

Differences in discourses of Black and White gun owners as a function of socially constructed
identity

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Word count:

Abstract: 183

Main Body: 9988

ABSTRACT

Identities of Black and White gun owners represent a complex and often misunderstood interplay of various dynamics such as those relating to gender, race, age, political affiliation, nationality, notions of citizenship and ethnicity. The literal and symbolic power of a gun is invested with meaning, which may influence gun owner's attitudes toward firearms, firearm ownership and regulation aimed at curbing its proliferation. This could have been influencing their decision to comply with the various requirements of firearms control legislation. In order to improve relations between government and legal firearms owners, there needs to be a better understanding of the identity of firearm owners. Firearm control legislation needs to be formulated, and communicated to firearm owners, in a manner which is cognizant of the social identities which relate to their identity as firearm owners. Eight Black and eight White gun owners were invited to share and reflect on issues of identity as relating to firearm ownership. Their discourses may influence their attitudes to firearm legislation which, although aimed at reduction of firearms proliferation, may be perceived as changing or challenging their socially constructed identities.

Keywords: *Firearms; identity; power; Apartheid; attitudes; social construction*

Firearm related violence is one of the leading causes of injury and death in South Africa (Cukier & Sidel, 2006). In recognition of this fact, government has passed into law the Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000 (FCA) which aims to curb the proliferation of illegal firearms as well as lay the foundation for a gun free South Africa (Minnaar, 2006; Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2006). However, many firearm owners have expressed dismay at the requirements of the Act, which they view as overly restrictive (Hedington, personal communication, June 5, 2009; Kirsten, 2008) and even unconstitutional (Nortje, 2009). Some have threatened not to comply with its requirements (BGOASA website, 2009; Herrendorfer, 2004). This could increase tensions with government as a result of these gun owners being held criminally liable for their actions.

Attitudes influence our behaviour (Mynhardt, 2006) and their intensity is based, in part, on a socially constructed identity (Krosnick, 1988, as cited in Clarkson, Tormala, & Rucker, 2008). Understanding how the identity of South African gun owners is socially constructed, may give us insight into why they hold certain attitudes toward the FCA. This has important implications for improving communication between government and gun owners, as well as encouraging them to comply with the requirements of the FCA. In this regard, Minnaar (2006) views the FCA as effective, to the extent to which all the regulations are implemented and compliance is enforced.

SOCIAL FACTORS SHAPING GUN OWNERSHIP IDENTITY

The existing literature suggests that gun ownership is indeed a socially constructed identity and influenced by various factors, which I will explore. It should be remembered that these factors interact with each other (Cooke & Puddifoot, 2000), and provides a backdrop to our understanding of gun ownership identity.

Cultural and identity influences

Ross (1997) defines culture as having an aspect of self-consciousness and involves shared understanding by people who have a common identity, which marks them as a distinctive group in comparison to outsiders. It is often expressed through specific behaviours such as customs and rituals (Ross, 1997). Colonialism and Apartheid have ensured that race remains a proxy for different culture groups in South Africa. For example, broadly speaking Black South Africans subscribe to indigenous African cultural values, while White South Africans, broadly subscribe

to European cultural values. Apartheid has furthermore ensured that different cultural groupings have differing familiarity with firearms (Cock, 1997; Kirsten, 2008).

In a study by Cooke and Puddifoot (2000), in which National identity was used as a proxy for culture, it was found that attitudes toward firearms is influenced by cultural identity. Although cultural identity is subsumed by a broad range of beliefs and behaviours that one shares with the members of the community, this does not mean that all members of this community have the same beliefs and practices (Jensen, 2003). Identities are “neither fixed and essentialist, nor completely fluid and shifting, but rather socio-historically constructed in changing processes of social interactions” (Cock, 1997, p. 77). This however, does not imply that the construction of these identities is accidental (Burr, 2003). We are reminded by Swann, Gomez, Seyle, Morales and Huici (2009) that there exists a complex interplay between personal and social identities. They mention that personal identities refer to characteristics of the individual, while group identities concern the group with which individuals are associated. This may manifest in differences in discourse between Black and White gun owners, which could be a reflection of differences between Black and White South Africans.

Cock (1997) and Kirsten (2008) mention that as a result of the oppressive nature of Apartheid, the process of identity formation has been linked to violence, as both oppressor and oppressed legitimized violence for their own ends. She uses the example of the AK-47 assault rifle as a symbol of this violence and mentions that, “... during the Apartheid era, for many young Black South Africans, the AK-47 became a marker of group identity; a kind of code for asserting ones political allegiance that carried great significance for individuals” (Cock, 1997, p. 79). Arzul (1994) found that during the dying days of Apartheid, many White gun owners constructed their identity as being “allies of the military and police forces” (p. 48). Thus, their identity as firearm owners was bound up with their identity as citizens. In the same study, the influence of compulsory military service was seen as a contributing factor by respondents in their decision to purchase firearms once they returned to civilian life.

