there are gaps and inconsistencies that indicate “preferred, alternative or counter-narratives”.⁵⁰⁹ A narrative-discursive approach would include all of these aspects to some extent, but focuses primarily on the cultural resources at play within a text as these reveal important elements of the context within which the text is narrated.

⁵⁰⁸ Taylor, S. and Littleton, K. “Biographies in talk: A narrative-discursive research approach” in *Qualitative Sociology Review* 2006 Vol.2 Issue 1, 22-38, p.24

⁵⁰⁹ Riessman, C.K. *Narrative Methods of the Human Sciences* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage, 2008), p.11

As Stephanie Taylor highlights, a narrative-discursive approach to analysis “has to be taken on trust” because it does not produce evidence such as the thematic approach used in the first phase of analysis in this research, a phenomenological hermeneutic approach or conversation analysis.⁵¹⁰ It could therefore be described as an inductive (rather than deductive), evidence-based approach, using patterns that the researcher sees occurring across texts as the basis for this evidence. These patterns are similar to what Margaret Wetherell’s discursive orientation towards social constructionist theory might describe as an “interpretive repertoire”, namely “a culturally habitual link of argument comprised of recognisable themes, commonplaces and tropes.”⁵¹¹ It is therefore not the personal details of a text that are the primary focus, but the relationships between stories and other texts relating to narrations of the legacies of conscription. This relationship-based approach applies not only to the researcher’s approach to texts, but also to dialogical, reflexive engagements with research participants and other relationship networks. The ways in which relational reflexive practice formed an integral part of this research will be outlined later in this chapter.

While a relationship and group-based reflexive element to a narrative-discursive method of analysis is important as a way of validating and enriching the researcher’s findings, an approach of this nature inevitably leads to outcomes that are specific to the researcher’s relationship with the material, and to the time and historical context within which the research is being carried out. The findings of the research emerge out of a matrix of dynamic intertextual and interpersonal relationships, rather than the researcher’s engagements with a fixed set of static pieces of text.⁵¹² It is an approach that allows for “wondering, tentativeness, and alternative views to exist as part of the research account.”⁵¹³ It is also an approach which recognises that a different researcher might well produce a completely different set of results from the same texts. It is with this in mind that this research outlines

⁵¹⁰ Taylor, S. *Narratives of Identity and Place* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p.53

⁵¹¹ Wetherell, M. “Positioning and Interpretative Repertoires: Conversation Analysis and Post-Structuralism in Dialogue in *Discourse and Society* 9(3) 1998, p.400 cited in Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.54

⁵¹² Pinnegar, S. and Daynes J.G. “Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative” in Clandinin, D.J. *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications 2007), p.14

⁵¹³ *Ibid.* p.25

a series of discussions and theoretical positions regarding the legacies of conscription, rather than a formal set of results or findings.

One of the aims of narrative-based research is to use case-based approaches to generate new theoretical positions which can become the basis for further research and interrogation.⁵¹⁴ Andrews describes this component of narrative research as disrupting “old certainties” and allowing us to “glimpse something of the complexities of human lives, selves and endeavours.”⁵¹⁵

It is for this reason that I have positioned this research as being a contribution to a new generation of work in the ongoing process of documenting and accounting for the legacies of conscription into the SADF, rather than a definitive statement on these legacies. It is also the reason behind there not being a specific findings chapter, but rather three chapters that combine findings with discussion (i.e. chapters Five, Six and Seven) by way of articulating the narrative terrain within which the legacies of conscription are negotiated, as part of ongoing conversations about the psychosocial legacies of conscription into the SADF.

Relational Reflexive Practice as Method

While the analysis of interviews and other texts were my primary focus, the reflexive ethos of this research was significantly enriched by a number of support and consultative networks at Rhodes University. In keeping with social constructionist orientated research, these networks enabled an “elaboration” through dialogue of the preliminary narrative-discursive framing of the research.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ Riessman *Narrative Methods* p.13

⁵¹⁵ Andrews, M. “Narrative Research” in Seale, C., D. Silverman, Gubrium, J. and Gobo, G. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2004), p.20

⁵¹⁶ Gergen, K. and Gergen, M.M. “Toward Reflexive Methodologies” in Steier, F. (ed.) *Research and Reflexivity* (London, Newberry Park, New Delhi: Sage, 1991), p.93

The first is the South African-Netherlands Project for Alternative Development (SANPAD)-funded South African War Veterans' Project, led by Professor Gary Baines. The SAWVP contributed funding towards this research and held a series of workshops and seminars in the early stages of this research, during which formative discussions and extrapolations of my ideas took place.

The second is the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project, of which I was the founding Director in 2011.⁵¹⁷ As a result, a number of events and opportunities to travel and engage with networks occurred during the second half of this research. The relationship between this research and the LAWs Project therefore contributed significantly to the development of key ideas during the final stages of this research. This was largely because a network consisting of conscripts, veterans of non-statutory (otherwise known as liberation force) apartheid era military structures, academics, activists and writers constellated around the LAWs Project and provided the kind of group-based forum that I had hoped could emerge amongst participants from the interview process. This group not only realised that need within this research but also had the added advantage that the group's diversity challenged the emergence of a self-referential culture of "group think" that dialogues exclusively with conscripts might have led to.

Work related to the LAWs Project enabled me to travel to Namibia in April 2013. It was during this trip that the shift into the second phase of the analysis in this research took place – as described in the Introduction.

Finally, both the History and Psychology Departments at Rhodes University hosted seminars where aspects of this research were presented, critiqued and new possibilities explored. The gradual clarification of a theoretical and methodological focus was enriched and enabled by the support, challenges and questions of colleagues who attended these events.

⁵¹⁷ See www.ru.ac.za/history/legaciesofapartheidwarsproject for further information.

Outside of Rhodes University-based networks, this research was also presented at a number of conferences. Over the five years of this research, I presented the following conference papers: *Life as an ex-SADF Conscript: Continuities and Conundrums* at the After the Wall: 20 Years On: Scholarship and Society in Southern Africa Conference held at Rhodes University on 8 and 9 November 2009; *Personal and Political: Making Sense of South African Defence Force Soldiers' Stories* at the Public Lives, Private Lives: Research Across the Disciplines Conference held at Brighton University in the United Kingdom on 2 June 2010; *Division in the (Inner) Ranks: The Psychosocial Legacies of the Border Wars* at the South African Historical Society Conference held in Durban on 27-29 June 2011 (this paper was published in the South African Historical Journal);⁵¹⁸ *Accounting for Courage, Collusion and Contradictions: Reflecting on the legacies of conscription into the apartheid state's military system* at the International Congress of Psychology held in Cape Town on 22-26 July 2012; *Contested Pasts, Contested Present: The Apartheid Military, Masculinities and the Media* at the Work/Force: South African Masculinities in the Media Conference held at Stellenbosch University on 13-14 September 2012; *A Reflection on Discursive Resources and Memory Fields in Narrative-Based Research with South African Defence Force Conscripts* at the Cultural Psychiatry and Global Mental Health conference held at VU University, Amsterdam in the Netherlands, on 31 May 2013 and the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Conference held at Rhodes University on 9-11 July 2013.

Having provided an overview of the emergent process of this research, the following section will reflect on and critique qualitative, narrative-based research as a research method within the context of this research.

The Praxis of Narrative-based Research

While this narrative-based research has worked with a broad range of texts, the starting point and primary point of reference for this research has been interviews with conscripts.

⁵¹⁸ Edlmann, T. "Division in the (Inner) Ranks: The Psychosocial Legacies of the Border Wars" *South African Historical Journal* Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2012, 256-272

The key shift that happened in the research process was from seeing these interviews as individual stories to seeing them as cultural texts. Within narrative theory as a form of qualitative research, interviews are regarded as a “discursive accomplishment” in which interviewer and respondent become active participants involved in jointly constructing narrative and meaning.⁵¹⁹ In line with ethnographic rather than quantitative research, narrative inquiry seeks accounts of experiences rather than concise answers or general statements.⁵²⁰ For these accounts to occur, an interview needs to be understood as a conversation in which leadership, input and control are constantly shifting and being tacitly negotiated as the conversation unfolds. As has been described in the previous section of this chapter, this can prove more complex than one might expect.

It is for this reason that there is criticism of the use of interviews by those preferring “naturally occurring talk”.⁵²¹ Their broad argument is that there is some artificiality about interviews and that speakers are led to talk about things which they would not discuss otherwise. A further criticism, relating to both interviews as data collection and data analysis of interviews, is that the researcher imposes her preconceptions on the interview rather than following what is important or salient to the speakers themselves, as indicated by what they orient to, in how they talk and what they talk about.⁵²²

It is partially in response to these challenges to the validity of interviews as a research method that I used an intertextual approach which went beyond analysing the transcripts of interviews I conducted, which included incorporating a series of interviews conducted by another researcher. This broadened the range of voices, stories and perspectives used in the analysis. It also drew on the diverse perspectives that arose from work of a researcher who brought different subject positions to mine to the interviews he conducted. In addition to

⁵¹⁹ Mishler, E.G. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986) cited in Riessman p.23

⁵²⁰ Riessman *Narrative Methods* p.23

⁵²¹ Potter, J. and Hepburn, A. “Qualitative Interviews in Psychology: Problems and Possibilities” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 2:281-307, 2005 and Schegloff, E.A. “Whose Text? Whose Context?” *Discourse in Society* 8(2) 165-87, 1997 cited in Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.5

⁵²² Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.5

interview transcripts, I incorporated a wide range of published memoirs, newspaper reports, photographic exhibitions, blogs and video documentaries into the analysis.

As was outlined earlier in this chapter, the textual analysis of this research was enriched by a series of relational reflexive forums which provided me with a “sounding board” to interrogate and weave more texture into to the research than would otherwise have been possible.

Subjectivities, Positioning and Performativities in Research

In any research process, particularly one that has drawn extensively on interviews or group-based research processes, the question of why someone is being asked to speak about their experiences is key.

Membership of particular groups or “category entitlement” is important.⁵²³ Belonging to a particular group or category, such as being an SADF conscript, positions someone as being an expert or having privileged experience about the issue being explored. When asked to speak about their experiences in an interview a researcher is in a sense “mobilising” that category entitlement to establish a rapport.⁵²⁴ Sometimes, as was the case in the interviews I conducted, a researcher mobilises that category entitlement on the basis of constructions of difference between the interviewer and the research participant. In such cases, the two people involved in the interview process bring their own subjectivities to the process. And each brings assumptions about the other to the conversation. An interview or conversation therefore involves a process in which the category entitlement of the research participant, both parties’ subjectivities and the ways they consequently position the other unfold in dynamic relationship as the interview develops. There are inevitably aspects of performativity in how this takes place in both individual interviews and group discussions,

⁵²³ Phoenix, A. “Analysing Narrative Contexts” in Tamboukou, M., Squire, C. and Andrews, M. *Doing Narrative Research* (London: Sage, 2008), p.71

⁵²⁴ Phoenix “Analysing Narrative Contexts” p.72

with implications for how a speaker's category entitlement affects the performance of identity that takes place in a story or discussion.⁵²⁵

When working with written texts, such as the ones I have incorporated into this research, the negotiations of these subjectivities are carried out at different stages of the story-telling process. Firstly the person constructing the text – in this case the writer of a memoir, news item or blog, the creator of an exhibition or the director of a video documentary – positions their work in relation to a perceived and assumed audience. Secondly, a researcher who draws these texts into an analysis process brings her own subjectivities to bear on interpreting the material. These two processes are more discrete than in the case of interviews, and take place at different times and in different contexts. This potentially affects the relationship between the original development of the text and the researcher's interpretation of the text more than in the analysis of an interview.

Whether a researcher is working with interview or written texts, the issue of subject positions is both complex and significant in narrative research. Positions or positioning are the identities "conferred and taken up (since people can be positioned and also position themselves) in different situations, interactions and relationships with others, each with its associated point of view and interests."⁵²⁶ Speakers and writers adopt, resist and take up subject positions in the light of the "master narratives" and discursive resources that shape their narrations.⁵²⁷

As Phoenix highlights, the deployment of these dynamics in interviews that use a narrative-based approach can lead to a research participant adopting a defensive subject position in interviews, with their narrative "designed to defend the speaker from being viewed unfavourably."⁵²⁸ The subject positions that both the interviewer and research participant

⁵²⁵ Riessman *Narrative Methods* p.106.

⁵²⁶ Davies, B. and Harré, R. "Positioning: the Discursive Production of Selves" in *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20(1):43-63 (1990) cited in Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.14

⁵²⁷ Taylor *Narratives of Identity and Place* p.14

⁵²⁸ Phoenix "Analysing Narrative Contexts" p.72

take up represent what would be called an “intersubjective space”.⁵²⁹ This space is unique to each conversation and research relationship, and is constructed in the light of both the assumptions each makes about the other and the evolving process of the interview or conversation. In the process of the evolving construction of these intersubjective spaces during an interview or conversation, it is inevitable that some stories will assume prominence, while others will be forgotten or avoided through denial or repression. In the case of textual analysis, the intersubjective space exists between the page or screen and the researcher and works in retrospect, rather than existing in a relationship that operates in the present tense.

The researcher’s role in the construction of these contrasting intersubjective spaces needs to be acknowledged and constantly interrogated. As Paul Gready acknowledges in reflecting on his research with people who testified at the South African TRC as victims of gross human rights violations, the researcher needs to be aware of their own desires and biases:

In my own research, reacting against the reification of suffering and victimhood I found myself privileging agency and resistance – but this of course is simply another form of selective listening and rendering the marginalised speechless. People may not see themselves as victims/survivors or heroes; resistance comes in many guises. Experiences and identities are nuanced, changing over time, often directly influenced by narrative episodes.⁵³⁰

In the same way, I have found myself drawn towards stories of resistance or disavowal of apartheid ideologies and the role of the SADF in implementing these ideologies. The reification of anti-communist propaganda or hyper-masculine identities in interviews and other texts made me extremely uncomfortable.

In contrast, accounts of experiences of violence or trauma during interviews had me struggling with the boundaries between research and therapy. While I had hoped that interviews and group discussion in this research would be a healing space for conscripts, I

⁵²⁹ Andrews “Narrative Research” p.15

⁵³⁰ Gready, P. “The Public Life of Narratives: Ethics, Politics, Methods” in Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. *Doing Narrative Research* (London: Sage, 2008), p.141

increasingly came to recognise that my role in these conversations was to invite stories about conscription and its legacies and not to assume the mantle of therapist. In doing so, I needed to monitor my biases and role as much as possible and constantly reflect on how the intersubjective space of an interview was being constructed. Negotiating these roles proved complex at times, with questions emerging for me about whether conscripts who were willing to participate in interviews actually benefited from our interactions or whether, in reality, I was the only one who benefited from our conversations.

Primarily, my role was to invite rather than marginalise the narratives and identities that conscripts wanted and chose to construct. My own biases and subject positions sometimes made this complex territory to negotiate. I also needed to respect the gift of a research participant's trust and willingness to speak, but stay within the boundaries of asking questions that focused on the research, i.e. clarifying and extrapolating the story, rather than therapeutic components to the conversation, i.e. exploring emotional affect or asking questions about healing possibilities in stories. However, as Andrews highlights, it is seldom possible to rigorously evaluate the extent to which a researcher maintains these boundaries and the extent to which interviews are positive experiences for research participants.⁵³¹

It is not only performance of difference that bring richness and texture to narrative work, however. The intersubjective space created in a research interview or group discussion is also an act of collaboration in which both parties share at least some meanings and conventions.⁵³² In the case of my research, the fact that research participants and I were similar ages and came from a similar generation of white South Africans was a significant asset in enabling conversations to be something of a joint narrative process. There were cultural allusions and mention made of political leaders or historical events that could be woven into conscripts' narratives specifically because they knew I would have a qualitative sense of the event or context within which their story took place. This dynamic probably

⁵³¹ Andrews, M. *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.42,43

⁵³² Salmon, P. and Riessman, C.K. "Looking back on narrative research: An exchange" in Andrews et al *Doing Narrative Research* p.81

influenced the stories that were chosen as much as the differences that existed between us. Some stories and insights would have been filtered out or changed if, for instance, a researcher young enough to be their daughter had tried to work in the same area of research. The Missing Voices interviews that Michael Cadman conducted were a valuable addition to this research, precisely because his subjectivities and approach to interviews foregrounded different, and sometimes contrasting, elements of conscripts' accounts.

The written texts that I used in the analysis had a similar but different performative element, primarily because the intersubjective space was different. The writers and producers of the works that I used had decided on how to perform their subject positions over a period of time. My interaction with their texts was therefore less reciprocal.

This diversity of performativities and intersubjective spaces enabled the texts I worked with to speak to each other precisely because they were different in ethos and focus. This ultimately enriched the analysis process.

The interviews I conducted with conscripts were once-off conversations and therefore had limitations. The narrative structure that a research participant used in one interview with me did not necessarily fully reflect their life story, their experience of conscription or the legacies of those experiences in his life. It represented what the research participant had chosen to give an account of on that day; what he has chosen to edit out of his narrative in the context of our meeting, and how he had positioned himself and me in relation to the themes being discussed. The narrative coherence in any one account of a conscript's experiences inevitably had variable elements of temporality, spatiality and performativity, depending on the context within which the narration was taking place and who the narrative was being presented to.

While there were limitations, the negotiations of the intersubjectivity and performativity within research interviews and other texts highlight the strengths of a narrative-based

process. Stories become both personal narratives and representations of particularities of history and context. Contrasting voices and subjectivities placed alongside each other and explored through the interrogation of the agency and imagination of both the teller and the listener enable a richness and texture to the analysis.⁵³³

The Role of Listening within Narrative-Based Research

An interview or research conversation is not only shaped by the intersubjective and performative dimensions of the relationship between the researcher and the research participant. The quality, intention and agency of the researcher as listener is also key.

In narrative work, the attentiveness with which a researcher listens operates at a number of levels. There need to be both intellectual and emotional components to their levels of attention and engagement, demanding a level of vulnerability and willingness to enter the unknown regarding stories of which a researcher might have limited understanding. Riessman highlights the amount of work and time required for this kind of consciousness in a researcher, arguing however, that this dimension to research enables new possibilities and frameworks of meaning.⁵³⁴

The unresolved and often intense emotional nature of discussion regarding the issues conscripts were speaking about proved a challenge during interviews and conversations with conscripts. What I tried to hold at the centre of these interactions was that this research is primarily about people's subjective, complex, lived experiences of history and the legacies it has etched on their lives, however else I might choose to position and analyse texts. It was these moments in particular that helped me understand my role as an outside witness.⁵³⁵ In narrative therapeutic theory, part of the role of a witness is to sit outside of a

⁵³³ Riessman *Narrative Methods* p.13

⁵³⁴ Andrews, M. *Shaping history: narratives of political change* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2004) cited in Riessman *Narrative Methods* p.27

⁵³⁵ Weingarten, K. "Witnessing, Wonder and Hope" in *Family Process* Vol.39 No.4 Winter 2000

story acting in solidarity with the speaker of a narrative as an act of hope.⁵³⁶ In working to communalise both an awareness of the system of conscription and the trauma that might have arisen from this system for conscripts, I came to see my role as a witness as being to validate and respect the stories I was hearing as they were being told.

The challenge of listening to stories of violence and trauma is a particularly complex research issue. As was discussed in Chapter Three, LaCapra's concept of "empathic unsettlement" is important to bear in mind in this regard.⁵³⁷ A researcher's awareness of the need to deal with her own emotional affect rather than appropriating the affect of research participants' experiences in the interests of their own needs is important to keep in mind. The researcher's own emotional responses and possible disorientation need to be addressed outside of the interview process, rather than imposed on the research participant or the research process in ethically problematic ways. Instead, reflexivity and awareness about empathic unsettlement in the course of listening to research participants' stories can enable a researcher to harness their discomfort in the interests of new insights rather imposing what LaCapra might describe as "utopian" fantasies.⁵³⁸

How a researcher deals with empathic unsettlement is linked to how she engages with agency in a research participant's story. Agency guides trajectories in narratives, working towards some kind of resolution or closure. The quality with which a researcher listens and recognises these trajectories of agency will have direct bearing on the space created for an enabling or curtailment of the storyteller's account.⁵³⁹

In the case of this research, it was often the stories that I found the most uncomfortable to listen to that gave me key insights. For example, stories whose trajectories were driven by

⁵³⁶ Ibid. p.402

⁵³⁷ LaCapra, D. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp.41,42

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Andrews, M., Day Sclater, S., Squire, C. and Treacher, A. "Introduction" in Andrews, M., Day Sclater, S., Squire, C. and Treacher, A (eds.) *Lines of Narrative: Psychosocial Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.7

justifications of the apartheid “total onslaught” ideology and fusions of these justifications with the context of post-apartheid South Africa enabled me to recognise perceptions of threat as a discursive resource in conscripts’ narrations. In the same way, historical and contemporary accounts of events that sometimes contained aggressive and violent expressions of racial, ethnic, cultural or gendered prejudice and superiority enabled me to recognise the temporal thread of impunity within conscripts’ accounts. Thus moments of sometimes the most acute discomfort brought some of the most valuable insights for me. As Andrews states, listening in narrative-based research “involves risking one’s self, exposing oneself to new possibilities and frameworks of meaning.”⁵⁴⁰ This vulnerability also involves the risk of trauma for the researcher that goes beyond “empathic unsettlement”.

One of the new frameworks of meaning that I grappled with the most in the course of this research was how to make sense of conscripts’ silences in interviews, as well as public conversations and the more social spaces of memoirs, photographic or video work and blogs.

The emotional vulnerabilities that I witnessed, especially in the course of interviews, was completely contradictory to the manifestations of hyper-masculinities that I had expected. The emotionally charged silences that sometimes led to emotional outbursts or expressions of pain required that I revisit my own assumptions. In so many interactions I experienced, silences were often characterised by men walking away from social conversations rather than speaking, or deflecting questions about their experiences with remarks that people who were not there would not understand. Many of the interviews I conducted gave me unsettling insights into the stoic, sometimes courageous, quality of these silences. The deeply fragmenting phenomenology of narrating military experiences in civilian contexts has been discussed in some detail in Chapter Three. I came to realise that this, combined with the levels of contestation that characterised any discussion about conscription, meant that many men had constructed a wall of silence as a defensive mechanism against the perceived

⁵⁴⁰ Andrews, M. *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.15

threats that vulnerability posed. Men have chosen silence because of potentially overwhelming emotions and the consequent struggles to voice their experiences, especially those of moral injury. This resulted in what I have come to describe as the unsettling breaking-open of my previous biases about men and their silence within the cultural norms and narrative trajectories of conscription. This process ultimately led to important shifts and increasing openness for me in how I listened and engaged with conscripts themselves and the texts I drew on in this research.

The nature of this research meant that trajectories that conscripts constructed in their narrations and their silences were both personal and political. Given the period of political change that conscripts' stories were dealing with, the agency at work in these stories shifted as a result of contextual shifts and the effect these had on the memory fields within which these narrations took place.

Memory Fields and Political Identities in Narrative Research

The intensely political context and focus of this research, and the political changes that had taken place since the time that conscription was in place, inevitably influenced the interviews and other texts that I worked with in this research.

In the interviews I conducted, this was particularly evident in the different forms of narrative coherence in conscripts' stories. While it appeared to me that some anecdotes had clearly developed a level of coherence because of a well-rehearsed performative element due to having been told on numerous occasions in the past, many were mostly disjointed and at times fragmented. As far as I could tell, there were two reasons for this. One was because events were emotional and traumatising, both at the time and in the telling. The other was because conscripts were grappling with negotiating shifts in politically correct language or cultural resources that were acceptable under apartheid but were no longer

socially acceptable in the new democratic era within which the research was being conducted.

As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, these negotiations were also evident in the additional texts that this research drew on.

Andrews alludes to something of these negotiations when she describes the “aftermath of grand ‘narratives’ of (a) social and political order” resulting in narratives being ascribed to “identifications rather than identities” with “no firm sociocultural ground from which to tell stories.”⁵⁴¹ This certainly resonates with the way in which conscripts would sometimes step out of the narrative trajectory of a story in the course of an interview, their use of language shifting from being primarily subjective to becoming self-conscious in negotiating the social and political positioning of their narration or – as Andrews describes this phenomenon – focusing on identifications rather than identities.⁵⁴² In the other texts I used, memoirs, blogs and video documentaries in particular showed evidence of careful consideration of the language, political position and ideological framework that would best communicate the narrations of identity and political identifications of the work.

These complexities highlight the convoluted memory fields within which the psychosocial legacies of conscription can (and cannot) currently be narrated in South Africa. They also highlight the contrasting ways in which conscripts negotiate the need to reinterpret their political identities in the midst of a contextual narrative terrain characterised by flux and change.⁵⁴³

The highly contested social positions that conscripts hold in South African society inevitably affected the narrations in texts this research has drawn on. As will be discussed in Chapter

⁵⁴¹ Andrews et al “Introduction” p.8

⁵⁴² Andrews *Shaping History* p.8

⁵⁴³ Whitebrook, M. *Identity, Narrative and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2001) cited in Andrews *Shaping History* p.9

Six, this contestation has led to the development of memory fields shaped by hostile adversity on one hand and the silencing of more complex, reflective or muted narrations on the other hand. This points to the complexities of narrating politically contested identities and stories in the midst of turmoil and political change, especially when those stories revolve around already fragmented narratives due to experiences of trauma.⁵⁴⁴ It also points to the complex task of the researcher in how she listens to and reads narrations of history and identity. The political dynamics of the context in which research takes place influence the listener/reader as much as the narrator of a story, making some stories more desirable than others and influencing the levels of enthusiasm and “deafness” with which stories are heard or engaged with.⁵⁴⁵

If the researcher is willing to be reflexive and critically interrogate their own subject positions, the political complexities within research can be where the power of the narrative lies. This is because a researcher’s engagements with these complexities “demand an effort of interpretation” in making sense of the relationship between an individual story or piece of text and the influence of contextual political dynamics in constructing the empty and silent spaces folded within a text.⁵⁴⁶ In this way the spoken and unspoken dimensions, the coherent and fragmented elements, within a story provide material from which to make sense of the cultural repertoires and discursive resources that have shaped the trajectories of both a story and the silences that it holds. They also serve to highlight the identity related stresses emerging out of the complex narrative negotiations that conscripts have experienced and engaged in.

The identity related stresses and narrative negotiations catalysed by the period of history covered in this research give the choices people made, and their contextual resonances, a particular edge. Crises and stresses sharpen levels of consciousness about identity related narratives, the choices people make, and the moral and social consequences of those

⁵⁴⁴ Andrews *Shaping History* p.12

⁵⁴⁵ Andrews *Shaping History* p.35,36

⁵⁴⁶ Poletta, F. *It was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) cited in Andrews *Shaping History* p.12

choices. In the course of this research, research participants and other texts reveal diverse interpretations of these identity-related crises and negotiations. The sometimes fragmented interpretations of events and choices in narratives had significant implications for the ideological and cultural groups with which conscripts and other authors of texts aligned themselves with or resisted, those they once ascribed to but had later moved away from, or those within which they had chosen to take up marginal or passive positions.

An Outline of the Narrative-Discursive Analysis Used in this Research

As has already been outlined, this research has used a variety of narrative-based approaches in analysing and formulating discussions about the psychosocial legacies of conscription.

Having initially planned to use a phenomenological approach to analyse the transcripts of individual interviews with conscripts, I finally settled on a narrative-discursive approach and incorporated a range of other texts alongside those of the interviews I conducted. This included seeing the texts being analysed as cultural texts rather than as individual stories.

This shift had several advantages. The primary advantage was that a narrative-discursive approach has not been used in other research into the legacies of conscription. Nor has the range of sources I have used. One of the criticisms that was made about the phenomenologically-orientated matrix of themes that emerged out of the first phase of my analysis was that the sources I had drawn on and the themes I had identified did not generate new knowledge. At most they highlighted and reformulated themes that had been discussed before. The shift to a narrative-discursive approach, based on a wider range of texts, enabled a more nuanced identification of the patterns that have discursively informed conscripts' accounts and the socio-political contexts in which they have taken place. This has not been done before by a researcher.