National identity and socially constructed demand for firearms

Cooke and Puddifoot (2000), showed that:

U.S. women were more likely to perceive guns as expressions of freedom or independence, and the U.K. women were more likely to view guns as expressions of violence. The findings were contextualized by comparison with samples of male participants of similar ages. (p. 423)

Their study indicates that different national identities associate firearms with different values. According to Cock (1997), Nationalism, as an ideology involves two claims: first, while people have different identities, the imagined political community of the nation provides a super-ordinate fixed and categorical form of belonging that supersedes other identities and second, violence is justified in defence of the nation against enemies. The experience of most White South Africans with respect to national identity has been influenced by Apartheid. Thus, their ownership of firearms could be viewed as a validation of their past national identity (De Greef, 2000).

With respect to a current national gun owning identity, Cock (1997) shows that since 1994 there has been an increase in firearms purchases by Black South Africans, which is a perverse indicator of changing power relations, as well as the rise of a new Black middle class. In this regard, the formation of the Black Gun owners Association of South Africa (BGOASA) was a watershed moment in the lives of Black gun owners, as they are claiming an identity as legal gun owners that have been denied to them before.

With respect to guns and gun violence, Cock (1997) recommends that we examine the diverse social practices built up around guns, which collectively constitute a 'gun culture'. A gun culture provides a demand for the possession of guns, which is socially constructed and mediated. It furthermore moulds attitudes toward firearm control legislation which may be perceived as threatening to the identity of 'adherents' of this culture. This socially constructed demand may be influenced by a socially constructed identity. For example, if an individual identifies himself as the protector of his family, which Burr (2003) views as a socially constructed role, then perhaps the demand for firearms is in part, a result of the need to fulfil the requirements of this role as protector.

Cock (1997, p. 78) also showed that "gun ownership as an identity, is often linked to issues of power, especially in post-Apartheid South Africa, where "a common theme articulated by informants who had purchased guns for self-protection was a sense of being powerless..."(Cock, 1997, p. 84). Thus, a desire for empowerment in the face of a disempowering high crime rate, would influence the demand for firearms. This, according to Beggan (1992), is as a result of people attributing to a possession, such as a gun, the ability to provide them with a characteristic which they believe they lack.

Kirsten (2008) mentions that during South Africa's transitional phase toward democracy, political violence was expanding to incorporate criminal violence. She suggests that guns, which were a symbol of Liberation for some individuals, now became a symbol of "wealth creation", while for others, the gun as a symbol of protection against politically motivated violence, now became a symbol of protection against criminals.

Masculine and ethnic identity

The demand for equality in all spheres of social life, has led to a re-construction of gender discourse in South African since 1994. This discourse challenges the accepted norms surrounding gender identity and roles of many cultural groups (Cock, 1997). It is also noted that "among diverse categories of men, there seems to be different versions of a 'crisis of masculinity', which reflects a social dislocation and confusion about their gender identity" (Cock, 1997, p. 85).

Feder, Levant, and Dean, (2007), indicate that the socialization of boys to conform to traditional norms of masculinity such as toughness, and aggression may heighten the potential for them to engage in violence and be drawn to guns. In this regard, Diener and Kerber (1979) suggest that the seeds of a gun ownership identity are formed in childhood. Gun culture, according to Cock (1997) constitutes various cultural understandings of masculinity and underscores qualities of aggression, toughness and strength. One of the prominent institutions in which masculinity was formed and linked to guns, was the army. The South African Defence Force (SADF), which used conscription, as well as *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, which was the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), moulded the attitudes of many young South African men. "Many young South Africans understand weaponry as emblematic of manliness; this militarized masculinity cuts across diverse cultures" (Cock, 1997, p. 86).

It was noted by Keegan (2005, p. 25) that "White South African gun owners ascribe to men the responsibility of physically protecting ones family and property". Furthermore, Keegan notes (2005, p. 25) that "African men's concerns overlap with their White compatriots...but they also introduce new concepts, particularly of power and dignity". Cooke and Puddifoot (2000) view gun ownership as supporting a particular image of functional masculinity-"one that may be diminished, even threatened, by the introduction of gun control" (p. 424).

According to Smedley (2005, p. 17), "ethnicity refers to clusters of people who have common culture traits that they distinguish from those of other people". Fifteen years after the

advent of democracy, for many South Africans, ethnic identity is a strong source of social cohesion and deep cleavages and ethnic antagonisms remain (Cock, 1997). Eugene Terre`Blanche, leader of an Afrikaner right-wing organization, has been quoted (Cock, 1997, p. 86) as saying that, “the Boer and his gun are inseparable”, while a leader in the Zulu community of South Africa has been quoted as saying, “the call to ban the bearing of weapons... is an insult to the manhood of every Zulu man” (p. 86). These statements serve to highlight a weapons ownership identity as being at an intersection of gender, ethnicity, and a socially meaningful interaction between an object and a person.

Apartheid has ensured that ethnicity and racial identity are still essentially inseparable. This enables a study of the differences in discourse between Black and White gun owners to be undertaken in such a way that Black gun owners can be expected to represent African culture, in all its broadness, while White gun owners largely represent English-speaking White cultural values or White Afrikaans-speaking cultural values.

Political and racial identities

The Liberation movement song *Lethu Mshini wham*, which translated means “bring me my machine gun” has been used by the president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, as a means to rally support against forces that he believes are reminiscent of oppression. This highlights how firearms “are invested with powerful social meanings and linked to contested social identities...” (Cock, 1997, p. 81).

During the early period of post-apartheid South Africa, various opposition political parties, whose constituencies were primarily White South Africans, expressed their opposition to draft legislation, which was aimed at preventing the proliferation of firearms. According to Kirsten (2008) when the draft Bill of the present FCA was put through parliament, one of the reasons that these political parties opposed the Bill was their inability to break with the past. In declaring the Democratic Party’s (DP) opposition, one of its members mentioned that the ANC “had struck at the very heart of established traditions and value systems within South Africa (Hansard, 1999, as cited in Kirsten, 2008, p. 160). Most of the supporters of the Bill, according to Kirsten (2008), were parties whose constituencies were primarily Black and were oppressed under Apartheid, often under the barrel of a gun. They were denied ownership of firearms for much of South Africa’s Colonial and Apartheid history. This, according to Cock (1997) and

Kirsten (2008), may have had an influence on their more negative attitude toward firearm ownership, compared to many White South African gun owners.

Political, ethnic and racial identities are closely connected with firearms and these identities have been a foundational concept in South African history. A survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC) in October 1999 (See Table 1) in which 2672 respondents were asked about their opinion and experiences of firearm use, found that more White respondents believe that owning a gun makes one safer, than putting one at risk, while more Black respondents believe that owning a gun, puts one at more risk than making one safer.

Table 1. *Perceptions of Whether a Gun Makes One Safer or More at Risk*

	Do you think having a gun makes you:					
	Very safe	Safe	Neither safe nor unsafe	At risk	Very at risk	Don't know
Black	10%	19%	12%	23%	31%	6%
Coloured	10%	19%	12%	23%	31%	6%
Indian	6%	16%	21%	25%	26%	7%
White	7%	12%	6%	22%	43%	11%
Total	10%	20%	12%	23%	29%	6%

Apartheid has ensured that different racial categories, serve as a proxy for culture and ethnicity, among other things. It was only in 1984, that the Arms and Ammunitions Act (no.75 of 1969), enabling people of colour to apply for a firearms license was amended (Kirsten, 2008). Black applicants however were subjected to a more rigorous vetting process compared to their White counterparts.

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

Persuasion, is defined as “an effort to change others’ attitudes through the use of various kinds of messages” (Mynhardt, 2006, p. 21). According to Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2006), attitudes have an identity or self expression function in which it permits the expression of central values and beliefs and thereby communicate who we are. This helps explain the intensity of resistance to efforts of persuasion (Baron et al., 2006). Wetherell and Potter (1988) stress that we should seek to understand what people are doing with their talk, and what purposes their

accounts are achieving. Understanding how gun owners understand their own identity, could help us better understand why they hold certain attitudes toward the FCA.

Cock (1997, p. 75) speaks about how “violence has a social dimension; it is connected to social relations, values, beliefs, practices, and most importantly, to different social identities”. The purchasing of weapons is viewed as socially constructed and influenced by ‘gun cultures’ within different cultural contexts. It appears as though the solution to combating the proliferation of firearms needs to critically examine the “meanings, allegiances and identities which underlie acts of gun violence” (Cock, 1997, p. 75), and by implication, the tools of the violence, that is, firearms. Exploration of the literature further indicates no known alternative hypotheses with respect to this socially constructed identity. That may be as a result of the research area being exploratory, rather than explanatory.

SPECIFIC AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

It is clear from the literature that a gun ownership identity intersects and interacts with various other identities. The difference between the identities of Black and White gun owners in South Africa as well as their attitudes toward firearm control legislation has not been adequately addressed. This research study therefore aims to:

- (1) Analyze discourses around issues of identity, as relating to Black and White gun owners.
- (2) Better understand how these identities are socially constructed and interact with each other.

DESIGN AND METHOD

Design

Having people speak openly about how they understand their identity as firearm owners is best done using a qualitative research design. This enabled certain social dynamics to be uncovered which may have been too complex and too hidden for a quantitative study to uncover (Parker, 2005). Morgan (1997) mentions how exploration is a great strength of qualitative methods in general and focus groups in particular. This also enables exploration of the differences in discourse between Black and White gun owners and how it is constructed. It seeks to “specify the condition under which the phenomena exist, the action/interaction that pertains to them, and the associated outcomes or consequences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 191).

Since not much research has been done on the differences in identity formation of Black and White gun owners in South Africa, there is not much theory to explain how this identity may

be formed. Qualitative research studies are suited to enable us to understand this, as it allows us to proceed inductively from empirical observations toward more general ideas regarding theory or methodology (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, & Silverman, 2004). Although I'm not proceeding inductively from empirical data, a qualitative study would still be suited to uncover possible themes in the discourse of the participants.