The process of identifying the narrative-discursive patterns in the various texts used in this research consisted of a number of phases.

The first was a detailed re-reading of the interview transcripts. These were the focus of my initial processes of analysis, and remained my primary point of entry in the narrative-discursive analysis as well. In the course of this re-reading and my engagements with the other texts I had incorporated into the analysis, I also revisited the writings of Crossley, Taylor, Andrews⁵⁴⁷ and Lomsky-Feder⁵⁴⁸ in order to think through how to reframe my analysis within narrative-based theory.

This led to the second phase of the analysis: the identification of theoretical frameworks which enabled an articulation of the narrative-discursive patterns that had emerged in my reading and engagements with the texts. This is what led to the identification of the discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat outlined in Chapter Two. As has been outlined in Chapter Three, Lomsky-Feder's theory of memory fields then helped me frame the contextual dimensions to how narrations of violence and possible trauma were being articulated in the texts I was working with.

The third phase of the analysis consisted of framing narrative-discursive patterns I saw in the texts, but for which there was inadequate language or theorisation in the theories I was working with. For example, the patterns I saw in the texts suggested the significance of historical continuities and historical shifts in how the legacies of conscription were being defined, and influenced, by the social and political transitions in South Africa. These were inadequately addressed by any of the social constructionist narrative theorists whose work I have drawn on. This led me to develop the idea of temporal threads that function over time and shape the patterns that emerge between texts, rather with within texts.⁵⁴⁹ In articulating the relationship between discursive resources, memory fields and temporal

⁵⁴⁷ See Chapter Two for more background on these theorists.

⁵⁴⁸ See Chapter Three for more background on Lomsky-Feder.

⁵⁴⁹ See Chapters Two and Seven for further discussion about this notion of temporal threads.

threads, I then developed the notion of “narrative terrains” that are negotiated through “narrative repair” and “narrative reinforcement”. These framings, notions and ideas were constructed over a period of time as I read and revisited the various texts I was working with. The emphasis on viewing these texts as cultural texts rather than individual stories was significant in this regard. Regular refinements and changes were made in the light of conversations with peers and engagements with the various networks described earlier in this chapter. The outcomes of this analysis can be found in the discussion in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Conclusion

In the end, the praxis of qualitative, narrative-based research has to rest on what the researcher believes will enable the best outcome for the process. After many twists and turns along the way, I adopted a narrative-discursive approach. This enabled me to work reflexively with a broader collection of texts than was initially envisaged, and proved the most effective way for me to take this research forward.

This chapter has outlined the process and praxis of this research process in realising its goals. It has outlined the complexities of finding the right methodological “fit” in this research process, and the ethical and methodological implications of qualitative research. It has also provided an outline of the process of analysis that was used.

The following chapter will outline a range of texts relevant to conscription, such as academic research, memoirs, films and photographic exhibitions. A selection of these works will be discussed in relation to the discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat, as well as the memory fields that shape the narrations of conscription in these texts.

CHAPTER FIVE

A REVIEW OF TEXTS RELATING TO NARRATIONS OF CONSCRIPTION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of literature regarding conscription into the SADF, with a particular focus on the psychosocial legacies of conscription. As discussed in the previous chapter, these texts have been used alongside interviews conducted with conscripts in the narrative-discursive analysis which has been the theoretical framework for this research. This chapter will therefore also provide analysis of the discursive resources and memory fields at work in a selection of the texts discussed.

The chapter begins with an overview of academic and NGO-based research on the psychosocial effects and legacies of conscription, followed by discussions about the emergence of conscripts' personal memoirs as a new genre of post-apartheid South African literature. Finally, a narrative-discursive lens will be brought to bear on various theatrical productions, photographic exhibitions, video documentaries and websites that have relevance to this research.

Research and Academic Writing 1970-2000

Research about the SADF over the period of history that this research deals with is wide-ranging in focus and ideological positioning. Research conducted during the apartheid era was inevitably shaped by its political context – researchers usually positioned themselves as supporting or opposing the SADF and the government of the day. The volume and diversity of historical and psychological research increased dramatically in the late 1980s, precipitated by heightened public debate about the system of apartheid and a growing awareness of the social and psychological costs of the prevalence of violence in South Africa.

For example, the 1970s and 1980s saw numerous publications emerge, primarily by South African historians and leaders inside and outside of the SADF.⁵⁵⁰ The largely military ethos of these works means that they fall outside of the domain of this research. However, it is worth commenting on the way in which they reflect their social and political context, and the memory fields that shaped narrations about conscription at the time.

As Leopold Scholtz points out in his very recent publication of the history of the Border War, the scope – or what in this research would be described as memory fields – of both apartheid and post-apartheid era research is largely affected by controlled access to information, both by the South African government and other military and political bodies.⁵⁵¹ His research was published nearly twenty years after the democratic elections in South Africa, and yet he claims he relied on SADF sources for 90% of his research because he still could not get access to Angolan, Cuban or most Namibian archives. It is not clear why he did not consult ANC archives, given that its military wing uMkhonto weSizwe was based in Angola and had extensive networks in Namibia. However, his point in this regard is salutary in its reference to the discursive *laagers* and fractured nature of the memory fields within which the military history of the Border Wars has been narrated, both during and after the apartheid era.

Another dimension of research during this period dealt with the personal experiences of conscripts. Research that engaged directly with conscripts' experiences began to emerge during the 1980s – primarily in the form of postgraduate research.⁵⁵² This would seem to

⁵⁵⁰ Examples include Cawthra, G. "South Africa at War" in Lonsdale, J. (ed.) *South Africa in Question* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, African Studies Centre, 1988); Grundy, K.W. *The militarisation of South African politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Leonard, R. *South Africa at war: White power and the crisis in Southern Africa* (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1983); Breytenbach, J. *They live by the sword* (Alberton: Lemur Books, 1990)

⁵⁵¹ Scholtz, L. *The SADF in the Border War 1966-1989* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2013), pp.xii,xii

⁵⁵² These include Davey, D. *A phenomenological explication of problems in intimacy experienced by the returned conscript, as a result of military experiences in the South African Defence Force* Honours Thesis, Rhodes University, 1988; Price, L. *A documentation of the experiences of military conscripts in the South African Defence Force* Masters in Social Science thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1989

indicate an awareness of the effects of conscription amongst young people who were of the same generation as conscripts and therefore personally affected by classmates and friends who were studying at university after serving in the SADF. However, this work received limited public attention. The sectors of the public that might have paid attention were limited by the fact that these were students from liberal English-speaking institutions, a sector of society that was treated with suspicion and disregard by the apartheid establishment.

There was a second wave of academic theses about conscription in the 1990's, mostly by Psychology students. Gary Koen's Rhodes University-based Master's thesis gives an account of his work with a conscript who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.⁵⁵³ The following year another Rhodes Psychology Masters student, Shane Hodgson, completed a thesis entitled *The psychological sequelae of involvement in combat: a preliminary investigation*.⁵⁵⁴ A few years later Catherine Draper, an Honours student at the University of Cape Town in 1999, published an article in a women's magazine inviting conscripts who were willing to be interviewed about their experiences to contact her.⁵⁵⁵ The paper she wrote about this research became widely available, including being loaded onto veterans' websites such as The Sentinel.⁵⁵⁶ This speaks to broader shifts that were taking place during and after the transition to democracy, in that this research was both encouraged and more likely to be disseminated amongst veterans through the newly available medium of the internet.

The first collection of essays that provided rigorous engagement with the effect of conscription on people's lives and in society was a 1989 compilation of papers edited by

⁵⁵³ Koen, G. *Understanding and Treating Combat-Related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Soldier's Story* Masters in Clinical Psychology thesis, Rhodes University, 1991. This research led to Koen being invited to testify at the TRC Special Hearing on Conscription. See Chapter Six for more detail on this.

⁵⁵⁴ Hodgson S.R.C. *The psychological sequelae of involvement in combat: A preliminary investigation* Master's thesis, Rhodes University, 1992

⁵⁵⁵ Draper, C. *Psychological Experiences of Military Conscription in South Africa during the 1970's and 1980's* Psychology Honours essay, University of Cape Town, 1999

⁵⁵⁶ The Sentinel Project's website can be found on <http://uk.geocities.com/sadfbok> (accessed on 8 September 2009)

Jacklyn Cock and Laurie Nathan, *War and Society*.⁵⁵⁷ One of the significant aspects of this book is that it was published at a time when conscription was still strictly enforced, creating legal challenges in terms of what could be discussed and written about. The book is unique and important both for the unprecedented breadth of research, analysis and information it provides and for the fact that previously unknown information about the SADF and its activities was placed in the public domain. While its readership would have been affected by the fact that both the editors and contributors were involved in anti-apartheid activities, including the End Conscription Campaign, it was nevertheless a timely catalyst in shifting the memory fields within which the social, political and psychological dimensions of conscription could be narrated. It was also the first time that constructions of gender, race and perceptions of threat were highlighted in work about conscription and the SADF. Gender and militarisation in particular became a major focus of subsequent work.

The publication of *War and Society* was followed by a number of papers and lectures on the gendered nature of violence in South Africa by Jacklyn Cock,⁵⁵⁸ and the publication of her book *Colonels and Cadres*.⁵⁵⁹ Cock's work was ground-breaking in the links it made between masculinities and militarism across political divides. Her framing of the manifestations of gender related dynamics in all spheres of political and social violence were seminal. Her work was also important in breaking the silences around social and military practices within the SADF, and their psychosocial impact for both conscripts and society at large. Workman's review of *Colonels and Cadres* rightly points out the importance of the link this research makes between traditional connotations of masculinity and violence and the ongoing challenge of achieving a "viable and just peace" in South Africa in the post-apartheid era.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ Cock, J. & Nathan, L. (eds.) *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989)

⁵⁵⁸ Cock, J. "Keeping the Fires Burning: Militarisation and the Politics of Gender in South Africa" *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 45/46, *Militarism, Warlords & the Problems of Democracy* (1989), pp. 50-64; Cock, J. *Women, the Military and Militarisation: Some Questions Raised by the South African Case* (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 1992); Cock, J. "The Feminist Challenge to Militarism" in *Agenda No. 36 No to Violence* (1997), pp. 27-39; Cock, J. "Gun Violence and Masculinity in Contemporary South Africa" in Morrell, R. (ed.) *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001)

⁵⁵⁹ Cock J., *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991)

⁵⁶⁰ Workman, T. "War and Gender" a review of *Colonels and Cadres* in *Southern Africa Report* Vol.9, No.2, November 1993, p.32

Indeed the very fact that this research has proven necessary more than 10 years after Cock's most recent work on these issues was published is evidence that the gendered nature violence remains a challenge for South African society.

Another significant publication in 1999 was *The Aversion Project Report*.⁵⁶¹ As has been outlined in Chapter Two, this report was the result of a group of health professionals deciding to investigate claims that homosexual men and women in the SADF had been subjected to shock therapy and unethical forms of medication (including chemical castration). The *Aversion Project* and its findings are another example of shifting memory fields in the post-1994 political context, enabling new kinds of academic work to be conducted and published.

Research and Academic Writing 2000-2013

The number of popular and academic publications that focused on SADF conscripts' experiences witnessed what could be described as an explosion from the mid-2000s onwards. Whether or not this became possible because of the way in which the TRC had highlighted the importance of personal narratives about the apartheid era is impossible to verify, but it is probable. It is also highly likely that this renewed focus was prefaced by burgeoning civil society initiatives that addressed the psychological effects of violence in the aftermath of the apartheid era. While the causes of these shifts may be difficult to pin down, there is no question that the memory fields within which narrations of the legacies of violence could take place shifted substantially during this period.

The shifts in these memory fields were particularly evident in civil society initiatives. The establishment of the South African Institute for Traumatic Stress in 2000⁵⁶² and the Themba

⁵⁶¹ van Zyl, M., de Gruchy, J., Lapinsky, S., Lewin, S. and Reid, G. *The Aversion Project: Human rights abuses of gays and lesbians in the South African Defence Force by health workers during the apartheid era* (Cape Town: Simply Said and Done, 1999)

⁵⁶² See <http://www.saits.org.za/> for further information.

Lesizwe Trauma Service Providers' Network⁵⁶³ created space and resources for a far greater scale of research, programmes and activities than had existed before. For example, Sasha Gear of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr) conducted unprecedented research for their Violence in Transition Series. She produced two publications: a literature review on the experiences of apartheid era ex-combatants (including conscripts) entitled "Now that the War is Over: Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence",⁵⁶⁴ followed by a paper based on extensive research entitled "Wishing Us Away: Challenges facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa".⁵⁶⁵

Postgraduate research proved an arena in which there continued to be significant interest. In contrast to research conducted in the 1990s, the research during this time included both conscripts' and conscientious objector's experiences,⁵⁶⁶ as well as military history.⁵⁶⁷

Whether their adversarial relationship with the TRC was the catalyst that prompted some SADF Generals to publish works about themselves and their military careers is impossible to

⁵⁶³ This initiative closed in 2007, but information can still be found on www.ngopulse.org/newsflash/themba-lesizwe-awards-r65mn-victim-empowerment-projects and www.peacebuildingportal.org/index.asp?pgid=9&org=4321 (accessed on 21 December 2011)

⁵⁶⁴ Gear, S. "Now that the War is Over' Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence: A literature review" in *Violence and Transition Series* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002)

⁵⁶⁵ Gear, S. "Wishing Us Away: Challenges Facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa" in *Violence and Transition Series, Vol. 8, 2002* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002)

⁵⁶⁶ Examples include Connors, J.P. *Empowering Alternatives: A history of the Conscientious Objector Support Group's challenge to military service in South Africa* Masters thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2007; Conway, D. *Masculinity, citizenship and political objection to compulsory military service in the South African Defence Force, 1978-1990* Doctoral thesis, Rhodes University, 2007. Further publications from Conway include "The Masculine State in Crisis: State Response to War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa" in *Men and Masculinities* Volume 10 Number 4 June 2008 pp.422-439 and "'Somewhere on the Border – Of Credibility': The Cultural Construction and Contestation of 'the Border' in White South African Society" in Baines, G. & Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008). Connell, M. *Prevalence Of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, And Coping Strategies, Among former South African National Servicemen* Masters thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2011; Phillips, M. *The End Conscript Campaign 1983-1988: A Study of White Extra Parliamentary Opposition To Apartheid* Masters Thesis, UNISA, 2002; Jones, D. *Objecting to Apartheid: The History of the End Conscript Campaign* Masters thesis, University of Fort Hare, 2013

⁵⁶⁷ Alexander, M. *The Cassinga Raid* Masters thesis, University of South Africa, 2003; McAllister, G. *Compliance, Compulsion and Contest: Aspects of Military Conscript 1952-1992* Masters thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2007; Warwick, R. *White South Africa and Defence 1960-1968: Militarization, Threat Perceptions and Counter Strategies* Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town, 2009

verify,⁵⁶⁸ but the literature of this period also saw the emergence of a number of works by senior members of the SADF. Many of these are attempts by SADF leaders to “set the record straight” in the light of new hierarchies of memory fields in the post-apartheid era by justifying their actions and the SADF’s strategies during the apartheid era.⁵⁶⁹

In terms of academic literature, the shifting memory fields of post-apartheid and post-TRC South Africa led to research focusing on the formulation of theoretical frameworks that enabled South African researchers to develop new formulations and analyses of the apartheid era and the emerging post-apartheid trends.

A significant publication that emerged from the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is Foster, Haupt and De Beer’s *The Theatre of Violence: Narratives of Protagonists in the South African Conflict*.⁵⁷⁰ For the purposes of this research, this work is noteworthy because of both its achievements and its omissions. Foster et al set out to provide theoretical framings that explain the combination of circumstances that led to South Africans of various political persuasions to use particular kinds of violence.⁵⁷¹ They also looked to shift the language of perpetrator and victim to the more theatrical (and therefore less politically loaded) metaphor of “protagonists” of violence. Due to the fact that the book focuses on members of the groupings and political structures who applied for amnesty, SADF conscripts are completely ignored. While SADF Generals appeared before the TRC, very few conscripts were able to participate in the Special Hearing arranged to investigate the role of the SADF.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ The relationship between the SADF Generals and the TRC is discussed in Chapter Six.

⁵⁶⁹ These include Breytenbach, J. *The Buffalo Soldiers - The Story of South Africa's 32-Battalion 1975-1993* (Johannesburg: Galago, 2004); Malan, M. *My Life with the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2006); Geldenhuys, J. *At the Front - A General's Account of South Africa's Border War* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2008); Nortje, P. *The Terrible Ones: A Complete History of 32 Battalion* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2012)

⁵⁷⁰ Foster, D., Haupt, P. and de Beer, M. *The Theatre of Violence: Narratives of Protagonists in the South African Conflict* (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town: HSRC Press and Oxford: James Currey, 2005)

⁵⁷¹ Foster et al *Theatre of Violence* pp.1,2

⁵⁷² The relationships between the TRC and the SADF Generals and the Special Hearing on Conscription are discussed in Chapter Six.

In spite of the contribution it made to a new genre of social psychology research, *Theatre of Violence* proved to be as constrained and complicit as the TRC in maintaining the memory fields that render the experiences and legacies of SADF conscripts' experiences invisible. The fact that it only focuses on police and security establishment operatives means that it has limited value for this research, except for the framework it provides of the cultural influences acting on conscripts and the SADF.

The work of Karen Batley, on the other hand, was specifically intended to shift the memory fields within which conscripts' experiences were narrated.⁵⁷³ Her research came out of a conversation amongst her and fellow academics in the UNISA English Department about what conscripts might be writing about their experiences of the SADF's withdrawal from Angola and Namibia in the late 1980s. She and some colleagues appeared on radio programmes and wrote letters to magazines inviting men who had served in the SADF to submit poetry, diary entries and notes. She was inundated with responses, but was unable to get this work published until the late 2000s.⁵⁷⁴ Her introductory essay to the collection of poetry by conscripts that she compiled contains some invaluable insights into conscripts' narrations of identity during this time in history, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

In recognition of both Karen Batley's and Sasha Gear's roles in documenting and articulating the legacies of conscription, both their work was included in the first substantial edition of collected works to explore the relationships between the Border War and the post-TRC South African context.

⁵⁷³ Batley, K. (ed.) *A Secret Burden: Memories of the Border War by South African Soldiers who fought in it* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2007); Batley, K. "'Documents of Life': South African Soldiers' Narratives of the Border War" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008)

⁵⁷⁴ Batley *A Secret Burden* p.xiii

This collection, *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts*, was edited by Gary Baines and Peter Vale.⁵⁷⁵ It contains a wide-ranging series of papers, with the aim of reconfiguring – perhaps defining – the way in which the Southern Africa is dealing with the legacies of apartheid era conflicts. Coming twenty years after Nathan and Cock's *War and Society* it could be described as an important “next step” in continuing the work of articulating the broader implications of the Border War, but with a broader lens on the topic than Cock and Nathan had in 1989. As Ian Liebenberg writes in his review of the publication:

This work presents a different genre. It is not a work of colonels, generals or the interpretation of apartheid journalists. Neither is the work helpful for those interested in blood and guts. *Beyond the Border War* does not define “liberation”, the concept “terrorist”, insurgency and counter-insurgency (“asymmetrical warfare”) or address grand military strategy and small group tactics. Yet it moves beyond the stale debates of a Cold War... It touches the present and people who live in it.⁵⁷⁶

Certainly, this research has drawn extensively on the essays in this collection, and can be seen as an attempt to develop the genre of writing about the apartheid era wars of which *Beyond the Border War* has been a path-breaker.

While new and creative genres of social history have been emerging since 2000, the well-established genre of military history has also continued to produce further publications and research. These are often tentative revisions or expansions of the history of the Border Wars, whose aim is to bring new information or insights rather than radically review existing interpretations of similar publications going back to the 1970s.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁵ Baines, G. & Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008)

⁵⁷⁶ Liebenberg, I. Review of “Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late Cold War Conflicts” in *African Historical Review* (2011) 43:2, 119-121

⁵⁷⁷ Examples include Hamann, H. *Days of the Generals: The untold story of South Africa's apartheid-era military generals* (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2001) and Williams, D. *On the Border: The White South Africa Military Experience 1965-1990* Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2008)

A recent publication in this genre is Leopold Scholtz's general military history entitled *The SADF in the Border War 1966-1989*, which is something of an exception in that it does provide some interesting new details in how to frame of the apartheid era wars. Firstly, he describes the Border War as needing to be seen through the "triple prism" of "a war against racial domination, a war against colonial domination, and as part of the Cold War."⁵⁷⁸ This extrapolation of colonialism and the race-based system of apartheid is new to this genre of historical research, and provides a very useful framework for making sense of this history. Secondly, he describes the "hybrid" nature of the war was one of its most "interesting" elements: "it was an insurgency and counterinsurgency war, a fast-moving mobile conventional war and, at the end, a set-piece war of attrition, all rolled into one."⁵⁷⁹ While the technical details of this description are not a focus of this research, the complexity of this "hybrid war" goes some way to explaining the complexity of conscripts' experiences within this war, and their equally complex narrations of the legacies of these experiences.

The most recent academic publication on conscript's experiences is Diana Gibson's "'The *Balsak* in the Roof': Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts".⁵⁸⁰ It marks another step forward in acknowledging conscripts' experiences and the formulation of theoretical frameworks that make sense of them. While based on interviews and narratives not dissimilar to the methods used in this research, Gibson's approach differs in two respects: she is a medical anthropologist and she specifically interviewed men who had combat experience. Nevertheless, her use of Lomsky-Feder's work with Israeli conscripts and the framing of her analysis within theories of PTSD mean that her work has been a significant point of reference for this research and discussion.

⁵⁷⁸ Scholtz, L. *The SADF in the Border War 1966-1989* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2013), p.436

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Gibson, D. "'The *Balsak* in the Roof': Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts" in Kapteijns, L. and Richters, A. (eds.) *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010). See also Gibson, D. "Untold Stories and Disconnectedness. The Dilemma of Conscript Veterans of the Bush War" *Werkwinkel* vol. 4(1), 2009, pp.71-102

Memoirs and Personal Narratives by Conscripts

Grensliteratuur

The term *grensliteratuur* (literal translation: border literature) is used in relation to a genre of mostly Afrikaans literature that appeared during the late 1970s and 1980s. While the term is used fairly loosely in the literature in terms of the actual works that belong to this genre, I have drawn on Henriette Roos's framing in her chapter entitled "Writing from Within: Representations of the Border War in South African literature."⁵⁸¹

For Roos, *grensliteratuur* encompasses Afrikaans-language works written during the time that conscription was in place. These works were not ideologically coherent, as the genre includes works that were popular and supported the dominant social discourses of the time as well as the more widely attributed works that expressed unease and disaffection with apartheid doctrine and culture.⁵⁸² What defines works that expressed dissonance with the context of the time is their focus on – and struggle with – the idea of a border. As Roos highlights, many of Southern Africa's borders are part of "a colonial heritage of delimitation as a sign of conquest and exclusion aimed at disempowering the Others."⁵⁸³ For writers in this genre, most of whom served in the SADF as conscripts, this notion of a border shifted from being not only an historical space, but a metaphysical and metaphorical realm as well.⁵⁸⁴

Thus works reported on what happened on the borders of Namibia and Angola, but also subverted notions associated with the "total onslaught" ideology through their engagement with the theme of negotiating and transcending frontiers and borders. Through this, personal journeys of individuation began to take place in these works. Giliomee highlights a focus in these works on brutalisation – both of SADF "enemies" and SADF soldiers

⁵⁸¹ Roos, H. "Writing from Within: Representations of the Border War in South African Literature" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008)

⁵⁸² Ibid. pp.141,142

⁵⁸³ Ibid. p.142

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid. p.143

themselves.⁵⁸⁵ He also points to the trauma of trying to reconfigure boundaries and borders between white and black, friend and enemy, compassion and fear – and how this acts as a spur for writers in trying to reinterpret history.⁵⁸⁶

Grensliteratuur acted as a precursor to the array of publications that emerged after the cessation of conscription. It laid important foundations in challenging the perceptions of threat that apartheid ideologies drew on, in claiming personal agency in the face of the impunity of the apartheid military system and in challenging hegemonic memory fields and narrations of experience for white South African men.

Post-Apartheid Memoirs and Narratives

After the cessation of conscription, it took nearly ten years for post-apartheid literature about conscripts' experiences to start emerging. These included Anthony Feinstein's account of his experiences as a medical officer in *In Conflict*⁵⁸⁷ and Rick Andrew's *Buried in the Sky*.⁵⁸⁸ There had been one oral history publication, Barry Fowler's self-published compilation of conscripts' accounts in *Pro Patria*⁵⁸⁹ (later republished in 2006),⁵⁹⁰ and some fictional works, the most famous of which is Mark Behr's novel *Smell of Apples*.⁵⁹¹

Neither Feinstein nor Fowler's work received much attention at time. However, Behr's novel received considerable critical acclaim. It won the M-Net Award, The Eugene Marais Award, the CNA Debut Literary Award, the Betty Trask Award for the best first novel published in the United Kingdom, and was shortlisted for both the Steinbeck and Guardian Literary

⁵⁸⁵ Giliomee, H. *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2003), p.593

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Feinstein, A. *In Conflict* (Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1998). This text was later reworked and published as an expanded edition in both English and Afrikaans: *Battle Scarred: Hidden Costs of the Border War* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011)

⁵⁸⁸ Andrews, R. *Buried in the Sky* (London and Sandton: Penguin, 2001)

⁵⁸⁹ Fowler, B. (ed.) *Pro Patria* (Sentinel Project, 1995)

⁵⁹⁰ Fowler, B. (ed.) *Pro Patria* (Durban: Just Done Productions, 2006)

⁵⁹¹ Behr, M. *The Smell of Apples* (London: Abacus, 1996)

Awards.⁵⁹² Originally published in Afrikaans as *Reuk van Appels*, it is an account of an Afrikaner family living in South Africa during the 1970s. Through the narrations of the boy and young man Marnus, the moral and human corruption of the apartheid state and its treatment of people is mirrored by events in his family, its relationship with the apartheid military and the context in which they live. The complexities of the context of the story and the author himself are ironically highlighted by the fact that, subsequent to the success of the novel, Behr made public confessions in 1996, at a writer's seminar⁵⁹³ and later to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,⁵⁹⁴ that he worked as a spy for the apartheid security establishment while simultaneously leading public anti-apartheid student protests and acting as an agent for the African National Congress. Despite the public vilification that followed this disclosure, Behr's writing remains significant for its time. It is doubtful that he walked alone in living a life of paradox, secret identities and conflicting allegiances. Not only his writing but his life itself were uneasy, complex mirrors and metaphors of broader contextual issues in apartheid era South Africa. As Roos points out, such complex confessionals are in danger of providing an accommodation of the writer's culpability rather than an honest confrontation.⁵⁹⁵ However, Behr's ongoing work in accounting for his actions would seem to suggest that he does not shy away from confrontations with those he betrayed.⁵⁹⁶

In 2005, Clive Holt, a conscript who served in the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, published a South African edition of his memoir⁵⁹⁷ – a weaving of first-hand recollections, personal memories and secondary sources⁵⁹⁸ – and his struggles with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

⁵⁹² <http://us.macmillan.com/thesmellofapples> (accessed on 24 May 2011)

⁵⁹³ www.justice.gov.za/trc/media/1996/9607/s960730a.htm (accessed on 24 May 2011)

⁵⁹⁴ www.saha.org.za/resources/docs/PDF/Projects/trc_directory.pdf (accessed on 24 May 2011)

⁵⁹⁵ Roos, H. "Writing from Within: Representations of the Border War in South African Literature" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008), p.150

⁵⁹⁶ This is based on Behr's presentation when he spoke in public in dialogue with Mbongiseni Buthelezi at the 2013 Think!Fest during the South Africa National Arts Festival. This event was held under the auspices of the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project.