Sample characteristics

The sample characteristics which best complement the Aims and Hypothesis of the research question, is a group of eight self-defined Black South African male legal gun owners and a group of eight self-defined White male legal gun owners. The practical significance to interview only male firearm owners was motivated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of firearm owners are male (Cock, 1997; Cooke & Puddifoot, 2000; Cukier & Sidel, 2006; Kirsten, 2008) and so this is the group which would be targeted by policy directives. The primary reason for their firearm ownership was self-defence.

The participants were aged 32 and above, and have been South African legal firearm owners for the past five years at least. They would therefore be old enough for their understanding of firearm ownership to have been shaped by Apartheid, as well as institutionalized 'old South Africa' values of masculinity, citizenship, race, and so forth. The language criteria were that they be English speaking, since I am best able to converse with the participants in English. Furthermore, the language criterion for many Psychology journals is in English.

Kvale (1996) mentions that in interview studies, the sample size tend to be around 15, give or take ten. He claims that this value may be due to a combination of time factors and resources available to the researcher as well the law of diminishing returns, which implies that with a particular sample size, the quantity and quality of data being given by the participants is balanced. Once this sample size is surpassed, their talk would not yield new information. I've therefore chosen a sample size of eight participants in each group.

Sample recruitment procedure

I've recruited participants from the False Bay Gun Club, whose members are predominantly self-defined White South Africans, and University of Cape Town (UCT) security guards who are predominantly self-defined Black South Africans. I initially made contact with the False Bay

Gun Club via e-mail, which led to participant recruitment. Black participants were recruited via the 'snow-ball technique', whereby I introduced myself to three individuals and asked them to encourage members of their family, friends and community who fit the criteria for participation, to make contact with me. I've sent both groups detailed information (See Appendix A), so that they may better understand the purposes of the research, as well as disseminate it to potentially interested persons who fit the criteria. The advertisement sheet was in English only.

They indicated their willingness to participate by leaving their contact details with the liaison in the particular group, with who I've been in regular contact **or to contact me directly**. The participants have been compensated R50 for their transport costs and 'gate-keepers' were compensated an additional R10 if they recruited participants who fit the criteria.

Data collection materials

The research was conducted in the form of focus groups, using semi-structured interviews, which "allows for a sequence of themes to be explored" (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). The literature indicates both Black and White gun owners have had different historical factors impacting on their identity and I have therefore structured the interview schedule along these lines, for example, it would have been inappropriate to ask Black participants about their perception of the effect of conscription on their identity as gun owners, since they were never conscripted. This meant that the interview schedule for White participants were slightly different to that of Black participants (See Appendix B and Appendix C). Since I was exploring issues of identities and attitudes, the use of semi-structured interviews in the form of focus groups, enabled me to explore shared and tacit beliefs, which would then emerge in interaction with others in a local setting (Seale et al., 2004).

Morgan, (1997, p. 10) mentions that "group discussions provide direct evidence about similarities and difference in the participants' opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching such conclusions from post hoc analyses of separate statements from each interviewee". Audio equipment in the form of a voice recorder, as well as note taking was the means of data collection.

Research context

The three Black gun owner focus group interviews, took place in empty lecture theatres, after their working hours at a time that was convenient for the majority of participants. Refreshments

were made available, so as to create a relaxing environment in which participants feel less inhibited to express their views. One focus group interview was held in the home of a gun owner and the other one took place in the hall of the False Bay Gun Club. More than one focus group was used, as a result of time and logistical constraints of the participants.

The interviews lasted for about one and a half hours, but the participants were requested to arrive at least 15 minutes in advance of the interview so as to fill out the necessary voluntary consent forms and to familiarize themselves with the audiovisual equipment and venue. This, it was hoped would encourage them to feel more relaxed once the actual interview started.

Data analysis procedures

The theoretical orientation from which I have evaluated the talk of the participants is social constructionism. Gergen (1985) mentions that social constructionism may be thought of as loosely having one or more of the following key assumptions; (1) a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge. In this regard, Burr (2003, p. 3) states that we should challenge “the assumptions that the nature of the world can be revealed by observation, and that what exists is what we perceive to exist”, (2) historical and cultural specificity. This means that all our ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative (Burr, 2003), (3) knowledge is sustained by social processes. Burr (2003) mentions that it is through the daily interactions between people, that our versions of knowledge become fabricated. Thus, the knowledge gained through this research study was fabricated through my interaction with the gun owners as well as their interaction with each other. (4) Knowledge and social action go together. This study has therefore sought to uncover the knowledge relating to this sort of social action, as the literature review shows this to be a gap in the knowledge field. This could be used for social action in the form of reformulating policy related to firearms control legislation.