⁵⁹⁷ Holt, C. *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter: A Frontline Account of the 1988 Angolan War as seen through the Eyes of a Conscripted Soldier* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005)

⁵⁹⁸ Baines, G. "Memoir Writing as Narrative Therapy: A South African War Veteran's Story" 2010, unpublished paper presented in Newcastle, Australia in 2010

While Holt's work, *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter*, has not received the critical acclaim of some other works in this field, it is significant for several reasons. The first is its efforts to reconcile both the experience of intense combat in Namibia and Angola and the aftermath of suffering from PTSD within one account. Holt also highlights the heartache of moral injury from war, as discussed in Chapter Three, in the following excerpt:

Part of my purpose with this book is to illustrate how we had been brought up and taught to live by a certain set of rules, then were suddenly told to forget what we had learnt over the past 18 years and apply a new set of rules. This would not be too challenging if the new paradigm was similar to the old, but it was not. The new rules we were given were, in most cases, totally opposite to what we had been taught. And, to confuse things even more, after two years of living by these new rules, we were told to go home and to please revert back to our original set of rules and live a normal life, without any assistance whatsoever from the SADF. It came down to the fact that we had given the SADF two years of our lives, placing our bodies on the line in many instances, and, once it was all over, we no longer existed or served any purpose.

One of the basic biblical commandments is "Thou Shalt Not Kill", so how do people cope when they are told that for the next two years it is quite alright to kill, but thereafter they must again observe the original commandment?⁵⁹⁹

Holt writes evocatively through his book of the tension and inner conflicts of seeing and viscerally knowing the futility of the war (and the ideological motivations for the war) while at the same time feeling an intense loyalty to the troops he is serving alongside. As has already been discussed in Chapter Three, this is a loyalty that often blinds a soldier to the humanity of the enemy they are bonded together to fight. The death of his close friend is as much of a catalyst in his trauma as his experiences of combat.⁶⁰⁰ His account of his struggles with PTSD-related symptoms courageously breaks taboos amongst conscripts about this subject, inviting others to travel a similar path. Holt's very subjectivity is his greatest strength in this work.

The seminal oral history-based publication that elicited an unprecedented response and catalysed numerous similar publications came in 2006. Jacqui Thompson's *An Unpopular*

⁵⁹⁹ Holt *At Thy Call* p.12

⁶⁰⁰Whitty, K., Review: *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* 22 August 2005

<http://entertainment.iafrica.com/books/nonfiction/69246.html> (accessed on 24 May 2011)

*War: From Afkak to Bosbefok*⁶⁰¹ provoked so much interest that there were eleven reprints in the following three years.⁶⁰² The book is a compilation of interviews with 40 conscripts, with excerpts from the interviews divided into chapters based on various aspects of conscription.⁶⁰³ Excerpts are used in an unedited form, with the conscript's first name and his age at the time he was called up listed at the end of each piece. In her preface, Thompson describes the work as "a collection of mental snapshots from their time as SADF conscripts: an inspection, the routine of camp life, the monotony and dread of patrols, the dread of a battle."⁶⁰⁴

An Unpopular War was not just a publishing success; it also was a moment of signification in how memory fields that shaped narrations of conscription were shifting. The scale of the book's success, and likely social impact, was due to a number of factors.

The first factor was the scale of media coverage it received, probably at least partly due to Thompson's media related experience and connections.⁶⁰⁵ The second was the way in which it told a story that had, up until then, been rendered largely invisible and unspeakable in public spaces and social conversation.⁶⁰⁶ A glance at the comments page on the publisher's website reveals the emotional intensity of readers' responses to the fact that lived experiences of conscripts were handled in this very public domain with humour and compassion.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰¹ Thompson, J.H. *An Unpopular War: From Afkak to Bosbefok – Voices of South African National Servicemen* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006). The second part of the title uses Afrikaans colloquialisms from the time, roughly translated it means from "pissed off" (angry, resentful) to "bush fucked" (traumatised by what happened while fighting in the bush).

⁶⁰² The text used in this research was printed in the eleventh run, which was in 2009.

⁶⁰³ Thompson *An Unpopular War* p.ix

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ The back cover blurb of the book and the publicity material circulated by the publishers describe Thompson as a freelance journalist. During interviews conducted for this research, a number of research participants alluded to the fact that her husband is a popular presenter on a national radio station, whose on-air discussions about the book provided high profile publicity.

⁶⁰⁶ This statement draws heavily on discussions around this theme in Sasha Gear's paper "Wishing Us Away: Challenges Facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa" in *Violence and Transition Series*, Vol. 8, 2002 Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002

⁶⁰⁷ <http://zebra.book.co.za/blog/2007/02/14/letters-from-an-unpopular-war-ex-conscripts-write-in/> (accessed on 24 May 2011)

The public profile the book achieved marked the beginning of a shift in public discourse about conscripts, in that accounts by members of the apartheid forces were being heard alongside the accounts of members of the liberation forces.⁶⁰⁸ Along the lines of the trend mentioned in Holt's work, the paradoxical nature of many conscripts' experiences was also given public airing and a new kind of permission to be discussed. Thompson's belief that the apartheid state's war was "unpopular" is subject to contestation, or at the very least clarification regarding what aspects were unpopular. However, the very fact that she challenged the sense that a hegemonic white society uncritically supported the apartheid state's ideologies and military strategies (a claim for which she could have been arrested in the past), drew attention to the work and gave permission for conversations about conscripts' experiences (however mixed) and their memories of those times.

Thompson's work was about ordinary *troepies*; not military leaders, members of any special units or people with a particular issue. By speaking for this voiceless and forgotten group, the book created a public profile and significant platform for by far the majority of national servicemen – something many conscripts probably felt they did not have the voice, agency or significance to do for themselves. Whatever the limitations of unedited accounts with little or no analysis or contextual framing, the honouring and acknowledgement of conscripts in this way is, in my view, the book's greatest achievement. Part of its role was to communalise memories and the trauma of conscription into the SADF.

The shifts precipitated by *An Unpopular War* – within South African society and within the publishing world – are evident in the number of "cathartic" conscript-narrative orientated publications that emerged soon after its publication. Zebra Press, the same publishers as *An Unpopular War*, have published two more compilations of conscripts' oral narratives, edited by Cameron Blake. While the first, *Troepie: From Call-Up to Camps*⁶⁰⁹ follows a similar format to Thompson's work, the second, *From Soldier to Civvy: Reflections on National*

⁶⁰⁸ Graham, M. "Cold War in Southern Africa" *Africa Spectrum* 1/2010, 131-139

⁶⁰⁹ Blake, C. *Troepie: From Call-Up to Camps* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2009)

Service,⁶¹⁰ contains some innovations. These include a chapter in which women speak about the effects of conscription on their lives and a concluding chapter in which conscripts' narratives shift to reflecting on the ongoing legacies of conscription.

In addition to his compilations of conscripts' narratives, Cameron Blake has also published a collection of photographs accumulated during the interviews that made up his first two publications, *Troepie Snapshots: A Pictorial Recollection of the South African Border War*.⁶¹¹

Examples of other memoirs published subsequent to the emergence of *An Unpopular War* are Tim Ramsden's *Border-Line Insanity*,⁶¹² Steven Webb's *Ops Medic: A National Serviceman's Border War*,⁶¹³ Granger Korff's *19 with a Bullet*⁶¹⁴ and Frank Nunes' *Altered States*.⁶¹⁵ While humour is a component of many of the books already mentioned, A.J. Brooks' *Tale Gunner: The Lighter Side of South African Military Life*⁶¹⁶ and Gary Green's self-published *Stand at Ease: A Reluctant Conscript's Tale of Military Madness and Mayhem*⁶¹⁷ hint at the emergence of a genre of cathartic memoir writing in which the humorous side of army life is the primary feature.

There have also been some lesser-known publications which speak to particular kinds of experiences, and therefore carry a quiet significance. Andre Carl van der Merwe's novel/memoir *Moffie*⁶¹⁸ is a slightly fictionalised account of his experiences as a gay man growing up in a conservative family and having to survive his time as a national serviceman

⁶¹⁰ Blake, C. *From Soldier to Civvy: Reflections on National Service* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2010)

⁶¹¹ Blake, C. *Troepie Snapshots: A Pictorial Recollection of the South African Border War* (Johannesburg: 30 Degrees South, 2011)

⁶¹² Ramsden, T. *Border-Line Insanity: A National Serviceman's Story* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2007)

⁶¹³ Webb, S. *Ops Medic: A National Serviceman's Border War* (Johannesburg: Galago, 2008)

⁶¹⁴ Korff, G. *19 With a Bullet: A South African Paratrooper in Angola* (Johannesburg: 30 Degrees South, 2009)

⁶¹⁵ Nunes, F. *Altered States* (Durban: Just Done Productions, 2010)

⁶¹⁶ Brooks, A.J. *Tale Gunner: The Lighter Side of South African Military Life* (Johannesburg: 30 Degrees South, 2010)

⁶¹⁷ Green, G. *Stand at Ease: A Reluctant Conscript's Tale of Military Madness and Mayhem* (Wandsbeck: Reach Publishers, 2009)

⁶¹⁸ van der Merwe, A.C. *Moffie: A Novel* (Penstock Publishing, Hermanus, 2006). A note regarding the terminology: "moffie" is a derogatory Afrikaans term for a gay man.

with much of his identity and sense of self hidden and at risk. As was outlined in Chapter Two, being a homosexual man in the SADF was both emotionally turbulent and potentially physically dangerous because of the threat of persecution by other soldiers and, as described in *The Aversion Project Report*,⁶¹⁹ the risk of being admitted for psychiatric treatment aimed at “curing” homosexuality. Van der Merwe demonstrates courage and insight in writing an account of the experiences of an ordinary *troepie* who had a particular and challenging path to negotiate through the system. Another novel that focuses on the treatment of homosexual and transgender men and women in the SADF is Hamish Pillay’s 2009 publication *The Rainbow Has No Pink*.⁶²⁰

While *The Aversion Project Report* provided evidence of homosexual or gay conscripts’ being sent to psychiatric wards in military hospitals and subjected to extreme and violent forms of treatment, little is known about the experiences of many other conscripts who were sent to psychiatric units for reasons other than their sexual orientation. *A Branch of Wisdom: A Quest for Meaning in a Divided World*⁶²¹ is the self-published account of a conscript who had a paranoid schizophrenic breakdown while serving on a military camp. He was admitted to a military hospital and found himself being subjected to shock therapy and various chemical treatments prescribed by military psychiatrists, including Aubrey Levine.⁶²²

Photographer John Liebenberg has published a collection of his own photographic work from the years he spent working as a war journalist in Namibia and Angola entitled *Bush of Ghosts: Life and War in Namibia 1986-90*.⁶²³ University of the Western Cape academic Patricia Hayes wrote the Introduction. There are several significant aspects to this book.

⁶¹⁹ van Zyl, M., de Gruchy, J., Lapinsky, S., Lewin, S. and. Reid, G. *The Aversion Project: Human rights abuses of gays and lesbians in the South African Defence Force by health workers during the apartheid era* (Cape Town: Simply Said and Done, 1999)

⁶²⁰ Pillay, H. *The Rainbow Has No Pink* (Johannesburg: 30 Degrees South, 2009)

⁶²¹ Christopher A *Branch of Wisdom: A Quest for Meaning in a Divided World* (Kommetjie: Beyond Books, 2002)

⁶²² Levine’s work and his subsequent arrest in Canada are outlined in Chapter Two.

⁶²³ Liebenberg J. and Hayes P. *Bush of Ghosts: Life and War in Namibia 1986-90* (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2010)

Hayes' Introduction places the entire genre of literature discussed in this section in very important perspective with the following remarks:

In recent memoirs and war accounts, whether Afrikaans or English, the Border War is a concept – even a trigger – that usually opens a space for self-referentiality, whether individual or collective. These accounts constitute a genre, with its own borders. One could argue that behind this trend is an even bigger structural and ideological state failure in South Africa to acknowledge both colonisation and decolonisation. While many former conscripts remember it simply as a time of bonding with their peers, others would like to hold their former government to account for what they saw and did in this “far-off place”. Most accounts convey a sense of loss, and of experience that is all but incomprehensible to families and communities back home. But nearly all of them appear to forget that this “white hell” always belonged to someone else,⁶²⁴ and that the war involved many other people whose lives were deeply marked by their presence over very long years.⁶²⁵

This excerpt captures part of the significance of the book, in particular the impunity of knowledge⁶²⁶ that frequently informs conscripts' accounts of the Border Wars. Liebenberg's photography and Hayes' commentary transcend the conventional discursive *laagers* and social fractures of this history by engaging with the “small lives” that were caught up the closing phases of Namibian colonial history. Liebenberg's photography explores the experiences of otherwise unremarkable, ordinary people involved in and affected by the war – both Namibians (political leaders, local residents and the soldiers fighting a liberation war) and South Afns (government officials, SADF soldiers and their families) – with a subtlety and intimacy that the written word would struggle to do. As Hayes states “(Liebenberg's photography) is critical of states of war, but tries to convey an understanding of both warring sides and especially the implications for societies caught in the middle, namely those ‘contexts and victims’ missing from recent international journalism.”⁶²⁷

⁶²⁴ Hayes cites the introduction to Karen Batley's *Secret Burden* p.35 with regard to the term “white hell”.

⁶²⁵ Liebenberg and Hayes *Bush of Ghosts* p.11

⁶²⁶ See Chapter Seven for further discussion about the notion of impunity of knowledge.

⁶²⁷ Liebenberg and Hayes *Bush of Ghosts* p.12. A note about the term “recent journalism”: Hayes is highlighting the shifts from Vietnam era photography, which highlighted the atrocities and horrors of the war, to the ways in which photojournalists in Iraq and Afghanistan have been “embedded” with troops, offering limited and controlled perspectives on what is taking place.

The year after *Bush of Ghosts* appeared, Anthony Feinstein published *Battle Scarred: Hidden Costs of the Border War*.⁶²⁸ This is a revised and expanded version of his earlier memoir *In Conflict*, which deals with his experiences as a medical officer in the SADF in the early 1980s.

Feinstein's work demonstrates a level of reflexivity and a breadth of insight that has, up to this stage, been rare in this genre of work, and warrants some engagement as a result. His book is structured around a number of cases that he dealt with while providing psychiatric and medical care to various units on the border of Namibia and Angola in the early 1980s. This, and the fact that he was a few years older than most conscripts such as Clive Holt, seems to have contributed to his ability to place himself in juxtaposition to a number of characters in his book. He is therefore able to shift beyond the "self-referentiality" described earlier by Patricia Hayes, and to explore levels of complexity in his own experiences with remarkable gentleness and good humour.

A comparison between Feinstein's *Battle Scarred* and Holt's *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* in terms of the discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat reveals some interesting shifts and counterpoints over the decade that their works span.

Holt's work is infused with uninterrogated assumptions regarding the alignment of his whiteness and masculinity to the hegemonic identity constructions of his time. He articulates a moral and emotional sense of dissonance, rather than ever interrogating the identity constructs that might have given rise to his "trouble" in finding a coherent narrative in the face of the traumatic events he endured. The final chapter in his book, entitled "Cowboys Do Cry", does hint at the need for men to deal with emotions and trauma, but predominantly within the social masculine norms of being "cowboys". Feinstein, on the other hand, constantly questions the hyper-masculine norms of militarism, and its denial of emotional vulnerability and trauma. His being Jewish may have contributed to a pre-existing sense of dissonance with hegemonic narrations of whiteness, but he also constantly – and

⁶²⁸ Feinstein, A. *Battle Scarred: Hidden Costs of the Border War* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011), also published in Afrikaans.

often humorously – raises questions about the discursive resources of whiteness that he encounters in the people that he describes.

Perceptions of threat also function as discursive resources in both texts, but again in different ways. Holt expresses shock at discovering, once he is on the border, that he will be fighting alongside black Angolan, Namibian and South African troops. There is no indication in his text that this led to any interrogation of why he had assumed an entirely white SADF would fight against black soldiers. His compliance with the system is ensured through both his childhood socialisation and his military training.

Similarly, there is narrative dissonance in his description of the perceived communist threat and its relationship to his experiences. In describing the SADF's military manoeuvres following the Cuban attack on Calueque Dam, he writes "The communist threat was real, but no one knew exactly what their intentions were."⁶²⁹ While it is true that the Cuban forces were involved in the Border Wars because of their position in communist Cold War related alliances, it is Holt's invocation of communism as a "social imaginary"⁶³⁰ in articulating perceptions of threat that speaks to the discursive resources at work in his narrations of experiences in the SADF. Feinstein on the other hand, regularly questions why the perceived enemy is constructed in this way, and highlights the outrage of atrocities carried out against perceived enemies. He implies on a number of occasions that the real enemy may well be the violent, abusive officers who implement and maintain apartheid military system itself.

Holt and Feinstein's books were published a decade apart, with Holt having very few reference points other than his own experience to draw on in positioning his work. Feinstein had more resources to work with in positioning himself and his work: a much broader life experience, his training as a psychiatrist, a longer time period for reflection on his experiences and the benefit of seeing others' memoirs about conscription. In the context of

⁶²⁹ Holt *At Thy Call* p.157

⁶³⁰ Norval, A.J. *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), p.54

this research, the differences between their narrations of identity can best be described as narrative reinforcement and narrative repair. Holt unconsciously reinforces historical constructions of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat in narrating his identity. Feinstein's reframing of apartheid era memory fields in his work comprises a form of narrative repair.⁶³¹

This brief analysis indicates how the literary genre of conscripts' accounts, and the memory fields that shape these accounts, are shifting and evolving as understandings of both the broader context of their experiences and the subject positionings of the "other" are engaged with.

A final comment in this exploration of personal memoirs and narrations of conscription. What is remarkably absent from much of the literature discussed in this section is the presence of the SADF in South Africa's townships. This was another significant "border" in the violent conflicts of the apartheid era, but one which fitted less comfortably with "total onslaught" indoctrination and heightened the polarised nature of South African society at the time. As has been discussed in Chapter One, the mid-1980s were also a period in which organised contestation of and resistance to the apartheid state, and conscription in particular, were increasing, making the narratives of those involved much more complex and difficult to articulate. It is hoped these silences will be addressed in the future.

The following section of this chapter will explore narrations about the legacies of conscription in theatrical performance, photographic exhibitions and video texts.

⁶³¹ This notion of narrative reinforcement and narrative repair is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Theatrical Performances

Theatrical productions about conscription go back as far as 1986, with the first South African performance of *Somewhere on the Border* at the National Arts Festival.⁶³² The script is by Anthony Akerman, who wrote and produced this anti-war play while in exile in the Netherlands. It was reprised at the National Arts Festival in 2011. The first performances in 1986 took place in the midst of a state of emergency in South Africa, and during the time that the play was banned for publication. By 2011 South Africa was in a very different place politically, and yet the play still drew audiences in Grahamstown, Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Somewhere on the Border is not the only theatrical production about conscription to have been performed more than once over a period of time. Paul Herzberg's script *The Dead Wait* was first performed in South Africa in 1996, then in London in 2002, where it received three Manchester Evening News Award nominations including Best Play and Production, winning in the third category for Best Actor.⁶³³ It most recently opened to critical acclaim at the Park Theatre in London in November 2013.⁶³⁴

Both Akerman and Herzberg's work comprises a cast of white actors who play SADF soldiers, as well as at least one black actor who symbolises the perceived threat of African nationalism and communism that the "total onslaught" ideology constructed. Akerman's play ends with a self-righteous liberal conscript making evident his inevitable complicity with the system by shooting an alleged terrorist dead. Herzberg's play has a similar moment, but explores the implications of this act of impunity by carrying the plot into post-apartheid South Africa, where the protagonist meets the daughter of the man he killed to account for his guilt. Thus both playwrights set about highlighting the impact and legacies of conscription through brutal re-enactment and powerful questions about the purpose of the

⁶³² Akerman, A. *Somewhere on the Border* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2012), p.xix

⁶³³ <http://parktheatre.co.uk/whats-on/the-dead-wait/creatives> (accessed on 10 January 2104)

⁶³⁴ www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/10475381/The-Dead-Wait-Park-Theatre-London-N4-review (accessed on 10 January 2104)

system of conscription and its ongoing legacies for all concerned. Akerman's script primarily comprises a reflection on what happened. Herzberg's script begins to explore the possibilities of moral and narrative repair.

These reflexive engagements with memory, violence and moral injury are in stark contrast to the satire and nostalgia that have characterised other productions.

Greig Coetzee's one-man performances of *White Men with Weapons* and *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny* draw on a range of characters Coetzee himself encountered as a conscript. Coetzee describes his work as tragi-comic in its exploration of various aspects of life as a conscript in the SADF. His work premiered at the South African National Arts Festival in the late 1990s, later appearing on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2000, where it won a Scotsman Fringe First Award.⁶³⁵ He continues to perform both his productions in South Africa and the United Kingdom, his most recent run being in London in April 2013.⁶³⁶ While his productions probably perform a valuable role in enabling a level of catharsis through providing a compassionate and humorous memory field within which to narrate experiences of conscription, his critique of the system is more oblique than in Akerman or Herzberg's work. The longevity of his work certainly suggests that there is an audience in need of the spaces he provides. There is an uneasiness, however, about whether these are spaces of nostalgia that reinforce self-referential accounts or whether the memory spaces these performances provide enable shifts out of residual memory fields of the apartheid regime.

A third, rather more different, recent theatrical production is the Deon Opperman musical *Tree Aan* which was staged at the State Theatre in Pretoria in 2011.⁶³⁷ It is described in its publicity as "a contemporary and contextual new South African work engaging in the debate

⁶³⁵ <http://www.thesouthafrican.com/entertainment/arts-culture/greig-coetzees-white-men-with-weapons-returns-to-london.htm> (accessed on 10 January 2014)

⁶³⁶ www.thesouthafrican.com/entertainment/arts-culture/greig-coetzees-white-men-with-weapons-returns-to-london.htm (accessed on 10 January 2014)

⁶³⁷ www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=28255 (accessed on 10 January 2014)

between Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument⁶³⁸ about the omission of the names of the deceased from this part of South Africa's history." However, reviews of the actual production suggest that the production had a rather different ethos. It would seem that it was more of a nostalgic trip down a generic conscript's memory lane, with very little critical reflection on the apartheid era history which these experiences referenced, or the post-apartheid context in which the musical was performed. It was a hugely successful production, playing to packed houses and returning for a second run towards the end of 2011. This production would seem to have positioned itself very firmly in a memory field that supports and encourages nostalgia about the past. In fact, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, the speech made at the opening night of this production proactively and defiantly set about "reclaiming" Afrikaner identity narratives and discourses from the past.

Theatre productions about conscription are an indication of the contested and complex social spaces within which the legacies of the apartheid military system continue to be narrated. While there is merit in the way new memory spaces are opened up through these productions, they serve sometimes contradictory purposes in the ways they either bolster or challenge historic constructions of discursive resources, social memory fields and practices of impunity.

Another field of work that has produced diverse textual interpretations of conscription is photography. The next section of this chapter will compare three recent photographic exhibitions that deal with different perspectives and subject positions in narrating conscription.

⁶³⁸ The "Freedom Park Fracas" is discussed in Chapter Six. It needs to be pointed out that the debate was never between Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument as this publicity claims. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, this saga was far more complex.

Photographic Exhibitions

The SADF, and therefore the issue of conscription, has featured prominently in photographic work both during and after the apartheid era. There are countless images in print and on the internet of photographs by conscripts themselves, as well as professional and media images from the apartheid era. In parallel with the burgeoning genre of Border War memoirs, photography has also seen the emergence of new fields of work and interpretation regarding conscription.

Three exhibitions in recent years will be highlighted, by way of reflecting on the diverse approaches and focus areas that photographers have used in narrating the legacies of conscription. The first is by a woman, the second by a conscript himself and the third by the son of a conscript.

In 2010, Jo Ratcliffe – a South African artist – held an exhibition entitled *As Terras Do Fim Do Mundo*, consisting of a series of black and white photographs taken in Angola twenty years after the cessation of military conflict in the area. The programme note at the exhibition describes her work in the following way:⁶³⁹

Ratcliffe captures the eerie silence of the traces of war. Her haunting images explore the idea of landscape as pathology; how past violence manifests in the landscape of the present, both forensically and symbolically ... (T)he artist notes that we live in a present space, but one that “bears the marks (indelible and ephemeral, visible and invisible) of its history. And as much as we occupy places, they have the capacity to pre-occupy us.”⁶⁴⁰

As with Liebenberg’s work in *Bush of Ghosts*, Radcliffe’s photography communicates the complex, unresolved nature of the Border Wars. Ratcliffe does this through reflecting on the ways in which the landscapes and communities of Angola remain etched with the imprints of the war. The exhibition is notable for the absence of military people or activity it conveys,

⁶³⁹ Booklet from Cape Town exhibition held 21 October-27 November 2010 at the Michael Stevenson Gallery, 160 Sir Lowry Road, Woodstock, Cape Town

⁶⁴⁰ The quotation is from Jill Bennett *A Concept of Prepossession* Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 2005

and yet South Africa's military occupation of these landscapes is very evident in the images of destruction, emptiness and decomposition. One is left to wonder about the action that happened there in the past, and the ways in which violent sounds and actions still reverberate in the places, as well as the lives, that were caught up in the violence that is not depicted.

A year after Ratcliffe's exhibition, Christo Doherty, a conscript himself and a lecturer in the University of the Witwatersrand Fine Art Department, held an exhibition entitled *BOS* which focused far more directly on conscription than Ratcliffe's work had done. Doherty used constructed photographs of people, based on images from the media coverage of the time, to explore the effect on the South African national psyche of the apartheid-era Border Wars.⁶⁴¹ There were two primary kinds of constructions used in this exhibition, both of which comprised reminders of what life was like on the borders of Namibia and Angola during the Border Wars. The photographic images were not life-like but rather used self-conscious techniques that had the effect of being a commentary rather than re-enactment. The first technique was taking close-up portraits of young men dressed in military uniforms with camouflage on their faces. These men were the same age Doherty was when he was conscripted. The second technique was creating models of iconic photographs taken by John Liebenberg during the Border War and then photographing these models. Thus, for example, bodies of dead SWAPO operatives being tossed into a mass grave were used in some images. Others depicted Koevoet operatives and their families having a picnic with a military Casspir as their mode of transport. All the images had the feel of a military scale model that might be used in combat. The effect of this technique was to create dissonant narratives that shifted the viewer out of conventional memory fields and hegemonic constructions of masculinities, gender and perceptions of threat with regard to the SADF and conscripts' experiences in particular. The exhibition provoked intense debate regarding its purpose and role, which was probably part of Doherty's intention.⁶⁴² His work seems to set out to disturb and raise questions rather than take up positions or present answers.

⁶⁴¹ See <http://www.artthrob.co.za/Artists/Christo-Doherty.aspx>. (accessed on 15 September 2011)

⁶⁴² Examples of contrasting views on the exhibition can be found on <http://kaganof.com/kagablog/2011/01/24/robyn-sassen-interviews-christo-doherty-on-bos/> and

The third example of photographic texts that explore narratives about the legacies of conscription is the 2012 *Not My War* exhibition by Fine Art Masters student at the University of Cape Town, David Brits.⁶⁴³ This exhibition marks a shift in who the agents are in narrating conscription, because Brits is the son of a conscript. His work therefore highlights the relatively unexplored nature of the generational impact of conscription.

Regrettably, Brits chose to curb his agency by only including works by men and women who were reflecting on their own experiences of the system of conscription – in other words, Brits' parents' generation. In spite of the range and quality of the work included in the exhibition,⁶⁴⁴ the overall intention of Brits' curation of the exhibition is not clear. However, he would appear to be the pioneer of a new and emerging phase in narrating the legacies of conscription. Colleagues in academic institutions across the country speak of growing numbers of students seeking creative ways to explore the effects of conscription on their lives as the heirs of these legacies.

Photography has been a vehicle for diverse and innovative explorations of the legacies of conscription through the adoption of various subject positions and diverse techniques. Film and video have seen a similarly diverse range of works regarding conscription.

Video Documentaries

As with other media that have been dealt with in previous sections in this chapter, filmmakers have focused on and responded to conscription since its early years.

<http://kaganof.com/kagablog/2011/02/06/paul-wessels-on-christo-dohertys-bos/> (accessed on 15 September 2011)

⁶⁴³ <http://notmywarproject.blogspot.com/> (accessed on 31 July 2012)

⁶⁴⁴ The exhibition included works by Wayne Barker, Christo Doherty, Paul Emmanuel, John Liebenberg, Jo Ratcliffe, Colin Richards, Penny Sipois, Christopher James Swift and Gavin Younge.

From the mid-1970s the government instituted heavy censorship of films that criticised the military on the one hand,⁶⁴⁵ and significant funding for films that extolled the military on the other.⁶⁴⁶ The introduction of television in South Africa in 1976 and the rapid expansion of the film industry due to the emergence of cinemas as a popular social space led to films becoming a powerful medium for pro-SADF propaganda in both English and Afrikaans sectors of white South African society. Perhaps the most famous of these are what became known as the *Boetie*⁶⁴⁷ series, made in 1984 and 1985. There were two films in this series, *Boetie Gaan Border Toe*⁶⁴⁸ and *Boetie op Manoeuvres*⁶⁴⁹ whose purpose was to “(divert) attention from the dangers of war and propagate the message that ‘fighting is fun.’”⁶⁵⁰

South African History researcher Dylan Craig explains the dynamics of the system that gave rise to films like the *Boetie* series in further detail:

The pro-war message was achieved through a parallel demonisation of the liberation movements and lionisation of the security forces, combined with an explicit scorn for members of the liberal media, draft dodgers, and females active in the anti-conscription movement. The rank-and-file of the security forces depicted in these films are likeable, noble individuals who respond to terrorist atrocities (almost exclusively against innocent civilians) with measured, precise, overwhelming force. Furthermore their immediate superiors (i.e. the generals and politicians) are shown to be not only reasonable, but also well informed enough so as to suggest semi-omniscience. Foreign governments, the films suggest, are either in league with the terrorists and naively incompetent, or both capable and secretly sympathetic to the South African cause.⁶⁵¹

Subsequent to the system of conscription being disbanded, there have been several films that have explored the legacies of conscription in diverse ways. Three video documentaries will be discussed as a way of exploring the diversity of this field of work.

⁶⁴⁵ Craig, D. “‘Total Justification’: Ideological Manipulation and South Africa’s Border War” in G. Baines and P. Vale (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa’s Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008), p.63

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid. p.64

⁶⁴⁷ Boetie is an Afrikaans term meaning little brother, often used as an affectionate familial nickname.

⁶⁴⁸ Translation: “Boetie goes to the Border”

⁶⁴⁹ Translation: “Boetie on Manoeuvres”

⁶⁵⁰ Craig, D. “The Viewer as Conscript: Dynamic Struggles for Ideological Supremacy in the South African Border War Film 1971-1988”, MA Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2003, p.90 cited in Roos “Writing from Within” p.142

⁶⁵¹ Craig “Total Justification” p.65

The first is the 2003 docu-drama *Property of the State: Gay Men in the Apartheid Military*,⁶⁵² produced by the Gay and Lesbian Association in South Africa and the Out in Africa Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. Following the revelations of the 1999 report titled *The Aversion Project*, in which the SADF's treatment of homosexual conscripts was exposed, this film uses narrated text, enacted scenes and interviews with conscripts (some of whom were given electrical shock and chemical aversion therapy by Dr Aubrey Levine) to highlight gay conscripts' experiences.

As has been discussed in Chapter Two, homosexuality was illegal during the apartheid era, legislation which was repealed in 1998.⁶⁵³ This shift in the legislative framework enabled a corresponding shift in the memory fields that shaped narrations of conscription, paving the way for an unprecedented work of this nature in narrating masculinity as a discursive resource in the lives of conscripts.

The second video documentary that deals with the legacies of conscription is Marius van Niekerk's *My Heart of Darkness*, which premiered in 2011.⁶⁵⁴ In this documentary van Niekerk, who was a member of the Parachute Battalion when he served as a conscript, invites three men who were part of separate (and in two cases enemy) military structures to travel back with him to a battle site in Angola – twenty years after they were involved in combat.

This Conrad-esque documentary portrays multiple physical, symbolic and metaphysical journeys in which these four men share life stories, their experiences of combat and their struggles with trauma on their journey deep into Angola. At some levels, this is a remarkable and ground-breaking piece of work. The idea of bringing ex-enemies together in this way is

⁶⁵² <http://shop.oia.co.za/featured/property-of-the-state-gay-men-in-apartheid-military/> (accessed on 11 January 2014)

⁶⁵³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/190268.stm> (accessed on 11 January 2014)

⁶⁵⁴ <http://myheartofdarknesss.blogspot.com/> (accessed on 10 August 2011)

unprecedented, and the healing ritual that comprises the climax of the film is primal and graphic, disrupting and questioning conventional narratives about the Border War.

However, much as there is to commend in the way this work shifts memory fields and disrupts historical perceptions of threat, there are elements of the film that are disturbingly redolent of apartheid era identity constructions. The most evident illustrations of this are the way van Niekerk places himself at the centre of the narrative, renders the stories of the other (black) combatants secondary and gives the film a title (“MY Heart of Darkness”) that alludes primarily to him as the narrator. However intentional or not these continuities in narrating whiteness as a discursive resource might be, the film is an important text to explore in understanding the complex negotiations of impunity that conscripts need to work with in narrating the legacies of their experiences.

The third video documentary that warrants some attention because of how it narrates the legacies of conscription is a piece broadcast in January 2011 on Carte Blanche, an actuality magazine programme on the DSTV pay channel M-Net. Entitled *Bush War Battle Sites*, it featured a group of conscripts from the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Veteran’s Association who travelled to old SADF bases in Namibia and Angola, planting crosses in memory of the dead on both sides of the war.⁶⁵⁵ As has been discussed in Chapter Three, the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Veteran’s Association has initiated important work in supporting and enabling conscripts to deal with memories of their experiences and possible trauma. This documentary focuses on the whole group’s journey back to Angola, but also profiles a few individuals who revisited places where they had experienced combat and witnessed the deaths of comrades. These individual portraits of trauma and unresolvedness are both moving and an important disruption of hyper-masculine constructions of identity for conscripts and members of the public who witnessed these scenes.

⁶⁵⁵ See <http://beta.mnet.co.za/carteblanche/Article.aspx?Id=4265&ShowId=1> for some background on this documentary. (accessed on 10 April 2011)

M-Net is one of the channels on the DSTV television network. Another is an Afrikaans channel called KykNet, which has also featured a number of documentaries about the SADF. Some of these are primarily (largely nostalgic) military history pieces, while others have focused on raising awareness about traumatic stress and strategies to address the symptoms. Significant as these works may be in responding to conscripts' sense that they have been "wished away" by South African society, very few of these works show much inclination to shift historical discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat. While this is understandable to some extent; maintaining and asserting memory fields that perpetuate apartheid era temporal continuities in narrating conscripts' identities is good for business. However, a consequence is that many of these documentaries reveal the same quality of self-referentiality that has been discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to conscripts' memoirs. The healing and transformative effects of this genre of video documentary are therefore limited, because old discursive *laagers* are perpetuated and the temporal threads of impunity that inform narrations of conscription remain static and uninterrogated.

This section of the chapter has explored a selection of video documentaries that narrate the legacies of conscription in diverse ways. The following section will highlight how conscripts have narrated the legacies of their experiences in cyberspace through blogs and websites.

Blogs and Websites

If the words "SADF" or "South African Border War" are entered into any internet search engine, they produce a plethora of internet sites and blogs. The majority of these sites are run by conscripts themselves.

The variety of sites that exists demonstrates the diversity of opinions and beliefs that shape and are shaped by contemporary and historical memory fields regarding the legacies of conscription. Some have the sole purpose of almost self-congratulatory reminiscence,

others are membership-based sites for soldiers from particular units or battalions, while others provide a space for emerging and thought-provoking experimentations with alternative ways of narrating the legacies of conscription.

A search on the social networking site Facebook produces a similar result. A fairly typical site is a group entitled *Grensoorlog / Border War 1966-1989*⁶⁵⁶ with the following description of the group on the site:

We are the National Service generation. The youngest is about 35 years old and the oldest in their sixties. We built the new South Africa! We are the generation that gave our time and ourselves for the nation in various ways. Some of our fathers and grandfathers wore medals during WW2 and some of us also received the Pro Patria Medal on occasion. Presently our involvement in this war is mostly knocked underestimated and being criticized. (sic)⁶⁵⁷

There are numerous similar sites on the internet, some of which are closed and have an exclusive membership based on the unit a soldier served in. As Gary Baines has observed:

The camaraderie of cyberspace has largely replaced bonding/drinking sessions in pub and reunions of veterans' associations. In fact, the reach and scope of the informal networks ... serve as something like virtual veterans' associations ... They constitute "cyber communities" in which hyperlinks, multiple postings and cross-citations facilitate communication between individuals who shared similar experiences."⁶⁵⁸

A member of the *Grensoorlog / Border War 1966-1989* Facebook group posted the following piece by a conscript, described as "Pete":

How can you understand? ... You were not there is the Mantra of the returned border soldier.

Brown Angolan soil falls on the sterile white bathroom floor when a mother washes her soldier-son's dirty laundry more than that she does not wish to know.....

⁶⁵⁶ Facebook page for *Grensoorlog / Border War 1966-1989* group on <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=103819570796> (accessed on 17 September 2009)

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Gary Baines "Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation? White Conscripts Reassess the Meaning of the 'Border War' in Post-Apartheid South Africa" *InterCulture* 5.3 October 2008, p.223

Today, we are branded the "baby killers" of Africa. That is, of course, if anyone even remembers us and our contribution.

From ages between seventeen and whatever, we took time out from lives, loves, jobs, education and "normal things" and donned nutria browns.

We were subjected to the rigours of "Basics", and many of us chose to endure even further hardships of advanced training; as leaders, special forces, parabats,⁶⁵⁹ mecchies,⁶⁶⁰ Op's medics,⁶⁶¹ and a multitude of other specialities. We learnt quickly, and assumed the mantle of professionals, all within a very short time. We performed!

We served in so many ways, sometimes enthusiastically, and sometimes with no great fervour. Many endured the peculiar experience of Border duties. Heat and dust (sometimes cold and mud), mozzies,⁶⁶² snakes and crap food. The odd mixture of tedium, interspersed with bouts of high adrenaline and occasional arse-clamping terror. And the camaraderie that lasts a lifetime.

But we did the needful, and did not shoot or "frag"⁶⁶³ our officers.

Some too, "crashed and burned" or took some wrong turns in their lives. They paid a price.⁶⁶⁴

The tone of both the group's definition of itself and 'Pete's' piece are revealing in their defensiveness and sense of defiance of post-apartheid memory fields. The writers provide strong hints that they are challenging dominant of post-1994 discourses and claiming what they believe to be their rightful place in history through what could be described as narrative reinforcement.

There is a sense of pathos in the description of Angolan soil washing out of the young man's uniform while neither he nor his mother voice any concern about his emotional, physical or spiritual well-being. The red mud sliding down the plughole and the pervading silence speak to the invisibility of the Border Wars, and constructions of silence that undermine agency in naming or addressing the layered issues surrounding conscripts' experiences and the

⁶⁵⁹ Slang for members of a Parachute Battalion.

⁶⁶⁰ Slang for members of a Mechanised Battalion.

⁶⁶¹ Slang for members of the Medical Corps serving in the Operational Area.

⁶⁶² Slang for mosquitoes.

⁶⁶³ A military term meaning to blow someone up with a fragmentation grenade – a reference to a practice amongst US soldiers in Vietnam who sought to dispose of unpopular officers.

⁶⁶⁴ Facebook page for *Grensoorlog / Border War 1966-1989* group on <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=103819570796> (accessed on 17 September 2009)

purpose of the SADF in Angola. It was these personal and interpersonal silences that buttressed the ignorance and denial of white South Africans regarding the presence of its army in surrounding countries. As the tone of 'Pete's' piece suggests, these constructions of silence and denial continue to affect his generation, but for perhaps for different reasons because of the way in which memory fields have shifted over time.

Both the tone and content of these pieces reveal very little reflection by 'Pete' or the people commenting on his writing as to the "other" in their accounts. There is a noticeable lack of curiosity about who the soldiers were that they were fighting against, what the lives of the people whose country they were fighting in were like, or the moral and political complexity of the war in which they participated. There is the sense of a discursive *laager* that protects the writer from the possibly risky act of looking beyond their own realm of action and experience to see who or what was on the "other side".

While the camaraderie and mutual support provided by many of these sites is significant in providing a safe space for conscripts to deal with and address the emotional legacies of their experiences, they do little to shift the narrative terrain within which these memories are articulated. Narrations shaped exclusively by historical discursive resources of masculinities, gender and perceptions of threat are in danger of reinforcing the disconnected and uncritical social discourses of the apartheid era. They are not conducive to narrative repair, shifts that support sustainable personal or social healing or a healthy engagement with post-1994 Southern African society.

There are some examples of blogs in which conscripts have shifted outside of the memory fields described above. Two sites will be highlighted as examples of this genre.

The first example is a website that has been established by Tim Hewitt-Coleman, a conscript from Port Elizabeth who later joined the ECC. His site is called *Slegtroep* and contains a wide range of material, the most provocative of which was a public call to Israeli conscripts to

refuse to participate in the 2009 invasion of Gaza.⁶⁶⁵ The following is an excerpt from the video in which he made this call:

This is Tim Hewitt-Coleman, with a special appeal to Israeli conscripts currently engaged in the war in Gaza. I am a South African and I served in the Angolan Border War. I was a conscript in the South African Defence Force in 1986 and 1987, and I speak to you from that perspective. Perhaps there are some parallels between what my experience was with conscription in the South African Defence Force and your experience of what you are going through now.

Firstly, I want to say that I feel for you ... I know, through the world a lot of people are criticising your actions, but... I feel for what you are going through. But it is important for you to know that it is up to you to decide to continue to be within this war, within the belly of the beast, or whether you are able to at this stage withdraw from it.

This is my appeal to you today, is that this war, the war in Gaza – like the war in Lebanon and the other wars that Israel has been engaged with – is not your war. You are a young person. You are 18 or you are 20 or you are 21. You have been conscripted into this army. You have been compelled to serve in it because of wars that have been decided on, created, by others that have gone long before you. This is not your war; this is not your problem. You cannot solve it. You are participating in it at the requirement of others.

Your actions cannot lead to the winning of this war. Even if there is a military victory, *you* will not win this war, *you* will not be victorious, *you* will be judged by history of participating in a war that has led to the blood of women and children being spilt.

You are being used, you are being manipulated, you are being abused by those in power over the state of Israel. You will need to answer to your grandchildren as to what role you played in this war in Gaza and whether you were on the side of right. It's a very interesting question your grandchildren will ask you, because who could possibly be right in this war, when blood is being shed on both sides.⁶⁶⁶

There are two components of this statement that are particularly worthy of mention. The first was Hewitt-Coleman's ability to position himself outside of cultures of self-referentiality and to make connections beyond the scope of his own experience. Hewitt-Coleman transgressed the memory fields of his context in ways that enabled him to speak with compassion to young men and women who have been conscripted into the Israeli military system. In doing so he drew on his own moral and political assessments of the apartheid era and brought them to bear on the Israeli-Palestinian context. As will be discussed in Chapter

⁶⁶⁵ www.slegtroep.blogspot.com (accessed on 17 December 2009)

⁶⁶⁶ Transcript of video recording on <http://www.slegtroep.blogspot.com> (accessed on 17 September 2009)

Seven, this demonstrates the creative possibilities that emerge when acts of narrative repair play a role in shifting the narrative terrain of which they form a part.

The second component of Hewitt-Coleman's statement that warrants attention is his ability to look into the future, rather than the past. Requests like his for the needs of future generations to be considered are rare. But they enable a degree of moral and narrative repair through articulating a level of moral responsibility that shifts the narrator out of a passive, victim-based subject position.

A second blog that reflects growing shifts from the catharsis of nostalgia and reminiscing into a process of meaning-making is *The Journey Home*.⁶⁶⁷ This blog has been set up by Paul Morris, a conscript from Cape Town who served in Cuito Cuanavale, moved to the UK and trained as a gestalt therapist. After meeting the brother of a SWAPO soldier whom he probably fought against, he decided to explore ways of enabling dialogues and healing processes between conscripts and members of liberation forces. He undertook a personal pilgrimage back to Angola by bicycle to revisit the sites that he last visited while involved in combat in an armoured SADF vehicle. The blog developed a uniquely dialogical ethos, publishing a poem by an ex-MK fighter and becoming a space for engagement with conscripts, Namibians and Angolans, as well as high school students in the USA. His pending book about the trip, *Back to Angola*, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.⁶⁶⁸

There are several aspects of Morris's journey and his blog that are worthy of mention as acts of narrative repair. Through both his writing and the events of his journey, Morris proactively sought out and embraced people that had been constructed as a threat during the time that he was a conscript. He disavowed hyper-masculine identities by cycling alone and undefended into an area he previously knew as a war zone. He set about deconstructing the power and privilege attributed to whiteness by foregoing leadership of the trip and

⁶⁶⁷ <http://www.angolajourney.blogspot.com/> (accessed on 15 January 2014)

⁶⁶⁸ Morris, P. *Back to Angola: A Journey from War to Peace* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2014)

asking a black liberation force veteran to guide him back to Cuito Cuanavale and set him on his way.

Through writing about these experiences on his blog, Morris has set in motion possibilities for an unprecedented style of dialogical narrations of the legacies of conscription. The point of greatest significance is that the dialogues are with both his comrades and his enemies from that time. This shift beyond historical discursive *laagers* into making sense of the whole of which an individual was and is part would seem to be key in identifying personally and socially transformative ways to narrate the legacies of conscription.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of various texts and other narratives that focus on conscription into the SADF and its legacies. Examples have been provided of the way in which narrative-discursive theory has been used as a framework to analyse these texts.

These texts reveal both complexity and contradiction in how the legacies of conscription are narrated, historically and in the current South African context. However, there is substantial momentum in claiming old, new and emerging spaces for these narratives to keep developing and shifting. There is an indefatigability about the way conscripts continue to seek spaces and methods to communicate and address the legacies of conscription in their lives. Some do so in the midst of feeling marginalised and under threat in post-apartheid South Africa. However, there are also examples of how the passage of time and the advent of democracy have catalysed innovations, narrative shifts and the inclusion of previously silenced voices in literary, artistic and cyber spaces.

The following chapter will discuss post-apartheid memory fields by outlining a series of case studies that indicate the socio-political terrain that conscripts navigate in narrating their experiences.

CHAPTER SIX

POST-APARTHEID MEMORY FIELDS AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF SILENCE IN NARRATIONS OF THE LEGACIES OF CONSCRIPTION

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore some of the key socially and politically constructed spaces within which the experiences of SADF conscripts have been narrated in the post-apartheid era.

The first space, or case study, is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Special Hearing on Conscription held in 1997, four years after the cessation of conscription in 1993. The second is what has been called the "Freedom Park Fracas", namely the controversial decision not to include SADF conscripts' names on the commemorative Wall of Names at Freedom Park in 2007. The third case study deals with a series of high profile media events in 2011 that were catalysed by a speech made at the opening performance of *Tree Aan*, a theatrical production about conscription. Together, these case studies reveal temporal shifts and contestations regarding narrating the legacies of conscription over a period of fifteen years. Taylor's synthetic narrative-discursive approach as outlined in Chapter Two and Lomsky-Feder's theory of memory fields as outlined in Chapter Three will frame discussion about the discursive resources of gender, race and perceptions of threat with regard to these events.

Following these three cases studies, the social and personal silences that surround these public events, and the complexities in narrating identities and subject positions that arise out of these events in post-apartheid South Africa, will be discussed.

The chapter will highlight the ways in which memory fields have, in sometimes contradictory ways, both shifted and ossified for different sectors of South African society in the twenty

years since the cessation of conscription. The apartheid era wars remain a politically charged issue. Diverse and sometimes conflicting notions about the ethics and morality of the activities carried out by SADF personnel,⁶⁶⁹ and conscription in particular, reciprocally inform, contradict and conflict with public and private accounts of this issue. Central to the narrative and memory field “trouble” in these contestations are the memory fields that shape – and silence – these accounts.

The Social Legacies of Conscription: Three Case Studies ⁶⁷⁰

The three case studies discussed here span a period of roughly fifteen years, providing a sense of the shifts and contestations in post-apartheid memory fields relating to SADF conscripts over a period of time. The extent of this time span enables an exploration of the ways in which contextual dynamics and personal narratives interact on an ongoing basis, with some changing and shifting while others gather strength and a sense of vehemence. The historical period under discussion could be described as representing memory field “trouble” in the same sense that Taylor defines identity “trouble”, i.e. that narrating and understanding conscripts’ experiences has proven complex, emotionally sensitive and politically fraught.

Edna Lomsky-Feder’s definition of a life story as a cultural text acknowledges the relationship between historical time and biographical texts. She describes life stories as being both “idiosyncratic” and “embedded in time, place, and culture.”⁶⁷¹ She also highlights how, in the process of telling a story, both story-teller and listener “cross boundaries of time and space, together reviving past events.”⁶⁷² The relationship between an individual’s

⁶⁶⁹ Gibson, D. “The *Balsak* in the Roof: Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts” in Kapteijns, L. and Richters, A. (eds.) *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), p.212

⁶⁷⁰ The case studies outlined in this chapter were presented in a paper entitled *A Reflection on Discursive Resources and Memory Fields in Narrative-Based Research with South African Defence Force Conscripts* at the Cultural Psychiatry and Global Mental Health conference held at VU University, Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 31 May 2013 and the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Conference held at Rhodes University 9-11 July 2013.

⁶⁷¹ Lomsky-Feder, E. “Life Stories, War and Veterans: On the Social Distribution of Memories” in *Ethos* 32(1) American Anthropological Association, 2004, 82-109, p.85

⁶⁷² *Ibid.* p.87

personal accounts of war and contextual dynamics are identified in her discussion about the relationship between social commemorations of past wars and veterans' own narrations of those wars.⁶⁷³ In later work, she acknowledges the temporal relationship between context and personal stories by describing the way in which "the relationship between personal and national memory is a fluid one, constantly challenged both by members of the group (of veterans) itself and by other generational units."⁶⁷⁴ This links to temporal elements of memory fields, and how they too have a fluidity over time. These temporal dimensions of narrative inquiry and the notion of memory fields have particular relevance for the case studies that follow.

Case Study 1: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Background to TRC Case Study

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a defining moment in South African history and in the evolution of transitional justice. The TRC has significance for this research as well, because it marked the first occasion that post-apartheid South African society had an opportunity to publicly engage with conscripts' experiences and the legacies of the apartheid military system for the men who served in it.

The ongoing contestation that characterised the relationship between the SADF and the TRC in many ways undermined the stated intentions of the TRC's Special Hearing on conscription. A consequence of this was the construction of memory fields that – contrary to the overt objectives of the TRC – perpetuated a sense of being under threat for white men who had been conscripted.

⁶⁷³ Ibid. p.98

⁶⁷⁴ Ben-Ze'Ev, E. and Lomsky-Feder, E. "The Canonical Generation: Trapped between Personal and National Memories" *Sociology* Volume 43(6) December 2009, 1047–1065, p.1058

TRC Amnesty Committee and the SADF

The possibility of perpetrators being granted amnesty for committing gross violations of human rights was a key tenet of the TRC.⁶⁷⁵ It was the mechanism through which people identified as perpetrators of gross human rights could seek exoneration for their deeds and become exempt from prosecution in South Africa through being granted amnesty. The nature of the Border Wars and some of the SADF's activities in South African townships meant that the issue of whether or not to apply for amnesty was a question many ex-soldiers needed to consider.

Central to the contestation regarding amnesty for acts committed by members of the SADF was the TRC's mandate to investigate and document gross human rights abuses "within or outside" South Africa's borders during the period 1960-1994.⁶⁷⁶

The fact that the majority of the SADF's combat-related activities took place outside of South Africa's borders, in neighbouring states, caused some concern for possible amnesty applicants, not least those who served there in the SADF. Apartheid era SADF generals held meetings with the TRC to clarify whether any amnesty the TRC may grant for violations of human rights in neighbouring states would still apply in international law. When it became evident that amnesty granted by the TRC was not valid in international law, and that crimes that came to light in TRC hearings might lead to prosecution in foreign countries, the generals refused to apply for amnesty and distanced themselves from the TRC.⁶⁷⁷

The generals' ongoing refusal to cooperate with the TRC on this and other issues led to pointed remarks being made in the TRC Report about the SADF's "reluctance" to participate in its work.⁶⁷⁸ The relationship between the TRC and senior SADF generals has been

⁶⁷⁵ TRC Report Vol.1 Ch.4 pp.55ff.

⁶⁷⁶ TRC Report Vol.2 Ch.2 p.42; Saunders, C " South African in Namibia / Angola: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Account" in Baines, G. and Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008), p.267

⁶⁷⁷ TRC Report Vol. 6 Section 3 Chapter 1 p.185

⁶⁷⁸ TRC report Vol. 6 Section 3 Chapter 1 p.182

discussed in some of the literature relating to the TRC, but with relatively little consideration of the impact of this strategy on conscripts' relationships with the TRC.⁶⁷⁹

Baines argues that conscripts were reluctant to appear before the TRC because of fear that the TRC – and South African society at large – would conflate their actions with those of the security establishment.⁶⁸⁰ He also provides examples of generals describing conscripts who did make statements to the TRC as “sympathy seekers or outright liars,”⁶⁸¹ sending conscripts a clear signal that they would receive no support or backing from apartheid era military leadership if they decided to participate in the work of the TRC.

There are important temporal continuities in the roles of the apartheid leaders and the way in which the SADF generals' actions and attitudes of impunity perpetuated influence and control in imposing on and constraining conscripts' choices. This shows that, in both cases, senior, white, male figures within South African society had significant influence in shaping the life choices, social identities and memory fields within which conscripts exercised agency in narrating the legacies of their experiences. The same hierarchy that had propelled the apartheid military system continued to influence the memory fields in relation to which conscripts exercised agency in accounting for their actions and narrating their experiences. Key to this memory field “trouble” is the choices conscripts made – and continue to make – regarding the discursive resources they have drawn on in terms of race, gender and perceptions of threat.

The constraints acting on conscripts in making choices with regard to the TRC went beyond the roles of the generals, however. Members of the SADF were also discouraged by the

⁶⁷⁹ See Baines, G. “Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation? White Conscripts Reassess the Meaning of the ‘Border War’ in Post-Apartheid South Africa” in *InterCulture* 5.3 October 2008, p.220; Hamman, H. *Days of the Generals* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2001), p.130

⁶⁸⁰ This is a subtle distinction, but an important one in the case of conscripts. Firstly, the security establishment fell primarily under the auspices of the South African Police Force or intelligence structures. Ostensibly at least, the military (i.e. the SADF) and the police performed different functions. The compulsory nature of conscription, as opposed to the fact that police volunteered to be employed by the state, meant that conscripts could argue that there should be different levels of accountability for any atrocities committed while serving under these respective commands and circumstances.

⁶⁸¹ Baines “Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation” p.220

South African National Defence Force (SANDF)⁶⁸² from making individual applications to the TRC, and were encouraged to use the “nodal point” set up by the SANDF to process any amnesty applications to TRC.⁶⁸³ The fact that a very low number of amnesty applications was actually received⁶⁸⁴ led the TRC Report to note that “the Commission received a strong impression that the nodal point acted as a gate-keeper rather than facilitator for amnesty applications.”⁶⁸⁵ Again the message from military structures was that the work of the TRC was perceived as a threat, which was to be treated with a mixture of suspicion, disdain and dismissal. The truth that the Commission was set up to seek would not be forthcoming from the leadership of the SADF, even if other amnesty applicants implicated them in separate submissions to the Amnesty Committee.⁶⁸⁶

In spite of this, two conscripts did apply for amnesty. Sean Mark Callaghan applied for, and was refused, amnesty for acts of omission regarding his role while attached to a Koevoet unit during 1983. Kevin Hall was granted amnesty for his role in killings as part of a unit on patrol during the mid-1970s.⁶⁸⁷ Both applications were disputed in later publications by and about the work of SADF generals.⁶⁸⁸

The key difference between the actions of the SADF generals and the conscripts who applied for amnesty was that the generals perceived the TRC as a threat, their response being to build a protective disciplinary and discursive *laager* based on an attitude of

⁶⁸² The South African National Defence Force came into being after 1994, comprising members of both statutory and non-statutory forces from the apartheid era.