Burr (2003) mentions that people can only represent their experiences and identity by using the concepts embedded in language. Thus, to understand how gun owners construct their need for firearms, discourse analysis was used as an analytical framework, as it is most compatible with the Aims and Hypothesis of the research agenda. Discourse analysis is “distinguished by its commitment to a strong social constructivist view and in the way it tries to explore the relationships between text, discourse, and context” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 6). Text may take a variety of forms, including written texts, spoken words, pictures, symbols, and so forth (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998). Discourse analysis, furthermore enabled me to

explore how the many socially produced ideas and objects relating to gun ownership are created, maintained and held in place over time (Phillips & Hardy, 2002), as well as how images of the self and the world circulate in society (Parker, 2005).

Reflexivity

As a young, English speaking, university educated, Coloured person, difficulties could have been experienced by the participants, as their views (if any) of the above characteristics of me the researcher, may have been shaped by Apartheid, culture, class, and so forth. For example, in some traditional African cultures, it is seen as inappropriate for a young man to sit in the company of older men, let alone ask them questions.

The fact that the two White gun owner interviews have respectively taken place in a club hall as well as the home of a participant, should have mitigated against participants forming preconceived ideas about the intention of the research, conducted in a non-neutral venue. This is relevant when considering that a potential White participant mentioned “you do realise that UCT houses some of the most active members of the disarmament lobby” (Name withheld, Personal Communication, June 3, 2009). Thus any association with UCT, especially in the form of an interview venue could have influenced the respondents’ responses differently to what they were. No such concern was shown by the Black participants who preferred the interviews to be conducted on campus as it was convenient for them.

My personally held attitude toward firearms, which can be described as moderate, may have influenced how I engaged with participants as well as how I framed questions or responded to their comments. This is relevant when considering that two Black and five White participants indicated their concern that I would construe them in a way that would hinder their efforts to challenge negative public perception of gun owners. I sought to mitigate against this by informing them that the study is not sponsored by any group with a vested interest in the results. They were also told that they could leave at any point and may look at my notes at any time during the interview.

Ethical considerations

The research delved into sensitive areas of peoples’ lives and the dignity of the participants was the guiding principle throughout the entire process. Issues of race are always a potentially volatile discourse and I have thus exercised extra caution in dealing with these discourses, as and

how it has arisen. This I've done by indicating, at the beginning of the interviews, that if they do not want to use racial categories **in their talk**, they are under no obligation to use them, and if it makes them feel more comfortable, neither would I. They were made aware of Ethical approval of the study by the UCT Psychology Department. I've also indicated to them that the purpose of the tape recorder and note pad is to facilitate transcription and not to implicate them in any way. They were given my supervisors contact details if they feel aggrieved and wished to complain to a higher authority.

The participants were required to sign an informed consent form (See Appendix D) explaining their rights as a participant. Their confidentiality remains guaranteed by not using their names or any recognizable references to them. This is especially relevant when considering that all Black and five White participants indicated that one's identity as a gun owner should be kept a secret.

The participants were debriefed after the interview to remind them of the stated aims of the study, its potential contribution to society, and how the data will be used and any other questions related to the study were answered. They furthermore have had the option of expressing their views about the interview process (see Appendix E) in the form of debriefing forms. Furthermore, only my academic supervisor and I have access to the transcribed data, consent and debriefing forms.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

I have identified five dominant themes throughout the text, namely themes of childhood, race, Apartheid, gender, and that of legislation and citizenship. These are not the only themes used in the construction of a gun ownership identity, but seem to dominate the text and encapsulate the dynamics involved in the construction of this identity. I found much overlap between themes, indicating the complexity of a gun ownership identity.

The letter "B" or "W" refers to the self-defined racial description of the participant, that is, Black or White, while the number identifies the unique individual. Block parenthesis with italicised wording, indicate an interruption by a fellow participant. Non-italicised wording within block quotes refer to a comment made by me. Due to relevance of the themes uncovered, I discuss only the dominant themes and as such, use only the relevant quotes. In addition to the socially constructed identity of firearm owners, I have also sought to understand how this translates into certain attitudes toward the FCA.

The broad findings are that the identity of gun owners is a reflection of the above mentioned themes. Themes which have the greatest effect on the identity of White gun owners are that of gender, Apartheid, and childhood as well as cultural influences. For Black participants, the themes which have had the greatest effect on their identity as gun owners, is that of citizenship and legislation, Apartheid, and gender roles. With respect to attitudes toward firearm control legislation, White participants are unhappy with the new FCA and view it as an affront to their “right to self-defence” as well as the sentimentality of firearms which they view as part of their cultural heritage. Black participants view firearms as a “necessary evil” but welcome legislation that curbs its proliferation, especially in township areas. This may be as a result of practical difficulties in safe-guarding a firearm in township areas, coupled with high rates of firearm violence in township areas, where most of them (n=7) reside.

Both groups hold on to what can be described as traditional gender roles, that is, the man is the head of the home and acts as provider and protector and has to be tough and independent, in order to take care of the family. This may have influenced their attitude toward women and firearms, though the White participants views could be described as Liberal, in that they all supported a woman’s’ decision to purchase firearms and felt that this in no way threatened their sense of masculinity. Most Black participants (n=6) felt that women should not have firearms as they were not emotionally suited for the responsibility that it implied. This, according to them, is as a result of a combination of strongly held traditional cultural mores as well as the violent nature of firearm related crimes in township areas.