⁶⁸³ Even the establishment of this nodal point was a slight, in spite of the ostensibly cooperative tone of its establishment. The Act which governed the TRC’s work specified that an amnesty applicant could only qualify for amnesty if they met four specific conditions: that they applied in their individual capacity for acts they themselves committed, that their actions were political rather than criminal in nature, that they made a full disclosure of all the facts, and that they acted under orders rather than in their individual capacity. (See TRC Report Vol. 1 for more on this) Institutional control or facilitation of individual’s applications meant that the spirit of this law was being called into question.

⁶⁸⁴ According to the TRC report, there were 31 SADF applicants for gross human rights violations committed in South Africa, but each of these was already on their records or in the public domain. There were five applications for violations committed outside of South Africa, despite prolific reports of large number of violations. (TRC Report Vol.6 Section 3 Chapter 1, p.183)

⁶⁸⁵ TRC Report Vol. 6 Section 3 Chapter 1, p.186

⁶⁸⁶ Some of the other operations in which SADF personnel were implicated in amnesty applications by security establishment members included the 1980 bombing in Mbabane, the 1981 abduction and torture of an ANC member and the 1985 killing of seven COSAS members in East Rand. (TRC Report Vol. 6 Section 3 Chapter 1, p.216)

⁶⁸⁷ TRC Report Vol. 6 Section 3 Chapter 1, p.183

⁶⁸⁸ Hamann *Days of the Generals* pp.221-3 and Malan, M. *My lewe saam met die SA Weermag* (Pretoria: Protea, 2006), pp.474-6 cited in Baines “Blame, Shame or Reaffirmation” p.220

impunity. In contrast, the conscripts who applied for amnesty or chose to testify opted for a response that defied historical perceptions of threat by engaging with the TRC in acts of narrative repair. What lay between the actions of these generals and these two conscripts' responses were silences resonant with complex and often troubled responses from the thousands of conscripts who watched and waited as the TRC process unfolded.

TRC Special Hearing into Conscription

The TRC held a series of institutional and special hearings into aspects of the apartheid era that were not specifically required in terms of the Act that governed its work. Institutional hearings focused on business and labour, the faith community, the legal community, the health sector, the media, and prisons. Three special hearings were held; focusing on conscription, children and youth, and women.⁶⁸⁹

In an overt attempt to acknowledge the diverse and fractured ways in which conscription had been constructed and represented in South African society, the Chairperson of the TRC, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, said the following in his preliminary remarks at the hearing:

We know that there have been different points of view about the sensitive issue of conscription and strong views expressed for and against the old SADF [South African Defence Force]. Some held very firmly to the view that South Africa was facing a total onslaught from the Communist empire and its surrogates, and believed that they were constrained to defend South Africa against what they perceived as an atheistic, unchristian foe. Others believed, equally vehemently, that the enemy was not out there; that the border was here in our midst, that certain things happened in waging wars that were thought to be totally necessary - things that must make us all hang our heads in shame. This issue, like so many in our apartheid past, divided our nation. We want to know as much as possible about the truth from all perspectives so that we, as a Commission, can suggest ways in which a divided and traumatised nation may be healed and make recommendations on how to ensure that the mistakes of the past (made on all sides) are never repeated.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁹ Volume Four of the TRC Report is devoted to these institutional and special hearings.

⁶⁹⁰ TRC Report Vol. 4 Chapter 8, p.222

In a press statement the Commission stated that the hearing was “neither an attempt to look for perpetrators, nor a process that will lead to the awarding of victim status.”⁶⁹¹ The TRC Report notes that, in spite of efforts to “cater for the widest possible divergence of views”, most testimonies were critical of the SADF and the hearing was perceived as being biased.⁶⁹²

A footnote in the TRC Report on the special hearing into conscription provides more detail about this. It states that former Defence Force Chief, General Constand Viljoen, turned down an invitation to attend the hearing, saying his presence would only give legitimacy to a “one-sided programme which did not analyse the past honestly”. The footnote also states that the SANDF submission to the Commission claimed that “no serving or retired members of the SADF or SANDF (with the exception of General Viljoen) were invited to attend or provide information for the hearing. The Commission thus only heard one side of the subject.” The TRC Report claims that this statement is factually incorrect, providing examples of correspondence with the SANDF’s nodal point for liaising with the TRC. The TRC Report also points out that three participants in the Special Hearing were either current serving members of the SANDF (Lieutenant Colonel Botha) or retired members of the SADF (Reverend Neels du Plooy and Lieutenant Craig Botha).⁶⁹³

What is not overtly stated, but nevertheless emerges in the TRC Report, is the powerful role of General Viljoen and the SANDF in creating memory field “trouble” regarding how, where and by whom conscripts’ accounts could be heard and acknowledged. In spite of the fact that these generals no longer held any legal or military sway over conscripts. This marginalisation speaks to the complexity of dealing with the temporal continuities of *laagered* and fractured social dynamics⁶⁹⁴ in processes aimed at demilitarisation, transformation and reconciliation.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid. p.223

⁶⁹² Ibid. p.224

⁶⁹³ These claims can all be found in Footnote 3 in TRC Report Vol. 4, Chapter 8, p.224

⁶⁹⁴ See Edlmann, T. “Division in the (Inner) Ranks: The Psychosocial Legacies of the Border Wars” *South African Historical Journal* Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2012, 256-272 for more on the use of this terminology.

In the end, seven ex-conscripts gave individual testimonies to the Special Hearing, three of whom had served on the border.⁶⁹⁵ The hearing was largely ignored by the media, but seems to have been closely (although largely silently) followed by many conscripts I interviewed. One can only guess at the mixed feelings and reactions conscripts had as they grappled with identity and memory field “trouble” in the face of this complex and shifting society they now belonged to.

Emerging Themes in the Special Hearing

A number of people who did not necessarily serve in the SADF, but who had various kinds of expertise relating to conscription, also testified at the Special Hearing. Some issues raised in these submissions provide hints about discursive resources that will emerge more clearly in the other two case studies that will be discussed in this chapter.

Jannie Gagiano of the Department of Political Science, University of Stellenbosch, presented statistical research conducted with white South African students during the 1980s under the auspices of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA). The report comments on what he called the “closed socialisation environment” that shaped the “the mindset of the typical white conscript”.⁶⁹⁶ In 1989, IDASA’s research indicated that 85% of Afrikaner male students and 55% of English-speaking students indicated they would never refuse to do military service as a form of political protest. The report also highlights Mr Gagiano’s remarks that in 1989 a large majority of white students in South Africa still viewed communism as a very serious threat.⁶⁹⁷

Gagiano’s remarks highlight the temporal continuities at work in constructing and perpetuating *laagered* memory fields and discursive resources which young white South Africans conformed to and/or resisted in various ways. Perceptions of threat – especially

⁶⁹⁵ Gibson “*Balsak in the Roof*” p. 224

⁶⁹⁶ TRC Report Vol.4 Chapter 8 p.224

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid. p.224

regarding the communist threat which the apartheid state used to promote motivate the Border Wars – remained a significant discursive resource for white South Africans of this generation.

Both whiteness and perceptions of threat also emerged as discursive resources in a submission made to the Special Hearing by Christo Uys, a council member of a prominent Afrikaner youth organisation, the Junior Rapportryers Beweging (JRB). The following is a pertinent excerpt:

Sometimes it is often overlooked and forgotten that we also played a role in the struggle against Communism; today it is seen to be ludicrous but we believed that we did play a positive role there.

And in essence, our struggle was against anarchy. Today we listened how anarchy was prevalent in black communities - how it affected people's lives. There were references made to kangaroo courts, necklacing. This also affected us.

As a national serviceman in the army, I believed and I was sure that I contributed to keep (sic.) people's lives safe. ... The fact that we today have the infrastructure in this country that is the best in Africa, the fact that we have the potential to grow economically, that to me is proof that we succeeded in making a great contribution towards a peaceful transition in South Africa.⁶⁹⁸

What is striking about these statements is the way they draw on apartheid era ideologies, but reframe them in ways that reconstruct white men as heroes in creating an infrastructure and economy that would enable post-apartheid South Africa to thrive. This would seem to suggest a quest or desire for recognition and affirmation which existing memory fields do not allow for. What is also noteworthy is the way in which discursive resources that draw on whiteness, masculinity and perceptions of threat were sustained through the TRC. In addition – as will be discussed in the following two case studies – they have remained in place, in some contexts uninterrogated, for twenty years beyond the cessation of both conscription and apartheid.

⁶⁹⁸ TRC Vol 4 Chapter 8 p.227

Perpetrator and Victim as Discursive Resources within the TRC

The complexities of conscripts' relationships with the TRC, and the memory field trouble that these precipitated, arose not only out of the reactions of the SADF generals but also out of the way in which the TRC was set up.

The TRC's legislated delineation of people applying to testify at its hearings into perpetrators or victims is one of the key identity related "troubles" that conscripts needed to negotiate. This legislated separation of victims and perpetrators might have helped the TRC achieve its political agenda. However, it created significant identity and memory field "trouble" for those – like conscripts – who could argue that they were both victims and perpetrators under the apartheid system.⁶⁹⁹ While the stated intention of the TRC's Special Hearing was to provide a compassionate space within which the experiences of conscripts and the families could be acknowledged, the context within which the hearing took place mitigated against these intentions. The fact that this initiative was part of a post-apartheid institution that allowed little legislated space for the complexities of both "victims" and "perpetrators" led to the construction of fractured memory fields and contradictory understandings of identities for conscripts. This will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

These contradictions and confusions led to an obfuscation of the complexities of conscripts' experiences that took another decade to begin to shift in the public domain, with the publications of conscripts' memoirs such as *An Unpopular War*.⁷⁰⁰ Thus, in addition to being constrained by the behaviour of the SADF generals, conscripts also found themselves caught up in the ambivalence and fracturedness of the TRC itself. The way in which the identities of victim or perpetrator became a significant discursive resource in South African society during the period of the TRC therefore had the effect of fracturing the memory fields within which conscripts' (and probably others') narratives could be heard.

⁶⁹⁹ See more detailed discussion of this argument in Edlmann "Division in the (Inner) Ranks".

⁷⁰⁰ Thompson, J.H. *An Unpopular War: Voices of South African National Servicemen* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006)

The report on the TRC's Special Hearing on Conscription did to some extent acknowledge the tension of this use of language. In his submission to the Special Hearing on conscription, Laurie Nathan, founding member and chairperson of the End Conscription Campaign, overtly described conscripts as simultaneously being victims and perpetrators.⁷⁰¹ While this acknowledgement was important, it gained very little traction in the public domain at the time. It has taken more than ten years to emerge more strongly as a discursive resource in research that has been published more recently.⁷⁰²

Gibson highlights this issue in her description of conscripts as "both recipients and agents of violence", suffering from the violence of military training and combat but also inflicting violence.⁷⁰³ The fact that Gibson's research was published 15 years after the TRC Special Hearing is significant. Her reframing and rewording reflects a growing discomfort with the memory fields created by the TRC, and the SADF Special Hearing in particular, and the need for researchers to play a role in redefining these subject positions.

Research Participants' Perspectives on the TRC

While the aggressive responses of the SADF senior officers to the TRC is an issue that is discussed at some length in literature about the relationship between the SADF and the TRC, participants in this research did not refer directly to these roles that SADF generals played. The focus was rather on the personal implications of the TRC for them. The following is a summary of the ways in which the TRC was discussed during the course of interviews used in this research.

⁷⁰¹ See further discussion about the implications of Nathan's testimony in Edlmann "Division in the (Inner) Ranks". It is also referred to in Conway, D. "'Somewhere on the Border – Of Credibility': The Cultural Construction and Contestation of 'the Border' in White South African Society" in Baines, G. & Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.84

⁷⁰² These publications include Baines' prolific journal articles, Gear, S. "Wishing Us Away: Challenges Facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa" in *Violence and Transition Series, Vol. 8, 2002* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002); Batley, K. (ed.) *A Secret Burden: Memories of the Border War by South African Soldiers who fought in it* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2007); Baines, G. & Vale, P. (eds.) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008); Gibson, D. "'The Balsak in the Roof': Bush War Experiences and Mediations as Related by White South African Conscripts" in Kapteijns, L. and Richters, A. (eds.) *Mediations of Violence in Africa: Fashioning New Futures from Contested Pasts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010).

⁷⁰³ Gibson "Balsak in the Roof" p.225

By far the majority of research participants expressed a level of ambivalence about the relationship between what happened in the TRC and their lived experiences of both the past and present. Otto,⁷⁰⁴ however, was a strong exception. It is not clear why (or if) he received a letter of invitation to the TRC, but Otto describes his reaction to this letter in one of the Missing Voices interviews conducted by Michael Cadman that has been used in this research:⁷⁰⁵

Otto: I got a letter to say somewhere...must have been after '94, to see if I need to come...what do they call it...to go and repent my sins of the past. (Laughs)

Interviewer: To go to the TRC?

Otto: Yes, and you know what I did then I took that thing...I should have kept it...but I threw it. Idiots. My job was not to go into townships and shoot South African blacks, it was to keep Communism out, and that's what I did. So what the hell has it got to do with them? So obviously there are baddies that did stuff that we're not proud of, and that's them. So I laughed that off.⁷⁰⁶

In stark contrast, the following is what took place in the closing stages of the interview Barry and I conducted. Barry started speaking after a long pause, during which I thought the interview was over. He needed to say the following, however:

Barry: I wanted to go and speak at the TRC but I didn't have big stories like everybody else. There was no stories, there was nothing. But maybe that I just had been a pawn. And maybe that I didn't have enough courage to do six years or maybe that I hadn't gone overseas and joined the ANC or one of those.... But I followed the TRC proceedings with great interest.

Interviewer: Are you aware that there was a special hearing that focused on the SADF?

⁷⁰⁴ As discussed in Chapter Four, these are not the research participants' real names. They are names I have allocated each participant for the purposes of this research only.

⁷⁰⁵ See Chapter Four for further discussion about these interviews.

⁷⁰⁶ Missing Voices interview with "Otto".

Barry: I was aware of that. But mine would have been... there was absolutely nothing in terms of... I had never been involved in anything. And that's how it worked in the system.⁷⁰⁷

Barry's ambivalence speaks to a longing to transgress memory fields that would appear to have left him feeling trapped in the contextual identity constructs that had so significantly shaped his life history. There is also a form of temporal continuity in the construction of his role as not being important enough in the hierarchies of memory fields of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. The helplessness constructed in his subject position speaks to a sense of paralysis which enables neither narrative reinforcement nor narrative repair. It also provides one possible explanation for the lack of response by conscripts to the TRC's invitation to the Special Hearing.

Billy also described how he followed the TRC very closely but chose not to attend. However, he narrated a greater sense of agency in making a conscious choice not to testify at the Special Hearing:

Now I didn't have anything personally that I thought I should have gone to the TRC and said I was one of 10 000 soldiers who went to the war. The SADF did this and did that and yes, three people's lives ended directly because of me and hence collaterally a couple of others were also killed because of me. I didn't know if I had to do that, and I thought no. That wasn't for me. I wasn't on a political wicket to go there so, you know, I was just one of the millions.... I looked at (the TRC) with a certain amount of interest because I want to deal with my past unemotionally and quietly. So I read and I listen and I look.⁷⁰⁸

Later in the interview we conducted, Billy did allude to the need for the confessional ethos and focus in the TRC's work to be extended. He referred to many conscripts' need to find a safe, cathartic space to speak about their experiences as a "TRC release":

And amongst those men, under a couple of drinks, you'll usually find somebody who will start waxing about their experience and how many people they killed or what

⁷⁰⁷ Interview with "Barry", Grahamstown, 16 September 2010

⁷⁰⁸ Interview with "Billy", East London, 9 October 2010

they did, you know. Captain Caprivi⁷⁰⁹ and so on. And I find there are a lot of guys who want to unload their experiences, like a TRC release, but they can't because it's not politically correct to talk to anyone about this experience. ... And you know politically you can't raise it because in this world we are living in nowadays, you know, BEE⁷¹⁰ and you're not getting promoted, you're not getting considered for things and it's not cool to talk about the old days.⁷¹¹

Thus, although the stated aims of the TRC Special Hearing on Conscription were not achieved, the idea of a confessional space did permeate narrations of the legacies of conscription to some extent for a conscript such as Billy. The possibly reconciliatory ethos of this period of post-apartheid South Africa began to shift with time, however. As the next case study reflects, the implications of this were significant for conscripts in their significations of the shifting memory fields within which they were positioned a decade after the TRC.

Case Study 2: The Freedom Park Fracas

This case study explores the 2007 controversy that was precipitated by a decision not to include the names of SADF soldiers who died during the Border Wars on the post-apartheid memorial Freedom Park's Wall of Names.

Background to the Establishment of Freedom Park

Freedom Park was established as a Presidential Legacy Project during Thabo Mbeki's term of office, in response to the TRC's call for symbolic reparations for those who had suffered under apartheid.⁷¹² It is situated in Pretoria, on a ridge between the Afrikaner

⁷⁰⁹ "Captain Caprivi" is a colloquial term for someone who brags excessively about his exploits in the Border Wars. The name is based on a photocomic hero renowned for his exploits in the Border War and with women. The Caprivi Strip is a thin piece of land on the eastern border of Namibia, bordered by Zambia to the north, Botswana to the south and Zimbabwe at its far eastern point. It was thus an area that saw significant combat during the Border Wars. It is now a province of Namibia, and has been renamed the Zambezi Province.

⁷¹⁰ BEE is an acronym for the post-1994 South African government's policy of Black Economic Empowerment.

⁷¹¹ Interview with "Billy", East London, 9 October 2010

⁷¹² www.iol.co.za/news/politics/include-us-say-ex-sadf-members-1.311310#.UTmyg9b-EaE (accessed on 23 January 2013); www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=338:freedompark080408&catid=44:developmentnews&Itemid=52 (accessed on 23 January 2013)

commemorative Voortrekker Monument⁷¹³ and the Union Buildings, administrative home of the South African government from 1913 to the present day.⁷¹⁴ In the middle distance, hills called Klapperkop and Skanskop are also visible – strategic points where Boer forces constructed forts to protect Pretoria from British forces during the South African War of 1899-1902.⁷¹⁵ The site on which Freedom Park has been established is therefore imbued with the complexities of South African history, and contrasting Afrikaner and African nationalist struggles in particular. As a result, historical symbolism and geographical significance have played a significant role in the contestation that has surrounded the nature and purpose of the Wall of Names at Freedom Park.

The Wall of Names is a series of curved walls on the Freedom Park precinct, with space for the inscription of the names of people who died in what have been identified as the key conflicts that played a role in shaping what South Africa has become. These are the precolonial conflicts, slavery, genocide, wars of resistance, the South African (Anglo-Boer) War, the first and second World Wars, and the liberation struggle against the apartheid regime.⁷¹⁶ Wally Serote, founding CEO of the Freedom Park Trust, engaged in public debates with groups who sought to have the names of deceased SADF soldiers – including conscripts – who fought in the Border Wars included on the Wall of Names. However, he ultimately stood by the decision not to include these soldiers' names on the Wall of Names.⁷¹⁷ His justification was that SADF soldiers had fought to “preserve apartheid and defeat the struggle for liberation.”⁷¹⁸

⁷¹³ The Voortrekker Monument was established in 1938 at the conclusion of the centenary commemorations of the Great Trek. The purpose of these 1938 centenary celebrations had been to “further the Afrikaner cause.” www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/great-trek-centenary-celebrations-commence (accessed on 13 March 2013). See also. Autry, R.K “The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory in South Africa: The Voortrekker Monument” in *Theory, Culture & Society* 2012 29: 146-164, p.148

⁷¹⁴ www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?reid=187 (accessed on 13 March 2013)

⁷¹⁵ www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=338:freedompark080408&catid=44:developmentnews&Itemid=52 (accessed on 23 January 2013)

⁷¹⁶ www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=338:freedompark080408&catid=44:developmentnews&Itemid=52 (accessed on 23 January 2013)

⁷¹⁷ www.iol.co.za/news/politics/sadf-dead-do-not-belong-in-freedom-park-1.314526#.UTmyftb-EaE (accessed on 23 January 2013)

⁷¹⁸ Baines, G. “South Africa’s Forgotten War” in *History Today* Volume: 59 Issue: 4, 2009, p.1

There was a vociferous response to this from a number of – primarily Afrikaner – cultural groupings. Afriforum, an Afrikaner rights organisation, claimed the decision would be polarising.⁷¹⁹ The political party the Freedom Front Plus, whose membership is mostly conservative Afrikaners, called for a boycott of Freedom Park, alleging that the omission of SADF names “excluded Afrikaners from history”.⁷²⁰ As a form of protest, an unofficial memorial was erected on the approach road to Freedom Park, under the leadership of musician Steve Hofmeyr.⁷²¹ It was two-metre-high steel structure, triangular in shape, intended to symbolise that there are many sides to history – and to communicate to people at Freedom Park that the “side” of SADF conscripts was being ignored and rendered invisible.⁷²² Hofmeyr sent an open letter to Serote, in which he said ““You assume that I, as an 18 year-old conscript, chose 'against freedom' when I heeded the call to defend my country against a Leninist one-party autocracy.”⁷²³ He also questioned why the names of Cubans who “fought for the communist third-world agenda” were to appear on the wall, but not South Africans who had fought in the SADF.⁷²⁴

While the Serote-Hofmeyr confrontation was particularly polarised, the incident – described by Baines as the “Freedom Park Fracas”⁷²⁵ – highlighted many complexities beyond the realms of these oppositional stances.

Subsequent to the Hofmeyr-led protest memorial, a wall of names specific to the SADF was constructed on the slopes of the hill on which the Voortrekker Monument is situated.⁷²⁶ It consists of a semi-circular wall of black marble – conceptually evocative of the Vietnam memorial in Washington DC. It is spatially symbolic and confrontational – facing directly towards the Freedom Park Wall of Names across the valley.

⁷¹⁹ Autry “The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory in South Africa”, p.159

⁷²⁰ Autry “The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory in South Africa”, p.159

⁷²¹ Baines “South Africa’s Forgotten War” p.1

⁷²² Baines “South Africa’s Forgotten War” p.1

⁷²³ www.iol.co.za/news/politics/include-us-say-ex-sadf-members-1.311310#.UTmyg9b-EaE (accessed on 23 January 2013)

⁷²⁴ www.iol.co.za/news/politics/include-us-say-ex-sadf-members-1.311310#.UTmyg9b-EaE (accessed on 23 January 2013)

⁷²⁵ Baines, G “Site of struggle: the Freedom Park Fracas and the divisive legacy of South Africa’s Border War/Liberation Struggle” in *Social Dynamics* Vol. 35, No. 2, September 2009, 330–344

⁷²⁶ <http://blogs.timeslive.co.za/minor/2009/10/sadf-memorial-wall-at-the-voortrekker-monument/> (accessed on 20 July 2011); www.voortrekkermon.org.za/wall.php (accessed on 20 July 2011)

This incident highlights some significant shifts in terms of the assertion of memory fields relating to the apartheid era, and conscription in particular. The Freedom Front Plus, with Hofmeyr acting as chief spokesperson, drew on the well-established discursive resources of race, gender and perceptions of threat in responding to this perceived attack on their identity, their history and their chosen memory fields.

During the TRC it was primarily researchers who referred to the continuities of these discursive resources in perpetuating memory fields that evoked nostalgia for the apartheid era. Here it was Afrikaner cultural and political leaders who seemed to have regained a sense of agency and power in asserting the importance of their apparently threatened white, male historical identities in the construction of this memorial and of post-apartheid memory fields.

Hofmeyr, and others who spoke out with him, clearly had the vocal support of a small minority but did not receive widespread support for their actions. However, his actions provide a significant indication of the troubled, contested memory fields within which conscripts' narrations of their experiences continued to take place more than a decade after the cessation of conscription.

Research Participants' Perspectives on the Wall of Names

The Missing Voices interviews which have formed part of this research were conducted prior to and during the period that Freedom Park "Fracas" took place, and the issue does not seem to have been mentioned in any of the interviews with conscripts.

One of the research participants I interviewed did allude to the contestations around the Wall of Names. It was David, who had recently returned from a trip to Namibia and Angola where he had met a number of ex-enemies from the time of the Border Wars. He framed

the Freedom Park “Fracas” as primarily political, rather than something that directly affected him.

But soldiers always sit down and have a beer after a war. You go to anywhere you like and you will find that. You will find they allow you to come and put crosses there.⁷²⁷ You will find they will chat easily about it to you. They don't have animosity. The politicians keep the fire going. Always. ... Even today we have a situation in South Africa where the Namibians point out to us that our government has missed an opportunity. Or created a Freedom Park, with some separate list of people that died for the cause, when in fact the ANC have never fought a battle on a battlefield, remember that. Never have they... [bangs fist on table] It was a revolutionary type war done in communistic and whatever fashion.⁷²⁸

David's dismissal of the Freedom Park Wall of Names is redolent of Otto's dismissal of the TRC, a trend that I will discuss further in Chapter Seven as representing the anomie that Chabani Manganyi suggests characterises societies in transition.⁷²⁹ While David dismisses any implication the Wall of Names might have for his own sense of identity, he uses the opportunity the incident presents to diminish the military exploits of the ANC-led military structures that are commemorated on the wall.

As the next case study indicates, David's narration of a military prowess that he denies groupings such as uMkhonto we Sizwe and its allies, suggests that sectors of South African society had begun to push back in response to hierarchical memory fields that portrayed them as having been vanquished in the Border Wars and subsequent political changes. In the process, narrations shifted from being about the apartheid era wars, to being primarily about race and identity.

⁷²⁷ David had placed crosses at a number of SADF bases in Namibia and Angola. This will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

⁷²⁸ Interview with “David”, Johannesburg, 3 November 2010

⁷²⁹ Manganyi, C. “Political Violence and the Psychology of the Transition” in Manganyi, C. (ed.) *On Becoming a Democracy: Transition and Transformation in South African Society* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press and Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004), p.49

Case Study 3: The Buys-Malan and McKaiser-Vice Sagas

This case study explores the way in which, by 2011, memory fields relating to conscription into the SADF had shifted from being about the representations of conscripts as soldiers to being about the way in which white identities were an ongoing source of contestation and conflict in South African society.

By way of example, two very different public debates about whiteness played out in the South African media during the course of 2011. These provide a useful case study in illustrating the complexities and temporal continuities regarding whiteness as a discursive resource in post-apartheid South Africa, and the significant role that conscription played in shaping these debates.

Part One: The Buys-Malan Saga

The first debate was sparked by the June 2011 speech by Flip Buys (CEO of Solidarity, a union that represents white people's employment and cultural rights)⁷³⁰ at the opening performance in the State Theatre, Pretoria, of *Tree Aan*, a nostalgic musical about conscription into the SADF. A transcript of the speech was published in the national Afrikaans newspaper *Die Beeld* on 22 June 2011.⁷³¹ In the course of this piece, Buys claimed that the Border Wars were not fought over human rights, but rather against the possibility of an "ANC-led one-party communist dictatorship" (translation from the original Afrikaans) taking over the country. He later claimed that, by standing firm with Western nations, the SADF directly contributed to the collapse of the Communist Bloc and the therefore also to the dissipation of the "communist threat" in South Africa.

This was a powerful and provocative claim, flying in the face of post-apartheid discourses that constructed SADF soldiers as colluding with the apartheid state in perpetuating an unjust system and often being responsible for human right abuses. It was a significant

⁷³⁰ <http://whoswho.co.za/p-buys-3962> (accessed on 20 July 2011)

⁷³¹ www.beeld.com/In-Diepte/Nuus/Afrikaner-vat-jou-verlede-terug-20110622 (accessed on 20 July 2011)

public statement of narrative repair in addressing the moral ambiguities and discursive trouble that being a conscript represented in post-apartheid South Africa.

A Stellenbosch University academic, Professor Anton van Niekerk, published a rebuttal of Buys's pieces in *Die Beeld* on 4 July 2011 and *Die Burger* on 14 July 2011. He outlined what he saw as the ongoing responsibility of white South Africans for the violations of human rights that took place during the apartheid era.⁷³²

Abel Malan, a member of a right-wing military group, who was also an officer in the SADF's Parachute Battalion, physically attacked van Niekerk in his office at Stellenbosch University on 14 July 2011, after a heated argument over van Niekerk's assertions and his refusal to retract them.⁷³³ Malan was arrested, granted bail and ultimately paid an admission of guilt fine.⁷³⁴

The case provoked substantial (and mixed) reaction in various sectors of South African society – examples including right-winger Mike Smith's blog post titled "Lippy Liberal Afrikaner Prof Anton van Niekerk meets his match",⁷³⁵ independent media columnist Jacques Rousseau's piece "Racial Nationalism: the silliest disease of them all",⁷³⁶ academic Jonathan Jansen's reflections on the media's depiction of the incident as an Afrikaner "tribal skirmish"⁷³⁷ and social justice activist and public intellectual Richard Pithouse's piece entitled "Denying the Wages of Whiteness"⁷³⁸.

⁷³² www.beeld.com/In-Diepte/Nuus/Wittes-het-baie-skuld-20110704 and www.dieburger.com/Opinie/Nog/Moenie-apartheid-vergoeilik-nie-20110714. See also a letter by Danie Booyens on www.beeld.com/MyBeeld/Briewe/Afrikaners-kan-net-dan-geskiedenis-terugvat-20110624 (all accessed on 20 July 2011).

⁷³³ www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Maties-professor-attacked-in-office-20110714, www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Right-wingers-praise-attack-on-prof-20110715,

www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Varsity-rejects-claims-of-trap-20110718 (all accessed on 20 July 2011)

⁷³⁴ www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Man-gets-bail-over-prof-attack-20110720 (accessed on 20 July 2011)

⁷³⁵ <http://mpoliticalcommentary.blogspot.com/2011/07/lippy-liberal-afrikaner-prof-anton-van.html> (accessed on 20 July 2011)

⁷³⁶ www.thedailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2011-07-20-racial-nationalism-the-silliest-disease-of-them-all (accessed on 20 July 2011)

⁷³⁷ www.timeslive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2011/07/28/broken-past-back-to-haunt-us (accessed on 6 November 2012)

⁷³⁸ <http://sacsis.org.za/site/article/746.1> (accessed on 12 September 2011)

The Buys-Van Niekerk-Malan incident, and the various responses it elicited, provided insights into several dimensions of race as a discursive resource in post-1994 South African society.

Buys's speech built on the memory field outlined in the previous case study, which is premised on the perceived need for Afrikaners to "reclaim" their history by reframing the ideological positioning and narration of the apartheid era wars. Van Niekerk's rebuttal referred to "whites" (rather than Afrikaners) bearing guilt and responsibility for what took place during apartheid (beyond the realm of the wars), but it was published in an Afrikaans newspaper (which English South Africans rarely, if ever, read). The violence of Malan's reaction to Van Niekerk's rebuttal is redolent of the invocations of apartheid era President P.W Botha for white men to stand firm in the face of opposition during the 1980s, especially from within the ranks of white people.⁷³⁹ And the fact that this saga was subsequently reported and commented on in a range of English and Afrikaans publications hints at the fact that this was a moment of signification. This conflict, contestation and memory field "trouble" might have primarily played out between Afrikaans citizens, but reactions in the media spoke in some way to the complexities and "trouble" of narrating whiteness for English white South Africans too.

Of course, the incident was not only about whiteness. There were significations of other "trouble" in narrating identities that intersected with whiteness during the course of these events. The protagonists in the saga were all men. In addition, Buys's speech was made at the opening night of a nostalgic narration of life as a conscript in the SADF.⁷⁴⁰ The conflicting narrations about the past and present that played out in the media and in van Niekerk's office therefore also revolved around ways of making sense of an historical system that imposed militarised models of masculinities on the already complex task of narrating (and – for some – defending) whiteness.

⁷³⁹ See Chapter One for more on this.

⁷⁴⁰ *Somewhere on the Border*, Anthony Akerman's highly critical, anti-war play about the experiences of SADF conscripts was performed in English at the National Arts Festival, the Market Theatre and the Baxter at roughly the same time as *Tree Aan*. It was warmly acclaimed in the comparatively limited media coverage that it received.

While far greater analysis of this saga is possible, it has been used as one example – a moment of signification – of the complexities that continue to pervade whiteness as a discursive resource in post-apartheid South Africa.

Part Two: The McKaiser-Vice Case Study

The second part of this case study, also from 2011, deals with a separate but related media debate about whiteness that took place in the South African media. Rhodes University philosopher Samantha Vice had published a paper⁷⁴¹ reflecting on the need for white South Africans to “cultivate humility and silence, given their morally compromised position in the continuing racial and economic injustices” in South Africa.⁷⁴² She also suggested that white people should feel shame about the “destructive legacy” of whiteness in the light of how it continued to shape and benefit white people “in ways that are far subtler than merely social and economic.”⁷⁴³ In the rebuttal of Buys’s speech referred to in the previous case study, van Niekerk referred to Vice’s argument in positive, supportive terms.⁷⁴⁴

Public intellectual and political commentator Eusebius McKaiser also wrote a reflection on Vice’s ideas in *Die Burger*⁷⁴⁵ and *The Mail and Guardian*⁷⁴⁶ in which he said the following by way of conclusion:

This is what I say to whites: “You have an unqualified political and ethical right to engage in the political and public spheres of (y)our country, but be mindful of how your whiteness still benefits you and gives you unearned privileges. Engage black South Africans with humility, and be mindful of not reinforcing whiteness as normative, just as a loud, boisterous, rugby-obsessive chief executive should take care of his unearned privileges as an aggressive, masculine male in the boardroom.”⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴¹ Vice, S. “How Do I Live in This Strange Place?” in *Journal of Social Philosophy* Vol. 41 No. 3 Fall 2010, 323-342

⁷⁴² <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-09-02-why-my-opinions-on-whiteness-touched-a-nerve> (accessed on 6 November 2012)

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ www.beeld.com/In-Diepte/Nuus/Wittes-het-baie-skuld-20110704 (accessed on 20 July 2011)

⁷⁴⁵ www.dieburger.com/By/Nuus/Hoe-moet-whiteys-in-die-vreemde-plek-leef-20110624-2 (accessed on 6 November 2012)

⁷⁴⁶ <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-01-confronting-whiteness> (accessed on 6 November 2012)

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

Once again, these publications – and the media debate they precipitated – are worthy of far deeper analysis than is possible here. For the purposes of this discussion, however, I would like to highlight a few resonances between this and the previous case study.

The first is that – in spite of the fact that this debate focuses far more on current narratives of whiteness than the *Tree Aan* related saga – both Vice and McKaiser construct whiteness as ontological. For both writers, whiteness is the unquestioned basis from which moral and relational “trouble” need to be negotiated. While ethnicity might not have been as much a point of tension in this debate as was the case in the *Tree Aan* saga, the conflation of whiteness with other identities is. Vice’s paper meticulously focuses on whiteness. McKaiser’s concluding statements invoke a scenario that conflates whiteness with an aggressive, overbearing, exploitative masculinity – at the cost of doing justice to the sensitivity and reflexivity of Vice’s ideas.

That a public intellectual of McKaiser’s standing would continue to conflate whiteness and a particular, militarised, construction of masculinity is salutary. If this is the case for a relatively articulate, considered public and political commentator (who is not white and was not a conscript), it only serves to illustrate the intensity with which white men who were conscripts continue to grapple with the continuities of these personal and social discursive resources for themselves and in the social domain.

The Silences that Surrounded These Case Studies

While the three case studies discussed so far had a high media profile, the reality is that the majority of conscripts have been narrating their experiences – or not – at a far more subtle, delicate and personal level than the primary role-players in the events described above. The very public nature of these events have troubled or reinforced the memory fields that have constructed narrations of these experiences.

The TRC, for example, claimed to be working at shifting memory fields in adopting a reconciliatory stance towards conscripts. However, the Freedom Park Fracas and the 2011 public spat have more than likely entrenched hegemonic memories, leaving little space for more fragile, contested and vulnerable narrations of their identities by the majority conscripts. However, beyond the level of narration, as Sasha Gear's paper suggests,⁷⁴⁸ many conscripts are more immediately facing a socially constructed silence that events such as the ones described in this chapter do not permeate or shift.

In their book about the post-war silences of the twentieth century, Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter explore the ways in which social silences rest in constructed spaces that sit somewhere between remembering and forgetting.⁷⁴⁹ Both silence and speaking are shaped by cultural codes which shift and change over time. When the time comes to disrupt silent spaces, it is possible for people to become "memory agents" in narrating their own experiences and influencing the memory fields that have previously silenced and marginalised them in some way.⁷⁵⁰

One of the challenges regarding the silences that have surrounded the legacies of conscription is the manner in which they have allowed others in society to position conscripts within social and political memory fields. This occurs most regularly in relation to identities such as victim, perpetrator, racist or political pawn. Those conscripts, such as Steve Hofmeyr, who have very publicly engaged in troubling and negotiating these identities, have often ended up reinforcing discursive *laagers* and hegemonic memory fields rather than shifting them in ways that enable and include other conscripts in any way.

What both the pervading silences and so-called "memory activists" in current South African society have ended up doing, is conflating and reinforcing discursive resources generated

⁷⁴⁸ Gear, S. "Wishing Us Away: Challenges Facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa" in *Violence and Transition Series, Vol. 8, 2002* (Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2002)

⁷⁴⁹ Ben-Ze'Ev, E., Ginio, R. and Winter, J. *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.8

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid. p.11

and imposed by the apartheid regime. It is difficult to unravel the confluences of the military identity and the historical political system which gave rise to that military identity within the intractable social systems of the current South African context.

The silences created by the intractability of current social dynamics remain spaces of narrative negotiation. Key to the identity-related narrative negotiations of the post-apartheid era is the way conscripts narrate their military identities as being those of heroes, perpetrators, victims, pawns or what Karen Batley describes as “socialised warriors”.

In constructing this notion of “socialised warrior” Karen Batley, in her introductory essay to a collection of poems and writings by SADF conscripts, alludes to Joseph Campbell’s writings about the mythical and mystical qualities of a warrior:

Fighting for the regenerative cause of bettering his society, he displays individual courage while serving a wider purpose – that of providing, by means of his creative acts, the link between humanity and immortality. The nature of the creative act here is transformation, particularly of his society... He kills with a noble purpose – to vanquish the outworn status quo and bring about the revitalisation needed by his society.⁷⁵¹

Batley argues that SADF conscripts fitted into another, less glorious category – that of a *socialised warrior*, used by a military system to perpetuate the status quo. It is a context in which both soldier and enemy become robotic participants “without the hope of transcendence to a new dispensation for society.”⁷⁵² Rather than being a warrior who is the pride of his family and community, the socialised warrior is a diminished human being who

⁷⁵¹ Campbell, J. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York and London: Fontana Press, 1993) cited in Batley, K. “Socialised warriors: Anti-heroic subversion in writing by South African soldiers in the Border War” in K. Batley (ed.) *A Secret Burden: Memories of the Border War by South African Soldiers who fought in it* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2007), p.5

⁷⁵² Lifton, R.J. *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims nor Executioners* (New York: Basic Books, 1985) cited in Batley, K. “Socialised warriors: Anti-heroic subversion in writing by South African soldiers in the Border War” in K. Batley (ed.) *A Secret Burden: Memories of the Border War by South African Soldiers who fought in it* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2007), p.6

becomes a pawn in the political games of others, bereft of a clear or believable mission.⁷⁵³ “In the end the enemy is everywhere for these (socialised) warriors – in an indifferent God, a hostile landscape, within themselves, their black compatriot enemies and, as far as some of them were concerned, their own government. And when they returned home they found that many civilians, particularly their own generation of students, were also their enemies.”⁷⁵⁴

Batley’s framing of conscripts as socialised warriors is useful in explaining the discursive resources at work in the complexities and social silences for many conscripts. However, it does not recognise the agency of conscripts in negotiating this identity construct. As will be discussed further in the next chapter, this agency is exercised in multiple ways, enabling both narrative reinforcement of historical identities and discursive resources and acts of narrative repair. It also does not recognise the fact that being a soldier is only one part of a conscript’s identity. A military framing of the identity of warrior or pawn is only one dimension to the possibilities of constructing an heroic or anti-heroic dimension to a conscript’s identity. However, the narrative terrain defined by post-apartheid South Africa’s memory fields results in these negotiations of identity being socially and politically fraught.

In the twenty years since the advent of democracy, the many social and political changes in South Africa have not yet enabled an unravelling of memory spaces in such a way that it is easy – even possible – for SADF conscripts to become warriors for new and noble causes. To a large extent, their identities as soldiers remain conflated with the discursive resources of the apartheid regime.

⁷⁵³ Batley, K. “Socialised warriors: Anti-heroic subversion in writing by South African soldiers in the Border war” in Batley, K (ed.) *A Secret Burden: Memories of the Border War by South African Soldiers who fought in it* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2007), pp.13,14

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid. p.23

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the memory fields that have been constructed regarding narrations and silence about the legacies of conscription in post-apartheid South African society, which have proven as shaped by personal and social fracturing and discursive *laagers* as the apartheid era itself.

This renders the task of narrative repair in dealing with legacies of conscription a challenging task. Conscripts face a paradoxically transforming and democratising society and an increasingly polarised context with regard to race, gender and perceptions of threat. Constructing coherent narratives that do not constantly stumble over the narrative trouble induced by these paradoxes is a complex and demanding undertaking for both conscripts and the rest of South African society.

The following chapter will outline the narrative terrain that conscripts' personal accounts of their experiences negotiate in the post-apartheid context.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NARRATIVE REINFORCEMENT AND NARRATIVE REPAIR IN CONSCRIPTS' PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF THE LEGACIES OF CONSCRIPTION

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the social spaces within which narrations about conscription have taken place in post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter will focus on the personal dimensions of narrating the legacies of conscription that have emerged in this research.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how this research has come to understand the post-apartheid narrative terrain of conscripts' narrations of identity. This terrain includes the discursive resources that were outlined in Chapter Two and trauma and moral injury outlined in Chapter Three. It also includes the memory fields, constructions of silence and subject positioning discussed in Chapter Six.

A key area of focus in this chapter is how the narrative terrain of conscripts' biographical talk is also defined by negotiations of historical continuities in the period of social transition that their life stories include. These historical continuities within the South African context, that form temporal threads through narrations of the past, the present and the future, are not unique to conscripts. They have been constructed over time by a history which all who live in South Africa share, albeit not from within the same identity constructs, subject positioning or ideological paradigms. For conscripts, these historical continuities are shaped in very particular ways by colonialism, of which apartheid was a continuation. They are also influenced by the shifting contextual dynamics of the South African transition to democracy. Negotiations of these shifts and changes are characterised by narrative reinforcement and narrative repair.

Narrative Reinforcement and Narrative Repair in a Context of Social Transition

Living through a period of political and social transition requires a renegotiation of the power constructs that shape every citizen's identity. For many, this has been a complex process and one that has resulted in narrative "trouble", both personally and socially. For some, this narrative "trouble"⁷⁵⁵ is exacerbated by the narrative wreckage⁷⁵⁶ precipitated by trauma and moral injury.⁷⁵⁷

In a time of social change, new agencies and subject positions become possible. An act of narrative repair would be a narration of identity that deconstructs historical subject positions and assumes, assimilates or articulates new identities and subject positions. Often narrative repair requires a recognition of moral injury, and a process of moral repair. Narrative reinforcement would comprise buttressing historical constructions of identity and discursive *laagers* in narrating identities that resist the new subject positions that have become possible through social and political change. Each conscript's negotiation of the post-apartheid narrative terrain is particular to their experiences and life story, both during their military service and in the subsequent period of political and social transition in South Africa. However, one of the key components in how narrative reinforcement and narrative repair are negotiated in conscripts' accounts relate to historical temporal threads of impunity.

Chabani Manganyi, an eminent South African clinical psychologist and biographer, has articulated some important dimensions of the psychological effects of negotiating the legacies of both apartheid-era impunity and the impunity that has been prevalent during

⁷⁵⁵ Taylor, S. and Littleton, K. "Biographies in talk: A narrative-discursive research approach" in *Qualitative Sociology Review* 2006 Vol.2 Issue 1, 22-38, p.26

⁷⁵⁶ Crossley, M. *Introducing Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma and the Construction of Meaning* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), p.56

⁷⁵⁷ Litz, B., Stein, N., Delaney, E. Lebowitz, L., Nash, W.P., Silva, C. Maguen, S. "Moral injury and moral repair in war veterans: A preliminary model and intervention strategy" in *Clinical Psychology Review* Volume 29, Issue 8, December 2009, Pages 695–706

South Africa's transition to democracy.⁷⁵⁸ This notion of impunity is significant in South African society, because of its relationships with violence, and trauma, and the subject positions these give rise to.

In his chapter "Political Violence and the Psychology of the Transition" Manganyi acknowledges that "little is known about the psychology of transitions from venal authoritarianism to democratic life."⁷⁵⁹ In this chapter he focuses primarily on the TRC's role in downplaying and excluding the psychological pain and suffering of generations of black South Africans, thus inadvertently perpetuating the physical and psychological "dehumanisation" that "followed in the wake of apartheid."⁷⁶⁰ He goes on to state:

(o)ne of the elements that determine this transitional society is the growing sense of being overwhelmed by social dislocation, the feeling that the ground may be giving in below us: that 'the centre cannot hold'. In social science this state of disengagement, this loosening of social bonds, is known as anomie.⁷⁶¹

At the risk of engaging in identity politics in ways that ossify racial delineations which are more complex than clear-cut in South African society, a number of issues that Manganyi raises require comment and reflection in relation to the narrative terrain being discussed in this research, as well as in making sense of the narrative reinforcement and narrative repair within conscripts' accounts of their experiences.

⁷⁵⁸ Manganyi's thoughts on this matter are most clearly articulated in Manganyi, C. "Political Violence and the Psychology of the Transition" in Manganyi, C. (ed.) *On Becoming a Democracy: Transition and Transformation in South African Society* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press and Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004). I first started exploring the possibilities of including the psychology of impunity in research about post-apartheid social transformation in South Africa after hearing him speak at some length about this issue following his acceptance speech on receiving the Rhodes University Psychology and Social Change Award in 2008. His paper, *Moments of awakening: Apartheid South Africa and the Making of a Psychologist* can be found on www.ru.ac.za/psychology/socialchange/2008/professorncmanganyi/ (accessed 31 January 2014). In the course of this research, it became clear to me that, while Manganyi's work appropriately responds to moral imperatives in exploring the effects of impunity on black people, there is also a need for the psychological role of impunity for South Africans who have been designated as white to be explored and understood.

⁷⁵⁹ Manganyi, C. "Political Violence and the Psychology of the Transition" in Manganyi, C. (ed.) *On Becoming a Democracy: Transition and Transformation in South African Society* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press and Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004), p.44

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid. p.49

The first is his emphasis on the psychological dimensions of social, political and systematic violence – both during apartheid and in the transition to democracy. People who were designated black under apartheid were discriminated against in appalling ways and have a complex and very particular path to negotiate in engaging with the legacies of this system in their own lives. However, I argue that the process of realising democracy through social transformation cannot be fully understood until the effects of the system on the so-called oppressor or beneficiaries of apartheid have also been investigated and understood. The psychological process of deconstructing colonial and apartheid-era understandings of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat need to be articulated and understood, both for a re-humanisation of that which has been dehumanised, and for democratic ideals to be realised. The narrative reinforcement or narrative repair that conscripts engage in arise directly out of complex narrative engagements with processes of reconstructing or buttressing oppressive subject positions arising out of colonialism and the apartheid era.

This links to the second issue in Manganyi's statements that have resonance with this research. He refers to the unacknowledged pain of "generations of black South Africans" that the TRC failed to address. The corollary to his statement that this research seeks to play some role in providing is that generations of white South Africans participated in the oppression and pain of these generations of black South Africans. Because of their position within the apartheid system, conscripts played an overt role in this system, willingly or not. Each of these subject positions and identity constructs represent a different part of the dehumanising effects of South African history. They need to be understood and addressed through investigating the links between historical events and their psychosocial legacies.

The third issue in Manganyi's work that has some resonance with this research is the way he describes an important psychological and social characteristic of transition as being the "loosening of social bonds" and the anomie this gives rise to. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this is an important issue to reflect on in relation to a group such as conscripts, in their negotiations of narrating identities in times of transition.

The following section of this chapter will discuss the ways in which some of the issues that Maganyi's work has highlighted can be seen at work in conscripts' narrative reinforcement and narrative repair in their negotiations of a narrative terrain characterised by discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat.

Given the personal and subjective nature of every conscript's story, the process of highlighting these narrative patterns is as complex as the narrative challenges conscripts themselves face in accounting for the legacies of their experiences. The narrative patterns that will be highlighted in the following section of this chapter are a qualitative interpretation of narrative terrain; the examples used are not necessarily representative of what a majority of conscripts said. Their role in this analysis is to highlight the narrative terrain and temporal threads in conscripts' narrations of identity in post-apartheid South Africa. As discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Four, this research has regarded conscripts accounts as cultural texts rather than primarily being subjective representations of a particular life story.

The previous chapter provided some insight into the reinforcement of discursive resources that has led to very public conflicts in both the Freedom Park Fracas and the spats that were precipitated by Flip Buys' speech at the opening night of *Tree Aan*. These incidents provide a sense of how historical discursive resources, and in some cases acts of violence, are perpetuated through justifications of what was done in the past, in defiance of post-apartheid memory fields. The two polarised scenarios discussed in the previous chapter are not necessarily representative of the majority of conscripts, however.

The texts that this research has drawn on suggest that, for the majority of conscripts, the post-apartheid narrative terrain is complex and convoluted rather than polarised. This is precipitated by the confusion and narrative dissonance that have arisen out of the shifts from hegemonic and hierarchical apartheid-era memory fields to a new set of post-apartheid hegemonic and hierarchical memory fields.

The following section of this chapter will explore aspects of narrating whiteness as a discursive resource in post-apartheid South Africa that have emerged in this research.

Negotiating Whiteness

Negotiating discursive resources of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa necessitates a negotiation of both historical and current contextual constructions of race.

An important dimension of these negotiations involves how to account for childhood memories that only reveal the discursive resources of race and perceptions of threat that informed the social system of apartheid in retrospect. Larry⁷⁶² gives a particularly graphic account of this in the following description of living near a police station and hearing – but not understanding – why he was hearing black people being interrogated in the building:

One of the events that I remember was that we lived in X street ... in Y⁷⁶³ and the ... police station was nearby and there were all the screams that would come out of the station – bloodcurdling screams. And I would say to my parents “What’s going on?” And they would say, “No, it’s just the blacks...” This is tricky because my mother is still alive, but they used racist language to describe what was happening in the police station and “They just making a noise”, you know. That kind of shook me, you know. And who knows what that goes to deep in you. I mean, I was a kid, you know. So there was always this sense of, well, that doesn’t sound like people are just unhappy, they sound ... there was violence there.⁷⁶⁴

At some point in most interviews I conducted, research participants described revisiting childhood memories, the links between their childhood and their experiences as conscripts, and how the insidious nature of the social system of which they were a part played an incremental role in constructing their identities as they were growing up. For many, issues of race in childhood experiences surface in subtle, sometimes almost mundane ways – not

⁷⁶² Pseudonyms have been used to protect research participants’ identities.

⁷⁶³ Note: names of places have been removed to protect the research participant’s identity.

⁷⁶⁴ Interview with “Larry”, Grahamstown, 6 September 2010

all of them with the graphic levels of violence and impunity that Larry experienced. But the discursive resources at work in the way the apartheid state constructed black people as “other” and inferior weaves its way through most narrations in different ways. Many conscripts have chosen to distance themselves from the racialised impunities of the apartheid era as an act of narrative repair. Others, however, engage in acts of narrative reinforcement by continuing to narrate their history and their current identities from within discursive *laagers* that have shifted relatively little for them in response to the changing socio-political context in which they now live.

In the following example of narrative of discursive resources of race, Lance describes returning to South Africa having been a conscript in the 1975 SADF invasion of Angola, known as Operation Savannah. As they were gathering to go through their final parade before going home, the event was cancelled and they were deployed in the townships of Soweto⁷⁶⁵ to assist the police in quelling the 1976 youth uprisings that were under way:

Ja, so that’s a very eventful year. ... We came back July/August to *klaar out*⁷⁶⁶ of 5 SAI.⁷⁶⁷ We were all on the parade ground, all the parents were there to fetch us. It was June the sixteenth. Now you know why the coons⁷⁶⁸ got really hammered in June 1976. We came out of Angola and went straight there. I suppose they thought we could handle the situation.⁷⁶⁹

Lance’s story is framed by narrative reinforcement of subject positions that fly in the face of post-apartheid discursive resources, especially regarding race. He invokes military, gendered and racial discursive resources in explaining the subject positions of power which fuelled these soldiers’ support of the police in one of the most violent suppressions of civil resistance in the history of South Africa.

⁷⁶⁵ Soweto stands for “South West Township”. It is part of greater Johannesburg.

⁷⁶⁶ The *klaar out* was the final military parade before being dismissed and sent home.

⁷⁶⁷ SAI is an acronym for an infantry unit.

⁷⁶⁸ Coon is a derogatory term for a black person.

⁷⁶⁹ Interview with “Lance”, East London, 9 October 2010

What is not clear in this description is the extent to which this narrative reinforcement of discursive resources and racially insulting descriptions of the young people who were at the forefront of the 1976 uprisings is in fact also an act of narrative repair. One is left to wonder about the possible levels of moral injury to a young person coming straight out of months of fighting in the bush in Angola and hoping to go home to their family, only to be sent into violence-torn townships of South Africa. Even in the midst of narrative reinforcement through the use of racist language redolent of the apartheid era, the silences in Lance's description suggest unresolved dimensions to a conscript's narrative that do not overtly find their way into biographical talk.

In the current South African context, narrative reinforcements such as those in the excerpt above are perceived by some conscripts to be either morally unacceptable or fraught with risk. As was discussed in Chapter Four, research participants who work in the business and corporate sectors in South Africa face particular challenges in this regard. The following account by Billy gives some sense of the contestations that take place regarding apartheid history and post-apartheid subject positions in some corporate environments:

There's a lot of pent-up frustration with a world that we gave mentally and physically and financially in those days in taxes and sweat and our colleagues who have died. And it's all for nought. We're now at the bottom of the food chain. ... You know, some black, male, female, other than white person says to me you were in the racist army, my only take is to not reply. I'm not going to get myself hysterical and go and sort of verbally slug it out because that is actually what they want you to do, is to react and hopefully you say the wrong thing. If you've said the wrong things then the damage is done. I just say to the person "It's the past. It's finished." I won't discuss it. It's finished. Your past and my past are our respective upbringings. We've embraced 1994 and that's where we are now. But that's it. Topic closed. Because other persons have tried to justify, you know "Yes, because I didn't want to sit in jail." And they say "You are a racist for supporting the government." I've seen many a good man go down the wrong road for saying things that he believes but it is *dis*interpreted. Not misinterpreted, but disingenuously twisted. And that's where I know a lot of times you've gone to corporate events, for example, where there's been alcohol and someone will provoke somebody because everybody got a bit loose with alcohol. And then someone will come out "Oh, you're a racist because you shot black people. You went and supported the government." Oh God. And then you know. Sorry folks, where's my car. Gone. Not even going to discuss whether it's right or wrong, Sorry, I'm just out of there. And you think of your blood and your friends who have been killed in the past for where we are now. Yes, you've got to get over it, but there

is this hurt part in you that can't be released because it's not politically correct for it to be released.⁷⁷⁰

If Billy's description is seen as a cultural text within a narrative-discursive approach, it enables the researcher to map several aspects of the post-apartheid narrative terrain regarding discursive resources of race. The adversarial nature of social relations in an environment such as Billy describes are based on invocations of the racialised history of the apartheid era, and the temporal continuities in narrations of politicised subject positions with regard to post-apartheid racial identities. In Billy's description, the ways in which race as a discursive resource in narrating identity and power have shifted are apparent. White men, who would have drawn on discursive resources of whiteness and masculinities to position themselves as the aggressors in the past, find themselves in a position of needing to defend and justify a history based on the fact that they served in the apartheid military. Billy alludes to examples of men trying to engage in narrative reinforcement by explaining and justifying the reasons for them serving in the SADF. Billy's narrative repair takes the form of an avoidance characterised by silence and absence. As has been discussed in Chapter Six, silences are a significant characteristic of the narrative terrain in which the legacies of war are negotiated. As Billy's closing statements in the excerpt above suggest, silences can be constructed spaces which hold significant moral injury, emotion, unresolvedness and pain. This is partly due to the impossibility of accounting for the close relationships and personal bonds of their time in the SADF in the narrative terrain they find themselves negotiating in situations such as the one described above. It is possibly also due to the ways in which trauma and moral injury cannot find their way into language that enables narratives of repair.