I will now examine the various themes in greater detail to show how firearm ownership identity may be influenced by these factors and the implications for the participants’ attitude toward the FCA. This will be done by first examining the differences in identity as relating to the themes between Black and White firearm owners. I will then look at the similarities before offering my own interpretation of the results.

DIFFERENCES

Child hood

The theme of childhood and firearms occurs within a particular cultural context which shapes child hood experiences. All of the participants were aware of this effect, but I will only quote two Black and two White participants to illustrate this point. Childhood had a particularly

influential effect on White participants who spoke openly about their childhood exposure to firearms. Overlapping with this theme is that of masculinity, in that firearm related activities was something that fathers and sons did together. This was true for all the White participants. Another overlapping theme for White participants is that of citizenship and legislation, as illustrated by W1 who mentions that the apparatus of the Apartheid state, namely the SADF and the education system moulded their childhood.

All the Black participants mentioned that they never had direct contact with firearms in childhood, though parental attitudes moulded their own attitudes. This is exemplified by four Black participants, including B5, who speaks about the effect of parenting on attitudes toward firearm ownership as well as their perceptions of White gun owners. These quotes validate the study by Diener and Kerber (1979) which was able to trace gun ownership and its use to childhood.

B5: ...for us its not a major thing to own guns... because we grew up in that ...we were taught by our parents that guns are not a good thing...but for White people and all these other people, it seems like its easy to get a gun because at the age of 18, you'll see a White man owning a gun...

B2: Whites grew up in the family with guns, they have history about guns and they have lectures and lessons about guns. Black people- it's a new thing, so they were not exposed to guns...

W1: From a very young age, I was four years old when I got a firearm from dad... having grown up in the Afrikaner community, the first thing you do when you reach the age of 14 in High School, is you joined the cadets, which was like the frontrunner for the SANDF...we were taught musketry at school.

W2: Most of us grew up with firearms and we've being imprinted with the idea of how to deal with firearms in a manner that is safe...

The above quote by W2 could be interpreted by some observers as an attempt to qualify a childhood that included firearms with notions of safety and procedure.

Race and Ethnicity

Concepts of race and ethnicity are used interchangeably by the participants and I've therefore put them under one theme. This theme permeates the talk of both Black and White gun owners and furthermore constructs race as an essential characteristic, in that physical characteristics are viewed as concrete and natural. When asked about firearms and race, six White and all Black participants responded in terms of ethnicity or culture. It therefore seems as though ethnicity or culture is used as a proxy for race by the majority of participants, which is explainable in the context of South Africa's history in which different race groups were segregated, which allowed for cultural development along race lines.

All the Black participants understood their culture to be largely silent on the issue of firearm ownership, which could be explained by the Apartheid and Colonial laws which disenfranchised Black South Africans from owning firearms. They were also in favour of legislation that curbed the proliferation of firearms and believed it was a result of government caring for all people, especially those most affected by firearm-related crimes, namely Black South Africans. The six White participants spoke about their racial identity as a proxy for their cultural and ethnic affiliation. This racial identity has a strong affiliation with firearms as quoted by W1 and W7 below, to the extent that they identified particular firearms with particular ethnic groupings. The last quote by W1 indicates that there is an in-group *othering* (Mama, 1995) construction of gun ownership identity by one of the White participants, which "others" ethnic groupings of the same race group, along the lines of language. Seven out of the eight White participants felt that firearms control legislation is more of an insensitivity toward their cultural association with firearms, than a blatant attack on White South Africans, as indicated by W2 below. One White participant (W3), when asked about differences in attitude toward the FCA by different race groups, held the view that legislation is needed to mitigate against a lack of discipline by Black gun owners. This could be understood as racist by some observers. Three White participants constructed firearms as a cultural trait associated with specific ethnic groupings.

B1: I think that what make the Black people scared of the gun is that they need to have a gun in order to fight, even in that time [Apartheid], people were in need of gun in order to fight back the Whites.

W4: ... everyone has a gun-Black, White, Yellow, whatever colour they are...

It therefore appears as though W4 reduces the identity of people to the colour of their skin and racial groupings are viewed as distinct from each other. They also “other” the race groups, in the sense that the focus is on difference and division. Boonzaier (1988) suggests that in a South African context, race is charged with social and political meaning. This is borne out by the quotes below in response to my question directed at a Black participant, on how he thinks White South African gun owners differ in their reasons for owning guns compared to White South Africans.

B2: They just got firearms to protect themselves, they not...they not like us, they don't rob each other...with guns.

The above quote furthermore appears to construct the identity of White gun owners as that of a protector, while constructing the identity of Black gun owners as that of a criminal.

As mentioned, race is viewed as a proxy for ethnicity, which Smedley (2005) defines as clusters of people who have common culture traits, which distinguish them from other people. The quote below suggests that these culture traits may take the form of an object. This was particularly pertinent with White gun owners (n=6) who associated firearms with their cultural heritage:

W1: The same with the Lee-Medford's at the time of the Boer war, it was an English rifle. It represented the British.

W7: The same as what we said earlier about the Boer... He's gun is part of his life.

W1: ...I'm not a gun-slinging hillbilly Boer and unfortunately his following [Eugene Terre' Blanche] was very much not the intellectual White Afrikaans speaking male. It was very much the hillbilly type...

W3: ...I say they not disciplined like we are. They'll take their neighbour out at the drop of a hat, so those Blacks who wanted to must go through the procedure, had to learn the law, do this course and that course...but you cant just have it for them and not say, 'Listen, Whites must also do the same', So a lot of Whites are a bit anti- with this new Law, because it used to be so very easy in the past...

W2: The Firearms Control Act don't feel anything about sentiment, nothing. W1: It doesn't recognize the sentimental value of your firearm. It belonged to your grandfather, they say 'I don't care who it belonged to. If you can't prove to us what you want it for-hand it in', and I think that's unfair.

Apartheid and the past

Five White participants indicated that the effect of Apartheid generally and conscription in particular has had a negligible effect on their attitude toward firearms. However, it did according to them, instil a sense of discipline. This is in contrast to the findings by Arzul (1994) who found that compulsory military service shaped the identity of many White South African gun owners. The negligible effect on White participants may be as a result of a long association from childhood with firearms, which meant that by the time they underwent conscription, their attitudes toward firearms have already largely been formed. There was a noticeable lack of recognition of the racist nature of Apartheid by White participants when discussing Apartheid and firearms. For example when speaking about the social meaning of the AK-47 rifle, most White participants (n=5) spoke about “Rooie gevaar” or Communist danger but not one mentioned the “Swaart gevaar” or Black danger concept that was promoted by Apartheid propaganda to demonize Black South Africans.

For Black participants, the use of guns by the Apartheid state to intimidate Black South Africans, appear to have shaped their initial attitudes toward firearms, together with their childhood. For three Black participants, firearms act as a signifier of the Liberation struggle (B2) while for four participants, it acts as a signifier of oppression (B4). One participant views it as a signifier of participation in the colonial economic system (B1) in which livestock was bartered for firearms. For three of the Black participants, Apartheid created a climate in which the few who had access to firearms were invested with respect by the community and identified as Liberation fighters.

B3: The community was supporting them, because when they get attacked by the Apartheid government, those people were defending the community...

B2: I think that what make the Black people scared of the gun is that they need to have a gun in order to fight, even in that time [Apartheid], people were in need of gun in order to fight back the Whites.

B2 in the above quote, conceives of Black firearm ownership identity as rooted in the recent past, while B1 below, roots it in the more distant past of Colonialism:

B1:..when that Van Riebeeck arrive at the Cape, he bring that firearms with him. It's whereby people started knowing firearms, because they give them 10 cows, then they get the firearm...

B4: Apartheid did influence us as Black people.... We must also have guns because they were shooting us with guns and we had only stones and sticks, so it's whereby we also get influenced by them...

W4: Conscription actually disciplined a young man [W7: It disciplined them, it did a lot of that [W4: especially those who don't go through it, you can see the results of that, they like incomplete...

Researcher:...Conscription militarized the masculinity of White males. Do you agree?

W6: I think it's a generalization, and it may happen to some extent...I don't think you can say this is an established fact, certainly not.

Victimhood

A major factor that appears to have had a different effect on the attitude of Black and White gun owners was their experience of crime in post-Apartheid South Africa. Participants spoke about a sense of victimhood as a result of crime, but the consequence of this victimhood directs the two groups along different paths. Six out of the eight Black participants indicated that this victimhood is justification for stricter firearm legislation, while all the White participants indicate that the sense of victimhood is a reason not to deny firearm ownership to law-abiding citizens. This difference in attitude may be as a result of the way in which firearms are construed in relation to crime. For example, all the Black participants spoke about firearms making one a target of crime, while the White participants spoke about firearms reducing the likelihood of being a victim. Crime seemed to have entrenched the already-held attitude participants may have had.

W1: ...in a country like ours, having to motivate why you need a firearm for self-defence is totally ridiculous. It shouldn't be necessary for me to write one word to motivate why I

need a firearm for self-defence. They should actually hand it to me, they should actually dish them out.

B1: ...once the skollies see you with a firearm, they take the firearm with another firearm. So I'm saying to you, having a firearm in our days is not good.