While Billy's account provides one example of the post-apartheid narrative terrain that conscripts negotiate, accounting for their role in the system of apartheid when they were young leads conscripts to take up many different positions. Ward, for instance, draws on his years of anti-apartheid activism in refusing to apologise for being a white South African. In describing his narrations of identity in post-apartheid South Africa he is critical of other

⁷⁷⁰ Interview with "Billy", East London, 9 October 2010

white South Africans for apologising for their role in apartheid. Instead, Ward constructs an act of narrative repair that seeks to position itself outside politicised memory fields by invoking a humanist construction of his experiences:

So I don't buy into this thing of, well you privileged people you know, you're responsible for apartheid and you're also now responsible for our not getting it together because you're part of the apartheid system. Well, I never was part of the apartheid system. I fought tooth and nail against it. So I know that many of my kith and kin who have written apologies and apologised for being white. Apologised. I don't apologise. I'm not a part, you know...I don't in my own life...I haven't done anything that I feel I need to apologise for, but I do understand where that sort of position is coming from. But to feel guilty by association doesn't help anybody. And it's part of the TRC and it's part of our own reconciliation. And sure, I have to acknowledge that I benefited from apartheid by going to a reasonably good school, and I got quite damaged in that school, as many of us did. So, it's not a one and one equals two kind of scenario. And many of us who were privileged and white, are also victims of history. We are all victims of history. So I have a much wider lens on this sort of stuff. And the resolution is not to ask for forgiveness because of the colour of your skin, or initially to feel guilty. That's not a resolution for me. I think we can do much better spiritually and you know, we really have to learn that and revitalise those values that not just represent non-racialism, but represent humanism.

Ward's statements reveal some of the complexity of negotiating contextual and political subject positions with regard to individual subjectivities. Accounting for the events of his own life in the context of the interview with me, he constructed his identity around discursive resources of pain, guilt and victimhood. He drew on these constructions in engaging in narrative repair that diminished the temporal threads of whiteness and impunity, and depoliticised his position within post-apartheid South African society. This is a complex negotiation, because this subject position of victimhood is possibly a partial reference to Ward's Jewish ancestry rather than his whiteness as a South African. Thus invocations of histories of trauma and victimhood are complex in themselves, and are subject to contestation and shift in the light of contrasting and possibly conflicting temporal threads within narrations of identity.

For many conscripts, post-apartheid negotiations of temporal threads relating to impunity require managing a sense of nostalgia for the pleasurable aspects of their military service

with a new awareness of the voices and perspectives of racialised others. Michael is a school teacher who served in the State President's Guard during F.W. De Klerk's Presidency while he was a conscript, and is very sensitive about how he positions his accounts of his whiteness and his time as a conscript in the SADF:

I teach at a school that's 40% black, so you have to be careful about how you talk about these things. You can't be too nostalgic. You have to be realistic and acknowledge... Once I hung a picture in my office in Joburg. It was a big office, shared space, and there was a picture of us sitting with F.W. de Klerk. ... And I had a black guy come to me, a guy I got on very well with. A good friend of mine. And he said to me "Ja, you apartheid foot soldier. You must take that down." And I accept that. So, I realise that my own nostalgia from 1989 and 1990 is very different to a young black boy. ... In fact I'm probably overly sensitive about ... I do have these guilt issues. I'm very sensitive not to celebrate. If I'm going to give my own talk about what it was like to be a national serviceman ... I do go out of my way not to say "Gee guys, it was a great adventure and we had a lot of fun."⁷⁷¹

Michael's negotiations of post-apartheid contestations relating to his experiences of conscription require balancing his public narrations of his history and identity with a private, more cautious, sense of nostalgia about his time in the State President's Guard. This highlights how the space and relationship within which conscripts are speaking plays a role in how narrative repair or narrative reinforcement are constructed. Michael's sensitivity and feelings of guilt about the way he presents himself to black colleagues or students is, to some extent, particular to those spaces and relationships. Once in the company of other conscripts, the "great adventure" and "fun" of his experiences would more than likely assume greater prominence. While these particular sensitivities and negotiations of space and relationship are specific to Michael, when his statements are analysed as a cultural text they highlight the ways in which these negotiations are characteristic of most conscripts' narrative adaptations from one space and relational context to another.

A contrasting negotiation of the post-apartheid discursive resource of whiteness is Dr M's story. His negotiation of post-apartheid narrative terrains has led to him challenging the impunity with which the apartheid system instituted racial segregation, and choosing to

⁷⁷¹ Interview with "Michael", Pietermaritzburg, 23 July 2010

adopt an apologetic subject position in reflecting on his role in this system as a medical doctor:

I went so far as to draft a personal apology for being complicit in apartheid. A personal apology for ever thinking it was normal that you had a hospital for black people only. For in any way complying with that system.⁷⁷²

While Dr M.'s statement is particular to his context and profession, when viewed as a cultural text the narrative repair at work in his statement is indicative of the repudiations of temporal threads of impunity that other conscripts have sought to negotiate and articulate in different ways. The final section of this chapter will explore this aspect of narrative repair further.

Each of the excerpts from interviews with research participants that have been cited above allude to the complexities for conscripts of narrating apartheid era racial identities in the post-apartheid context. As will be discussed in the next section, the narrative terrain regarding the discursive resource of masculinities is equally complex.

Negotiating Masculinities

Since the advent of colonialism in South Africa, white men have been negotiating the relationships between militarised masculinities and impunity in narrating their identities. These negotiations have been passed down from one generation to the next over centuries. It is inevitable, therefore, that conscripts negotiate historical constructs of masculinity, as well as the constructions of masculinity that the SADF invoked, in narrating the legacies of conscription.

Michael references this history in the following description of the links between previous generations of his family and his personal aspirations as a man:

⁷⁷² Interview with Dr M., Missing Voices Archive, Wits Historical Papers

From a very young age I had a great interest in military history. Both my grandfathers had been officers in the South African army in World War II. And the books that he encouraged me to read, which I absolutely love to this day, are books on military themes. They celebrate the heroism of Rorke's Drift, fighting on the North-western Frontier in India, that sort of stuff. So it was quite easy for me to buy into the idea of courage being the warrior type person. So I think it made me very susceptible when I got to 18 or 19 and issues like, are you going to go to university or are you going to go to the army? It was quite easy for me to say well, this is what I've read about since I was 12. I am going to give it a try myself.⁷⁷³

Michael's subject position as representing the next generation in a line of soldiers and "warriors" in his family is not unique. As was discussed in Chapters One and Two, connotations of masculinities, militarism and duty have been significant discursive resources for white men in much of South African history. The identity "trouble" that Michael's childhood heroic aspirations have led to are due to the political and moral contestations regarding his role in the apartheid-era military, and the very different memory fields that define narrations of his generation's army life compared to the memory fields of his grandfathers' generation.

The discursive resources of masculinity that emerge in conscripts' accounts of their experiences are about more than only the military, however. Negotiations of constructions of masculine power were also an important element of how masculinities were constructed during the apartheid era. Kevin represents an example of the more complex and sometimes contradictory negotiations of narrating masculinities. He described in some detail the violence that was inherent in both the schooling of his time and his military training as a conscript:

I mean, I had even been through school and got hidings from teachers and been smacked with lanyards and things like that, so even schooling, again, with the benefit of hindsight, undermined one's sense of privacy and the sacredness of the body. And you realise that your body is available for abuse, you know. That anybody can step up and abuse you anytime they want to. Because they're in authority, either in school or in the military. This is the way we were brought up as men, or boys, or whatever in apartheid South Africa. We were brutalised from day one. Ja, so we were particularly brutalised as kids and then this was like another stage in that

⁷⁷³ Interview with "Michael", Pietermaritzburg, 23 July 2010

process of brutalisation. Of realising that the human body is not sacrosanct, it can be abused anytime anybody wants to, with any weapon they want to, with any length of time they want to....⁷⁷⁴

He went on to describe how he understood the masculine power that informed his narrations of his upbringing:

Well firstly it's about being ascendant. It's about being on top. You know, the image of being on top is so powerful because it has so many resonances. So to be on top means you're number one. Being number one, there's no challenges, you're always obeyed and that if you're not obeyed violence will certainly follow...and it's done with muscularity, you know. It's done with vigour, and it's done with arrogance, and it's done with control. I mean there're so many...there are so many, like, sub-themes. But the essence of it is that we're number one, and all others, women and children, and other races and nations and classes will always be subservient to our authority, and we're used to that and we don't brook any challenges to that....

Later in the interview, there was a moment of signification and narrative reinforcement regarding the ways in which Kevin has interpreted these identity constructs in his own life. In accounting for experiences of severe trauma and violence, Kevin gave the following outline of the ways he reinforces temporal threads of impunity in perpetuating masculine power in his personal relationships:

You become the perpetrator. You take on the identity of the perpetrator, that's what I do. It's like being a scapegoat. I proclaim my madness. I proclaim my violence. I proclaim my domestic abuse. I proclaim everything that's bad.⁷⁷⁵

Kevin's personal story is very much at work in this excerpt from the interview we conducted. However, his allusion to the links between masculinity, impunity and domestic violence is an aspect of the legacies of conscription that was often alluded to by other research participants, but seldom directly discussed. What the majority of interviews that touched on the issue of negotiating masculinities pointed to was the process that any soldier needs to engage in when leaving the military and re-engaging in civilian life. This is a process of deconstructing the military's heteronormative and hyper-masculine "othering" of the

⁷⁷⁴ Interview with "Kevin", Plettenberg Bay, 31 March 2010

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid.

feminine, emotions and intimacy in order to engage in a process of narrative repair that enables the kinds of relationships a person desires.

The discursive resource of masculinities is an aspect of the narrative terrain that conscripts have negotiated which has been characterised more by silence than detailed articulations. This could be due to the prominence of racial constructs of identity due to the politicisation of race over gender in the South African context. It could also be because of the ways in which constructions of masculinities, particularly in their heteronormativity, are not consciously interrogated because of how socially entrenched they continue to be. It might well be that family members and intimate partners of conscripts can shed more light on the complexities of these negotiations that conscripts are able to themselves. It is certainly a dimension to the legacies of conscription that requires further investigation.

Negotiating Perceptions of Threat

One of the significant shifts that has taken place in the course of the political transition in South Africa is that the post-apartheid government comprises the very individuals and political entities that the SADF and apartheid government proclaimed to be white South Africa's enemies. These shifts have necessitated significant negotiations of narrative "trouble" in the midst of confusing and contradictory social and political contextual dynamics in the post-apartheid era for conscripts.

However, there was a narrative pattern regarding perceptions of threat that surfaced in many interviews which showed a particular and common reconfiguration of this discursive resource. The most common feature of this reconfiguration is that the space needing protection has shifted from what was described during the apartheid era as "the country" to being constructed as the home and the family.

The first hint of this in my research journey came in an interview with Harold. When I asked him what white South Africans have been doing since 1994, he jokingly replied “building indoor braais”.⁷⁷⁶ His remark has proven telling, because it hints at the ways in which perceptions of safety have been constructed and renegotiated as perceptions of threat have shifted over time in the narrative terrain of post-apartheid South Africa. In losing control and dominance of political and social domains, and in the face of growing crime that targets middle class homes, there is a sense that many white families have come to see their family relationships and homes as safe spaces that need to be protected from the perceived threat of violent intrusion and attack. The attackers are almost universally assumed to be black, although this is seldom overtly stated.

The indoor braai that Harold alluded to symbolises the discursive *laager* within which conversations about the past and the present can take place without the need for cautious negotiations of perceived political correctness, particularly with regard to race and political power. For some conscripts and their social networks, this *laager* represents an enclosed, uninterrupted “safe” space that is not contested or intruded on by the complexities of negotiating the narrative terrain of the “new” South Africa.

Larry’s description of his negotiation of perceptions of threat is noteworthy because of the way in which racial identity constructs infuse his account, but are seldom directly articulated:

Look, the one area of polarisation for men, and I probably share it, is protecting yourself and your family from an intruder. Crime. You know, the thought of some skollie dude who’s had an appalling life, who has become violent and will just take you out on opportunity and they break in. There is cause to fight. If you don’t fight you’re going to die. You think about these things at Fish River, the Fairheads, you know. Awful. It’s where all the bad stuff just comes clumping together in a violent explosion, so it is there and there is that tension. So all these men will talk about having their fears of having to fend off an intruder. So there is a question of polarisation. Except of course if you say that these people are living in the township, other people are there, they are preying on people everywhere. You could de-

⁷⁷⁶ Interview with “Harold”, Port Elizabeth, 8 September 2010

racialise it and show that it's more a class issue. So there is an ongoing thing about men arming themselves.⁷⁷⁷

Larry's narrative negotiation of perceptions of threat, race and class are indicative of a process of narrative repair. This narrative repair primary revolves around trying to articulate some of the complexities of class, race and geography that affect daily life in post-apartheid South Africa. However, narrative negotiations such as these are often overwhelmed by a pervasive phenomenology of unease and vulnerability.

Billy draws on this sense of vulnerability and unease that surfaces in many conscripts' narrations by focusing on his role regarding the safety of his family in public spaces:

But I am very short-fused when I think my safety is going to be compromised – the safety of my family and my own safety. I am probably disproportionately short-fused on that topic. If you come to my house and it is not necessary to have come to my house I'm going to ask you what you want and I'm also going to make sure you leave – unambiguously, as the family has told me. I have never resorted to any racial attack on anybody, but I have been very unambiguous that the person should leave. That's one trait that I have. If I think my family is going to be jeopardised I get away, take the family off the beach or off the esplanade or something like that. If you go up to Durban and you're on those esplanades and things and you see certain things getting out of hand, crowds not looking safe to be there, get away. Get away. I've never resorted to carrying a firearm post-national service. That's not me. I have a rifle I won as a schoolboy from a shooting competition from school days that I use when I go shooting springbok. But I've never walked in public with a firearm under my hip or something like that.⁷⁷⁸

Billy's reflections on the options available to him when he perceives his family to be vulnerable or under threat are indicative of the complexities of deconstructing temporal threads of violence and impunity in the post-apartheid context. When in a situation such as the one he describes on the Durban esplanade, Billy is negotiating several issues. Firstly, there are the narrative negotiations that arise from the physical reality of being confronted and surrounded by historically "othered" black people in a situation that feels like it is "getting out of hand." Secondly, there are the negotiations around his subject position and

⁷⁷⁷ Interview with "Larry", Grahamstown, 6 September 2010

⁷⁷⁸ Interview with "Billy", East London, 9 October 2010

response as a man when he sees his role as being to protect his wife and children. The third is the negotiations around the appropriate actions to take in the midst of his perceptions of a threat and the consequent perceived need to protect his family and himself. In similar vein to his responses in the corporate environment, Billy's personal preferred option is to withdraw. He does, however, allude to the other option of carrying a gun and using the threat of violence that a firearm on a man's hip signifies. Again, these particular negotiations and choices are particular to Billy's story. When viewed as a cultural text, this story becomes a map of how perceptions of threat operate in the post-apartheid narrative terrain which conscripts negotiate and respond to in different ways.

Perceptions of threat might have shifted in terms of how this discursive resource manifests in conscripts' narrations of their current identities, but they remain a significant feature in how conscripts position themselves in current South African society.

Up to this point, the focus of this chapter has been on post-apartheid narrative reinforcements and narrative repair in relation to discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat that are evident in conscripts' personal accounts of the legacies of conscription. The following section of this chapter will explore narrative reinforcement and narrative repair in constructions of knowledge in some conscripts' representations of history.

Negotiating Memory Fields and Knowledge

An aspect of the "self-referentiality" that Patricia Hayes⁷⁷⁹ has referred to in conscript's accounts of their experiences is the way in which these accounts, drawing on the power of experience, are narrated with what I have called an impunity of knowledge.

⁷⁷⁹ Liebenberg, J. and Hayes, P. *Bush of Ghosts: Life and War in Namibia 1986-90* (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2010), p.11

This narrative pattern has emerged in various ways in the course of this research. The first is the way in which many conscripts have claimed to know “exactly” what happened in the Border Wars. Often, a preamble of this nature is a preface to an account of the war that is structured around that conscript’s subjective experiences. It is a form of narrative reinforcement premised on a privileging of their own experience and beliefs at the expense of the perspectives of others who were possibly on the other side of the war, and it often ignores historical facts. This strategy is, paradoxically, also a form of narrative repair in that it seeks to construct a memory field specific to that conscript’s period and context of national service, possibly because this affirms the phenomenological intensity of their experiences.

What these narrations ignore is the fact that there were several phases to conscription, with significant shifts in how conscripts were deployed and what experiences they had as a result.⁷⁸⁰ It also ignores the fact that the people who lived in the places they were deployed in and the enemy combatants against whom they fought would have very different interpretations and ways of describing what happened. The result of this way of narrating experiences is that it comprises an attempt to draw on, buttress and reinforce the hierarchical identity constructs which informed conscripts’ identities during the apartheid regime.

Another example of the ways in which this impunity of knowledge is perpetuated can be seen in the way some conscripts construct their perceived enemy. David provided the following account of how he saw Cold War dynamics at work in both the Border Wars and other global conflicts:

The communists are masters at propaganda. And they will even use it, as like the Vietnam War, to try turn it against the country that is fighting them. It’s a weapon they use. They used it in South Africa. They used it in every war they fought in Africa. The Russians have probably never fought a war. They fight everything by proxy. So the forces that fight are little black people from Northern Angola, fighting against some Imperialist white organisation in South Africa. ... Just go through the history of

⁷⁸⁰ See Chapter One for more detail on the sub-generations of conscripts that I have identified and how their experiences would have differed over time.

Africa. And every country was a proxy war. Cold War. East against West, boy. America against... and not one of their troops stood on the ground and shot bullets. Except that eventually the Russians did get to Angola. But that is the nature of how things were done. ... And I think that anybody that thinks we were fighting apartheid, (they) were influenced or were won over by the propaganda of the Russians or of the communists. They did not want that to be advertised. They would prefer for the race to advertised. And the guilt trips that they send everybody else down were... they weren't saying 'come and fight us we are going to take over South Africa.'⁷⁸¹

David's statements are problematic at a number of levels, and riddled with generalisations. Firstly, there is no clear definition of who the "communists" are that he is referring to. Secondly, his historical knowledge of Russian military history is limited and incorrect – they certainly have fought in wars over centuries. Thirdly, the subject positioning of African people alongside whom Russian and Cuban forces fought as "little" is intended to diminish the role of the African military structures which, after all, were the victors in the Border Wars. Lastly, his claims about who was fighting for and against apartheid are, at best, confused. His accounts of the Border Wars and the SADF are constructed as a form of counter-attack to the perceived threat of post-apartheid subject positions which undermine or negate the memory fields that construct SADF conscripts as heroic rather than "socialised" warriors.⁷⁸²

This same construction of impunities of knowledge is also invoked by conscripts in relation to post-apartheid South Africa. Many research participants made reference to infrastructure such as roads and electricity not functioning in ways they remembered from the apartheid era, with the implication that they knew how to run and maintain this infrastructure better than the black people who were in positions of political and civil power. Many predicted a dire future for South Africa, with the implied reason for this being that whites (particularly white men) had superior knowledge and skills to black people. In similar vein to Lance's description below, the majority of conscripts demonstrated the same anomie that Manganyi has identified in the course of these accounts; a sense that the order within which they had grown up had been disrupted in ways that also disrupted a sense of loyalty, attachment or

⁷⁸¹ Interview with "David", Johannesburg, 3 November 2010

⁷⁸² See Chapter Six for further discussion about the notions of heroes and socialised warriors.

belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Lance illustrates this pattern within conscripts' narrative with the following description of his thoughts and reactions to an electrical supply planning meeting he attended:

We had a meeting the other day ... and all the (white) guys over 50 were there. And I just sat and I looked at these guys and I thought in ten years' time... it's nag.⁷⁸³ Not even ten years' time. Ja, I don't know what the answer is but anyway. Fortunately I don't have to worry about it. I've just got to hang around there for a few more years.... You know if you grew up in a time when everything worked. And now things don't work anymore. It's very frustrating.⁷⁸⁴

The logic behind the narrative pattern that this interview excerpt highlights is one in which discursive resources of whiteness and masculinities are constructed using the same hierarchies of identity that the apartheid state drew on in implementing its ideologies. However, in this instance, they are applied to post-apartheid contexts in reformulated language. These forms of narrative reinforcement seek to disrupt post-apartheid memory fields by attempting to reinstate historical memory fields and constructions of identities. In doing so, they perpetuate historical threads of impunity that can be traced back through the apartheid era and colonialism.

The narrative reinforcement of discursive *laagers* that has been described above is one narrative-discursive pattern that has been identified in conscripts' post-apartheid narrations of their experiences. Another pattern consists of acts of narrative repair that have enabled shifts in the narrative terrains that particular conscripts negotiate. These will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

⁷⁸³ "Nag" is the Afrikaans word for night or darkness. The implication of Lance's remark is that the country will not have electricity once the old white men are no longer there to ensure that the system works.

⁷⁸⁴ Interview with "Lance", East London, 9 October 2010

Shifting the Narrative Terrain

This final section of this chapter will discuss the narrative patterns that occur when conscripts engage in narratives of repair that redefine the way they relate to temporal threads of identity and the narrative terrain which they negotiate.

The first example of this form of narrative repair emerged in an interview I did with Brian. In the first part of the interview he described a traumatic experience he had when he was a conscript. While serving on a camp, he was part of a police patrol in a black township when he witnessed an act of brutality in which a man died as a result of his head being smashed against the wall by police. Brian's narration to me, decades after the event, had a sense of resilience and narrative coherence that had probably emerged over a number of years. One can only imagine the narrative wreckage that witnessing this traumatic incident catalysed for him at the time. Here is his account of what took place:

All we are really going to go and do now is harass people, and that essentially what we did. And I remember the one house we went into they, um ... they found a dagga pip in one of these things and they ended up smashing this guy's head against the wall. (period of silence) And that to me was more of a defining moment than anything. I think that was what really hit things home to me. And that was one example of about ten or fifteen things that night... Ja, I think that's what really, really changed my life the most.... That what I'd been brought up to fight for and believe was entirely wrong. And that we'd been very carefully misled to believe certain things, when there were people who were just like my folks or us sitting at home doing absolutely nothing and a guy got his head smashed in for the sake of three dagga pips that were found in an ashtray. Ja, think that was it, hey.... Didn't result in any kind of trauma for me, but for the fact that I kept it all inside. But it certainly changed my perspective on life in a huge way. So I view it, and I've always used it, as a growth experience rather than a traumatic experience. It put me in a position where I felt extremely justified in what I later went on to do.⁷⁸⁵

Later in the interview, Brian described how his horror and moral injury in that moment of witnessing (and colluding with) a white policeman's fatal assault on a black man was a catalyst for him in embarking on a path of moral and narrative repair. The shame he felt at

⁷⁸⁵ Interview with "Brian", Pietermaritzburg, 21 August 2010

being complicit in an act of violent impunity in someone's home resulted in him deciding to engage in a process of moral repair that expressed itself through him becoming a leader in the racial transformation of sport. This required him shifting outside of the social identity constructs that defined him as a white male schoolteacher, and redefining his path through the narrative terrain of his context by working alongside black people in areas that the apartheid state had designated for black people. The satisfaction this form of narrative repair brought him resulted in him becoming involved in other work that redefined the narrative terrain of his career and the values that informed his narrations of identity:

I became very involved in the unity and transformation work in cricket and my nickname amongst the guys was *kaffirboetie*⁷⁸⁶ because here I was, this white guy, going in and trying to bring Indian and black cricketers into the system. And they weren't happy with that at all. ... You were always referred to as the *bleddy soutie*,⁷⁸⁷ you know, that's the way that you were viewed. But really it was more banter than anything else. The fact that I had become involved in a process of inclusion of the non-white cricketers, which I assisted, that became the issue more than the language. ... I went on to teach English to kids in the Durban City Hall and got involved with the cricket development. I coached for free at a Catholic school ... and so got far more involved. Now with our school now I'm involved with the outreach programmes.⁷⁸⁸

Another example of patterns of narrative repair that shift narrative terrain is David, who has undertaken two journeys back to the border of Namibia and Angola in the last few years, with the intention of planting crosses at old SADF military bases in memory of those who had died. His initiative had the effect of disrupting the impunity with which the SADF deployed conscripts in situations of combat, and then did not support families or comrades when there were fatalities. David's actions were also a disruption of the constructions of silence about the personal cost of the Border Wars for soldiers who died and those who were left with burdens of grief to bear.

⁷⁸⁶ This is a derogatory term for a white person who is perceived to be associating too closely with black people. The literal translation is "kaffir's little brother".

⁷⁸⁷ This is a derogatory term for an English person. It is an allusion to the fact that the person has one foot in Africa while the other is in Britain, meaning his genitals hang in the salty ocean. (The Afrikaans word for salt is *sout*.)

⁷⁸⁸ Interview with "Brian", Pietermaritzburg, 21 August 2010

David's description of going to old SADF military bases provides some insight into the narrative renegotiations that he and his travel companions needed to engage in as their physical journey of revisiting Namibia and Angola unfolded. It is unclear whether they had assumed beforehand that they would be allowed access to SADF bases that were now occupied by Namibians and Angolans. Whatever their planning and preparation had been, it seems they did not consider the fact that these bases now belonged to Namibia and Angola. This meant that people who were their enemies during the Border Wars, and would probably have regarded ex-SADF members as a threat to their safety, would be living and working there. The following account of trying to gain access to old SADF bases to plant their crosses provides some insight into the legacies of the SADF's impunity in appropriating and occupying these pieces of land during the Border Wars. The subject positions and identity constructions for conscripts that this system gave rise to resulted in complex negotiations of identities, power and subject positions for David and his travel companions when they revisited these spaces:

The plan there was to visit every... single SADF base that we occupied in Namibia and we did that. So I got my dad to make seventeen, twenty five crosses, and basically all it says on there is 'The going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember you. 2009.' Because we didn't want any political connotations. We didn't want any... Because we are going to plant these things. People must allow us into their base that they like. Just visiting each base. Some we were allowed freely. Some people chased us out of.

Really? Local people?

Ja. They are sensitive. They like to... the culture of the people is that they want you to ask them if you can come in to a base and sometimes the people don't have the authority. So you try and convince them and then they let you see. Others will say, look, no pictures. Others will say listen I need to find my boss. Some will say, I just phoned my boss and listen, he says it's not a good idea. But anyway, doing what we did this year, I would say I would recommend someone else a different way to do it. But we got into most bases. Those that weren't occupied by the military, their present military. Or police. Anyway, we planted a cross. The reason was that every base would get a cross. Some bases would mean things to us because we lost people at those bases or I rescued people out of a plane crash and their bodies were there. So that if we ever converted it into writing, we would be able to tell the parents that there was a cross laid there and that we didn't forget these people. So, that was the mission.⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸⁹ Interview with "David", Johannesburg, 3 November 2010

David's intended act of narrative repair in placing crosses at bases in Namibia and Angola was not a straightforward process. From the way he described his trip in our interview, it would seem much of the narrative "trouble" he encountered was a result of assumptions about perpetuating temporal threads in narrations of identity, place and impunity. His descriptions of the group's encounters with people living at old SADF military bases indicate that the narrative "trouble" arose out of disruptions of the identity narratives he had constructed in making the crosses and undertaking the trip. When viewed as a cultural text, David's account provides some insight into the complexity of deconstructing historical identities and understanding a narrative terrain that disrupts the discursive *laagers* of the past.

A recent example of how two conscripts have disrupted historical impunities of knowledge about the Border Wars is John Liebenberg and Christo Doherty's photographic exhibition *Mekhonjo! Born in the struggle for Namibia*.⁷⁹⁰ Both men were conscripts in their youth. For this and other reasons, they decided to travel back to Namibia in 2013 to gather photographs and personal accounts of people who had been involved in SWAPO. Liebenberg had known and photographed many of these SWAPO members when he was a photographer for *The Namibian* newspaper in the 1980s. Portraits of these SWAPO members and excerpts from their personal descriptions of the war and its legacies were exhibited at the 2013 South African National Arts Festival. Part of Liebenberg and Doherty's intention in putting together this exhibition was to disrupt the impunities of knowledge that characterised most white South African's accounts and interpretations of the Border Wars. Two Namibians attended the exhibition in Grahamstown and participated in various public events in the following week. The exhibition and the interactions between ex-SWAPO and ex-SADF that followed provided an indication of the narrative repair, moral repair and shifts in narrative terrain that become possible when ex-enemies work together to construct a sense of the broader narrative terrain that their particular stories formed part of. This is an issue that will be discussed further in the Conclusion.

⁷⁹⁰ See www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/show/mekhonjo-born-in-the-struggle-for-namibia/ and <http://legaciesofapartheidwarsproject.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/cue-article.pdf> for more information. (accessed on 1 August 2013).

The final example of narrative repair that plays a role in shifting the narrative terrain in which identities are narrated is Paul Morris's accounts of his 2012 bicycle trip through the battle sites of Angola. As was discussed in Chapter Five, Paul Morris has written about his 2012 solitary bicycle trip through Angola on his blog⁷⁹¹ and in his recently published book.⁷⁹²

There are key moments in Morris's book where he not only disrupted impunities through shifting the power dynamics in relationships. He redefined how relationships between him and ex-enemies have been historically constructed by foregoing the various sources of financial, political and historical power that he could have accessed. Instead, he placed himself in the hands and at the mercy of people that would have been his adversaries in the past. He got a lift to Angola with an ex-MK soldier in an old Land Rover. On their first night in Angola, at Cuito Cuanavale, he met and embraced a Cuban soldier who also fought in the famous battle which took place in that area in the late 1980s. Morris then cycled through the battlefields of Angola. In doing so, he constructed his presence in historical spaces of war as being solitary, rather than travelling with others who had been part of the SADF. He was also undefended from weather, environmental hazards and people who might respond aggressively to his presence. This was in stark contrast to his last visit to those places, which was in a military tank from which mortars were fired. His trip culminated at the 61 Mechanised Battalion Division's old Namibian base near Oshivello that had been the starting point of his role in the Border Wars. Morris constructed his trip as an act of moral and narrative repair through reconstructing his identity in relation to places, people and the landscape.

Key to this process of moral and narrative repair were a series of meetings that fundamentally shifted the dehumanising constructs that had shaped his and others' identities in the past, and a construction of alternative narratives of shared experience and connection.

⁷⁹¹ See www.angolajourney.blogspot.com for more detail.

⁷⁹² Morris, P. *Back to Angola: A Journey from War to Peace* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2014)

Morris's description of his first meeting with a Cuban soldier at Cuito Cuanvale gives some sense of how these shifts took place:

Taking the plunge happens in slow motion. I say '*África do Sul*', point to myself and then mime the action of firing a rifle. Roberto is working hard to understand but I don't think he's sure of what I'm trying to tell him. I write '1987' in the sand. Below it I write yesterday's date. I then put a '1' next to '1987' and, through signs and mime and scraps of words, convey that that was the first time I was here as a soldier. Alongside yesterday's date I write the number '2'. I circle it and look at Roberto. He gets it. His eyes are wide. He nods slowly. I can see that he knows the importance of my being here. Placing both hands on my heart, I exhale, trying to convey the depth of emotion I've felt arriving back in Cuito. Again, he nods, and this time closes his eyes for a second. I show him where my tears have run, tracking their course with two fingers down my cheeks. But already he understands; I can see it in his eyes. He was here too; he lost friends on this battlefield. And he has returned as a middle-aged man and felt the emotion of coming back to this place.

I want him to know the sentiments I have brought with me to this old war outpost. There is only one word that comes anywhere close, but it isn't the right one; it won't capture the subtleties of my feelings or the depth and breadth of my journey back to this place. But I say it anyway because it's the closest word I have: '*Desculpe*.' I'm sorry. The war was bad; my country shouldn't have been fighting here. Mostly I'm sorry for all the dying that was done here.

I'm not sure exactly how Roberto interprets this, but he shakes his head. '*Não, não*,' he responds, and goes on to say something in Spanish – or maybe it's Portuguese, I don't know – but of course I don't understand a word of it. The sentiment, I think, is that I need not apologise. And it doesn't matter now – I know this from the softness in his voice and his manner. He, like me, must have travelled a long path since the war and wrestled with demons of his own. Perhaps he too has moved beyond the battle lines drawn by our leaders into a place where human meetings are more important....

When eventually we decide to leave, Roberto walks over to say goodbye. He says something to me that I only half understand. I can make out the words '*hombre*' and '*guerre*' and know that he's saying these in relation to the two of us. We hold each other's gaze for longer than would be comfortable under other circumstances. But I do feel comfortable. Then he hugs me hard and long, and I reciprocate. It's a gesture that attempts to make up for the words we can't exchange. It's a hug loaded with all the feelings that we struggled to convey in our conversation. I'm silenced by the strength of my own emotions.⁷⁹³

⁷⁹³ Ibid. pp.46-48

While this description is particular to Morris and his experience of that meeting, when viewed as a cultural text it provides an indication of the potential for acts of narrative and moral repair to also redefine the narrative terrain of an individual's life. Key to this process of repair is shifting bonds of camaraderie beyond the boundaries of a soldier's own group or military structure to including others on other sides who were also part of the history and experiences of the war.

At the end of his trip, Morris writes the following reflection on what the journey meant for him:

Whereas the war fractured my fragile and barely formed sense of self, this journey has been deeply affirming. And my need for adventure on my own terms is only a small part of it. It has been a rich, multi-layered experience that has confirmed both my deeply held faith in human kindness and my conviction that we need to find non-violent ways to deal with difference and conflict. The relationships I've formed with the people I've met along the way have reinforced this: Patrick, Peter and Mary were my mortal enemies twenty-five years ago but have shown deep compassion, forgiveness and understanding; Benjamin and the old *soba* unquestioningly took me, a total stranger, into their homes; Gabriel and George kept in touch with me by phone to make sure I was safe; Rafael showed great generosity in hosting me in Cahama; and Joseph, Tobias and the young bare-legged boys on the road to Omuthiya graciously shared their fire with me. The most significant encounter of all, though, was my meeting with Roberto in Cuito Cuanavale. When my emotions were so churned up and I was feeling so vulnerable, Roberto looked deep into my eyes and could see it all. Without having to explain, I felt understood by this man who was once my adversary. We looked at each other and saw each other's humanity.⁷⁹⁴

Another significant factor in the kinds of moral and narrative repair that Morris and others have embarked on is that they usually consist of small, understated, humble gestures. While they might do little to shift broader social and political dynamics, they nevertheless act as important catalysts in shifting potentially dehumanising memory fields and silences that comprise the legacies of conscription into the SADF.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid. p.250

These shifting memory fields and paradoxical positionings are understandably confusing and fraught for many conscripts in the complex task they face of narrating the legacies of conscription. They go some way towards explaining the discursive *laagers* and silences that have characterised narrations about conscription. There are already significant personal challenges for conscripts who are still negotiating a fractured sense of self due to the nature of their experiences in the military, and possible trauma or moral injury that arose from that time. To then also be required to engage with a shifting socio-political context in which the perceived enemies of the SADF now hold power and are driving the construction of memory fields regarding conscripts' experiences in the military, has to be a daunting task. As has been acknowledged in Chapters Three and Six, retreating into a discursive *laager* that manifests as silence and/or defensive aggression at least provides a degree of narrative coherence in coping with circumstances that appear overwhelming. These responses speak to the anomie that Manganyi has referred to as being a consequence of socio-political shift and change. For many conscripts, this anomie arises out of the magnitude of the narrative and discursive shifts that they have been required to make. These have included negotiating the fractured narrative terrain of being both a soldier and civilian, as well as the renegotiations of contextual temporal threads.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the post-apartheid narrative terrain that conscripts negotiate in biographical talk relating to their experiences in the SADF and their current identities.

In outlining this narrative terrain, this discussion has focused on examples of narrative reinforcement and narrative repair in conscripts' negotiations of the shifts and transitions that have taken place in South Africa. While narrative repair can take a number of forms, this chapter argues that disrupting and transcending historical impunities and narrations of identity provides new narrative spaces within which old silences, constructions of dehumanisation and moral injury can shift.

The following chapter will focus on the possibilities and implications of moral and narrative repair enabling shifts in the narrative terrain that both conscripts and other Southern Africans of their generation negotiate.

CONCLUSION

RECONFIGURING THE NARRATIVE TERRAIN

Introduction

This conclusion provides an overview and summary of the research and the key themes and issues that it has highlighted, following which I will outline a series of recommendations arising from this research.

Overview and Summary of the Research

The 25-year period of compulsory conscription of all school-leaving white men during the apartheid era comprised both social and military systems through which the National Party implemented its “total strategy” in response to a perceived “total onslaught”.

During the time that military conscription was in place, conscripts were publicly proclaimed as heroes who were holding the perceived communist and African nationalist threats at bay. This social positioning of young white men within apartheid era society played a significant role in the identity constructs of all white South Africans. Personal relationships, schooling, family life, professional training, academic studies, life in the workplace and socio-political identities of all white South Africans necessarily involved negotiating their relationships with the system of conscription, and with men who had been conscripted.

For conscripts, being a white man who was groomed and propagandised from a young age to serve in the military, the arrival of their call-up papers was a moment of signification. Whether a young man chose to serve in the SADF or not had potentially profound implications both for them personally and for their relationships with others. For many, not serving in the military was not an option that they consciously considered – either because

of their personal values and beliefs, or because their family and community provided no language or social space for a consideration of these options. For those who chose not to serve in the military, there was a price to be paid. Prior to 1985, a conscript who chose not to obey their call-up either served a term in prison or went into exile. After 1985, a conscript could apply for the status of conscientious objector based in their religious pacifist beliefs. If this was approved, they were liable to be sentenced to up to six years of community service.

However a conscript's life path unfolded, the legacies of the choices they made regarding conscription would remain inscribed in their identities for the rest of their lives, both personally and politically. The personal and social consequences of the choices they made regarding conscription would shape the way they negotiated the contextual narrative terrain of both the apartheid and the post-apartheid eras.

The rest of South African society has shown limited and sporadic understanding of or regard for the effects and legacies of these choices in the lives of a generation of men. During the time that conscription was in place, this was a consequence of the ignorance and lack of access to information that characterised the apartheid era. A consequence of the post-1994 shift in political power was that conscripts were regularly constructed as collaborators with the apartheid era occupation of Namibia and oppression of black South African citizens. With a few exceptions (for example, the TRC Special Hearing on Conscription), these socio-political systems have had the effect of obscuring the complex personal legacies of conscripts' experiences. While the moral and political motivations of people who suffered at the hands of the apartheid state in constructing post-apartheid memory fields are understandable, the consequence of constructing public spaces which position conscripts as ineligible for commemoration in post-apartheid memory fields were not enabling of vulnerability or processes of personal healing and growth for either side of the debate. The effect of positioning conscripts in this way has, for the most part, led to a reinforcement of the discursive *laagers* that have characterised political debates and private conversations throughout both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

What becomes obscured in these dynamics is that men who have been conscripts are role-players and possibly leaders in every sector of society. Their presence and their narrations of their identities permeate every aspect of South African society. For example, the small number of participants in this research were teachers, researchers, spiritual or religious leaders, psychologists, medical doctors, business people, technicians, journalists and artists. Drawing such a diverse and influential group of people into national conversations and memory fields at a time when South Africa is grappling with how to come to terms with the racial, economic and social legacies of apartheid would seem to be more advantageous than otherwise.

These gaps in understanding and the silences regarding conscripts experiences that have characterised the shifting social systems of the last 50 years have been a day-to-day political, social and phenomenological reality for most conscripts and their personal networks. Silences of various kinds have therefore been significant in how conscripts have or have not been able to find conducive spaces to account for the legacies of their experiences in the SADF. This has frequently constrained the possibilities of coming to terms with temporal threads of impunity and the legacies of living through a period of history that was characterised by significant violence and the potential for trauma and moral injury – for conscripts and others.

The possibilities for narrative and moral repair in conscripts' own lives and in broader South African society are significantly influenced by the pervading social and psychological fractures and discursive *laagers* that have shaped both past and current public spaces and private narrations. These discursive *laagers* influence the nature of the memory fields within which narrations of the legacies of conscription take place.

In seeking to understand what the legacies of this system of conscription have been, this research has sought to understand the legacies of conscription for the men directly

involved, and to enable an act of witness of their experiences through communalising the legacies and trauma of this system.

As stated in the Introduction, the aims of this research have been:

- To investigate the extent to which conscripts' experiences have influenced their narratives of identity in post-apartheid South Africa, with particular attention paid to how conscripts have dealt with the multiple (possibly conflicting?) identities of being participants in the apartheid regime's "total strategy" and citizens in an emerging democracy in the post-1994 context.
- To explore the dialectics between conscripts' personal narrations and contextual dynamics in both the apartheid era and the post-apartheid eras.
- To explore the discursive resources, memory fields and temporal threads that have informed narrations of conscription and facilitated negotiations of post-apartheid narrative terrains.

In realising these aims, this research has used qualitative, narrative-based approaches to highlight the narrative-discursive patterns, memory fields and negotiations of narrative terrains at work in texts that focus on various aspects of conscription and its aftereffects.

As has been outlined in Chapters Six and Seven, the findings of this research are that conscripts' narrations of their identities have been significantly affected by the system of conscription. Both during the apartheid era and during the post-1994 period of transition to democracy, conscripts' identities have been narrated in relation to key contextual constructs or canonical narratives that are directly linked to identity constructs emerging out of their social positioning within the apartheid era military system. In the course of this research, I have identified whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat as discursive resources that every conscript negotiates in some way in narrating their identity.

These negotiations are complex, true of every conscript's experiences and, at the same time, unique to each conscript's own life story. Some narrations reinforce militarised and essentialised constructions of these discursive resources, while other conscript's narrations

are characterised by disruptions of the historical constructions of these discursive resources. However conscripts have chosen to narrate the legacies of their experiences, their negotiation of the narrative terrain regarding conscription has involved negotiating identity “trouble”. This has arisen out of a combination of factors, but primarily the fractured nature of any military-civilian identity and the complex contextual social and political dynamics within which their narrations of identity have unfolded. As this research has outlined, these contrasting and paradoxical contextual dynamics continue to influence, constrain, silence and enable conscripts’ narrations of their identities in different ways.

The passage of time has been significant in both personal and public narrations of the legacies of conscription. Accounting for the legacies of conscription requires explaining and describing memories of experiences from when conscripts were much younger than they are now, at a time when they were subjects of different social and political systems. Accounting for possible trauma and moral injury caused by conscripts’ experiences in the SADF, regardless of whether these experiences included combat or not, is a complex and challenging task. In addition to the complexities of the contextual changes they have experienced during their lifetimes, this is because conscripts currently live in a context that is both an emerging democracy and an increasingly polarised society with regard to race, gender and perceptions of threat. The impetus in charting a narrative journey is to enable a level of coherence in narrating identities. The reality is that conscripts’ narrations constantly stumble over the narrative “trouble” induced by the paradoxes and silences of their context.

Another key element of the narrative terrain which conscripts negotiate in accounting for the legacies of conscription is the temporal thread of a history characterised by impunity. In order to understand the complexities of the ways in which conscripts have been positioned as both victims and perpetrators within the apartheid system, it is necessary to trace and account for the temporal threads that have played a role in constructing these social and personal identities.

What the texts that have formed the basis of this research reveal is that there is growing momentum in the way conscripts are claiming old, new and emerging spaces for accounts of their experiences to keep developing and shifting. Increasingly, especially since the mid-2000s, there has been an indefatigability in the way conscripts and other members of society have created spaces and methods to communicate and address the legacies of conscription. In some cases, these efforts result in reinforcements of conscripts' perceived position of being marginalised, forgotten and under threat in post-apartheid South Africa. However, there are also examples of how the passage of time and the advent of democracy have catalysed innovations, narrative shifts and the inclusion of previously silenced voices in research, literary, artistic and cyber spaces. Conscripts are increasingly engaging in acts of narrative repair – rather than the previously prevalent patterns of narrative reinforcement which often included the buttressing of historical impunities.

These new shifts include:

Research

A key example of the shifts that have taken place in academic research would be Gary Baines' pioneering role in documenting aspects of the social history of conscription over the last decade. There are also increasingly sophisticated analyses of the history of the SADF, which provide a valuable counter to the ongoing reifications and justifications of their version of military history that ex-SADF leaders continue to produce. A small but significant element of the documentation of the history of conscription is research being done on acts of resistance and objection to conscription.

An emerging research trend is the way in which the children of conscripts and other ex-combatants of the apartheid era are engaging in research that provides a welcome and much-needed inter-generational lens in understanding the legacies of both conscription and other aspects of the apartheid wars. While much of this work is still in process, the results will be an important contribution to narrating the legacies of conscription.

Veterans' Support Groups

Increasingly in recent years, conscripts themselves have been shifting constraining memory fields and discursive *laagers* by creating spaces for dialogue, media events and lecture series. A significant and underrated development is also the establishment of support groups that enable conscripts and their families to begin a process of naming the trauma and moral injury that has affected their lives, and seeking ways to heal. In spite of the important differences between the contexts in which Vietnam veterans and SADF conscripts find themselves, there is much to be learned from what has been done by Vietnam veterans in finding conducive ways to heal from the trauma of war and be recognised by their community. However, the fact remains that only soldiers who have been part of the military system fully understand what other soldiers are dealing with. This understanding would seem to be key to the success of veterans support groups and should therefore be supported, with the provisos that talking “cures” are a complex phenomenon which sometimes inadvertently comprise narrative reinforcement rather than narrative and moral repair.

Innovative Approaches in Documenting Personal Narratives

The publication of conscripts' personal narratives is unquestionably the arena within which the most significant shifts have taken place in accounting for the legacies of conscription in post-apartheid South Africa. Clive Holt's book *At Thy Call*⁷⁹⁵ was a brave and important piece of work, articulating important insights into the levels of trauma that conscripts experienced, especially in combat. Since the advent of *An Unpopular War*⁷⁹⁶ and its massive success in the South African market, increasing numbers of conscripts have begun to put their stories into the public domain. While some tread very familiar narrative paths in

⁷⁹⁵ Holt, C. *At Thy Call we did not falter: a frontline account of the 1988 Angolan War, as seen through the eyes of a conscripted soldier* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005)

⁷⁹⁶ Thompson, J.H. *An Unpopular War: Van Afkak tot Bosbepok: Voices of South African National Servicemen* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006)

reinforcing the self-referentiality of the discursive *laagers* that have characterised the majority of narrations, recent works have played an important role in shifting this genre of South African literature and the narrative terrain which conscripts negotiate. Two key examples are Anthony Feinstein's *Battle Scarred*⁷⁹⁷ and Paul Morris's *Back to Angola*.⁷⁹⁸

Photography and film have also provided powerful media for exploring the legacies of conscription, although so far they have proven to be a less publicly acknowledged medium than published memoirs. Both these visual genres allow for a much-needed multiplicity of voices and an engagement with the complexities of personal and contextual dimensions to the legacies of conscription within the broader fields of exploring the legacies of the apartheid era wars.

The Way Forward: Reconfiguring the Narrative Terrain

While a significant part of this research has focused on the hindrances and constraints acting on conscripts' accounts of the legacies of their experiences, there have been important hints as to ways of engaging with the legacies of this history that facilitate and enable a reconfiguration of the narrative terrain that conscripts negotiate. This reconfiguration seems to be significant in shifting the discursive *laagers*, silences and memory fields characterised by alienation that still plays a significant role in defining conscripts' current narrative terrain.

Key to reconfiguring this narrative terrain is addressing the ways in which historical impunities continue to be – largely unconsciously – reinforced and perpetuated in the current South African context. The dismantling of political and economic power during a process of transition and democratisation cannot be fully achieved until there are parallel processes of dismantling social and psychological identity constructs that perpetuate the oppressions and impunities of the past. If Manganyi is correct in his assertion that the

⁷⁹⁷ Feinstein, A. *Battle Scarred: Hidden Costs of the Border War* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011)

⁷⁹⁸ Morris, P. *Back to Angola: A Journey from War to Peace* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2014)

psychology of societies in transition is inadequately understood then , as this research suggests, the effects of impunity need to be understood in relation to both the oppressor and the oppressed in order for social transition to avoid perpetuating historical patterns of violence, oppression and alienation.

I argue that shifting and reconfiguring the narrative terrain within which conscripts narrate their identities requires being vulnerable to those constructed as “other”, and not invoking historical constructions of the discursive resources of whiteness, masculinities and perceptions of threat as a way of creating what seem to be safe spaces and comfortable memory fields. This approach is no less complex than any other, and requires a willingness on the part of all concerned to renegotiate the narrative terrain of their relationships. However, as Paul Morris’s concluding remarks in his book describe, placing yourself at the mercy of someone who used to be an enemy can produce startling and life-changing results.⁷⁹⁹

An example of how safe spaces can be created for this reconfiguration of the narrative terrain that ex-enemies need to negotiate can be found in the *Journey through Conflict* work that has been developed in Northern Ireland by Wilhelm Verwoerd and Alistair Little.⁸⁰⁰ In dealing with the legacies of the Irish Troubles, this team comprising a South African and a facilitator from Northern Ireland, have drawn on group-work models developed in South Africa and elsewhere in creating a year-long narrative and wilderness-based programme. What is key to this programme is that any group they work with needs to be made up of ex-combatants who have fought in opposing groups, people who were the victims of the violence of the Troubles, and family members of people who died. This substantially shifts the narrative terrain within which people would usually have accounted for their experiences.

⁷⁹⁹ See Chapter Five for discussion about Paul Morris’s book, and his reflection on the effect of meeting ex-enemies.

⁸⁰⁰ Little, A. and Verwoerd, W. *Journey through Conflict Trail Guide: Introduction* (Bloomington: Trafford, 2013)

The composition of these groups alone therefore redefines the narrative terrain within which the legacies of the Troubles have thus far been narrated. Little and Verwoerd facilitate a process within which these groups are taken through a number of processes, including a period in the wilderness where they are dependent on each other to survive. While it is not appropriate to discuss this programme in further detail in the context of this research, the *Journey through Conflict* model provides some valuable clues about possible ways to go about reconfiguring the narrative terrain of a society in transition. It is for this reason that their unique approach is being highlighted in the closing sections of this thesis.

The first strategy worthy of note is inviting many voices that bring different perspectives and subject positions to bear on the history that is being narrated through group-work. In the case of SADF conscripts, this would require shifting beyond the self-referential discursive *laagers* that have characterised so many accounts, and listening to the stories of people who fought in SWAPO, MPLA, MK, APLA, as well as the Russian and Cuban forces against whom they fought. It would also require listening to the stories of the civilians who lived in southern Angola, northern Namibia and South Africa's townships during the apartheid era. And finally, it would require listening to the stories of families on all sides who lost those they love in the midst of the violence.

The second aspect of the *Journey through Conflict* model that warrants some attention in reflecting on the implications of this research is the methodology that is used. The use of stories as the starting point to a healing journey and time spent in the wilderness are central to the effectiveness of this model. Given the limitations of Western therapeutic models in providing a space that is conducive to healing for veterans of war, the idea of drawing on ancient story-telling models of dealing with trauma and placing them in a natural physical environment seem to be important factors to consider in enabling shifts in the narrative terrain of a post-conflict society. For conscripts in particular, it is likely that being in the bush would be a powerful reminder of their experiences of training and deployment, thus providing a space rich with associations, stories and identifications.

The final component to reconfiguring the narrative terrain within which the legacies of conscription are narrated that the *Journey through Conflict* model suggests would be for conscripts to reflect on their own experiences in the light of others' contrasting experiences. Given accounts from those conscripts, such as Feinstein and Morris, that have undertaken a reconfiguration of their narrative terrain in this way, it is very likely that seeing their story as a chapter in a much broader set of stories could shift the sense of anomie and isolation that characterises the post-apartheid narrative terrain. More research is needed in this regard; research that in itself shifts the narrative terrain of which it is a part by focusing on the legacies of the apartheid wars for a whole generation of Southern Africans rather than only certain members of that generation.

Concluding Remarks

As was indicated in the Introduction, the intention of this research has been to communalise understandings of the legacies and possible trauma of conscription for the men who were directly involved. I have seen my role as being that of an outside witness who can never understand what it was like to be conscripted or serve in the military, but who can formulate frameworks of understanding about the past, the present and the future. In doing so, I have seen this research as part of an ongoing series of conversations, and my role as being a synthesiser and percolator of ideas with a view to enabling greater recognition of the often unacknowledged complexities and courage of conscripts' lives.

My ultimate hope is that this research can contribute in some way to ongoing and future compassionate conversations both for conscripts and for others whose lives have been touched by the legacies of the apartheid wars.

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APPENDIX ONE: CONSENT FORM

RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENTS OF HISTORY & PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT

BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I (participant's name) _____ agree to participate in Phase One of the research project of Theresa Edlmann on the psychosocial impact of SADF conscripts' experiences.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Humanities degree at Rhodes University.
2. The researcher is interested in the links between conscripts' experiences of militarism, racism and possible trauma while in the SADF as well as the shifts or changes they have been through since the 1994 elections and emergence of the "new" South Africa.
3. My participation will involve my participating in an interview which may be recorded and/or completing submitting a written piece which is 4-10 pages long, in which I describe what happened to me in the SADF and the impact of those experiences on my life.
4. I am / am not willing for my story to be loaded onto the website developed for this research. (If you are willing, please complete section 4a.)
 - 4a. I would / would not like my own name to be used when my story is loaded onto the website.
If you would not like your own name to be used, please indicate the pseudonym you would like to be used on the website:

5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.

6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time - however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date):

Participant:

Researcher:

APPENDIX TWO: PERMISSION TO RECORD AN INTERVIEW

Rhodes University

<p>USE OF TAPE RECORDINGS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES</p> <p>—</p> <p>PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM</p>

<i>Participant name & contacts (address, phone etc)</i>	
<i>Name of researcher & level of research (Honours/Masters/PhD)</i>	
<i>Brief title of project</i>	
<i>Supervisor</i>	

Declaration		
<i>(Please initial/tick blocks next to the relevant statements)</i>		
1. <i>The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me</i>	verbally	
	in writing	
2. <i>I agree to be interviewed and to allow tape-recordings to be made of the interviews</i>	audiotape	
	videotape	
3. <i>I agree to take part in and to allow tape-recordings to be made.</i>	audiotape	
	videotape	
4. <i>The tape recordings may be transcribed</i>	without conditions	
	only by the researcher	
	by one or more nominated third parties:	

<p>5.1 I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the study is complete and the report has been written.</p>	
<p>5.2 OR I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to be utilised for the following purposes and under the following conditions:</p>	
Signatures	
<p><i>Signature of participant</i></p>	<p><i>Date</i></p>
<p><i>Witnessed by researcher</i></p>	