Gender

The views of both Black and White participants could be understood by some observers as patriarchal and even chauvinistic with White participants slightly more Liberal in their views concerning gender and firearms. All the White participants said that women should be permitted to own firearms and this would not violate their sense of masculinity, while six out eight Black participants felt that women should not be permitted to own firearms as a result of their emotional disposition, which three participants describe as unpredictable and intense. The White participants' views may be as a result of longer exposure to female gun owners in their community, while the Black community, as a whole were disenfranchised from owning firearms, coupled with traditional African cultural moors which dictate that weapons are a male's domain. Above all else, both groups constructed firearm ownership as bound up with notions of masculinity. This sense of masculinity overlapped with that of gender roles, in that firearms were understood to play a part in their ability to protect their family. For five White participants, this translated into their negative attitude toward the FCA which they saw as a hindrance to protecting their families. For Black participants, even though firearms were also viewed as playing a role in their ability to protect their families, they looked at the effect of firearm ownership on the larger community, resulting in more positive acceptance (n=7) of the FCA.

B5: Like in our culture, we know females are weak and they can't carry the weapon, we regard them as weak people...

The quotes below indicate that Black gun ownership identity is portrayed as essentialist for women, while socially constructed for men.

B4: ...you cannot teach your daughter, the only person you teach to shoot is your son, if you have a son. When you not around, you say to him 'You the man now, so you protect the family...

When asked if guns are as popular with women as with men, this Black participant responded by saying:

B2: Not African ladies. They don't like guns, they have heart

Specific racial identities enable the reinvention of the self, in and across space and allow for certain places to be invested with social meaning (Dixon, 1997). This is apparent in the following quote by W3 who conceives of Africa as not being advanced in terms of equality between men and women:

W3: There might be ...countries in the world where everything has become virtually equal, you know man, women...but you only get that in very advanced societies. You cant, I mean Africa is still, we grew up and I don't know for a long time to come

W1:... Women want to experience it as well, and it's not butch women, its beautiful women hunting

W4: We've had many females in this club [False Bay gun club] W6: And very good shotsman

In the above quote W4 indicates the gendered nature of language by defining a female who is a good shot as a shotsman, not a shotswoman. Parker (1992) indicates that discourses are sites of ideological resistance or entrenchment, and this quote supports that view as it entrenches the gendered use of language, thus perpetuating the view that women are not naturally inclined toward firearms.

Furthermore, when asked why guns are more of a male interest, White participants respond:

W2: I suppose it goes with the masculinity of it.

W1: I never raised my daughter to kick a rugby ball, neither did I raise my son to sing, or my daughter to shoot with hunting rifles, but my son goes hunting with me...it was just a "Girls don't belong in the army" type thing

The above quote illustrates the point made by Cukier and Sidel (2006), when they mention that cultural carriers such as traditional practices reinforces the link between masculinity and firearms and furthermore promotes the demand for firearms. In the context of the above

quote, it could be interpreted that firearms act as a signifier of masculinity. Similarly, it could be argued that B1 constructs firearms as a signifier of masculinity, as illustrated in the following quote:

Researcher: Tell me, when you first handled a gun, what did it make you feel like?

B1: ...That's what I told myself, that I'm powerful. Once you have it, you say, 'no one can do anything to me, I'm now a man.

The quote above seems to indicate that guns are an important part in the construction of masculinity, which Cock (1997) concurs with, in her view that various cultural understandings of masculinity relates to qualities of dominance, independence, toughness and strength. Cock (1997) also mentions that gun ownership as an identity, is linked to dynamics of power, especially in post-Apartheid South Africa and is borne out by the above quote.

When asked about their views concerning the possibility that their spouses purchase a firearm, their predominant responses were:

B6: She can go buy a gun, but I will own it, because I'm the head of the house...you know how dangerous is a women, they sommer kill you...

Researcher: Do you believe that government is undermining your ability to protect your family with the new FCA? W3: Absolutely W4: Ja, I have to agree W5: Ja...

White participants were more accepting of female gun owners, as exemplified by the following quote in response to the question of his masculinity and role as protector coming into jeopardy as a result of his wife getting a firearm:

W4: No, not at all, you know women are fighting all over the world for equal rights ...they more likely to get a license than a man...

Culture

Related to themes surrounding ethnicity, one Black participant indicated that, in post-Apartheid South Africa guns have become a part of their cultural understanding of crime to the extent that it can be seen reflected in the vocabulary of traditional African culture:

B2: ...crime is committed through amalahle-an illegal firearm...take for example us, you have a legal firearm, you have a illegal firearm as well so when you do your dirty jobs,

you use that amaladle... because that one cannot be traceable Researcher: *Is that generally what happen in the Black community?* B2: *Definitely* B3: *Of course.*

This is, however, not a sentiment shared by the majority of Black participants (n=7), as the quote below exemplifies:

B2: I can say with my culture...especially years ago, a gun used to be a very bad thing...and it wasn't used by our culture.

Cooke and Puddifoot (2000) mention that gun ownership appear to be associated with a particular cultural identity. This was a common thread with the White participants, as illustrated by the quote below which is in response to the question of whether or not gun ownership is part of the participant's culture:

W3: Ja, its part of my culture, I've grown up with guns since I was a pikkie, you know

W4: Ja, it's the same with me...

The following quote by W4 indicates contradiction when asked the same question later:

Researcher: Ok, so it's a part of your cultural identity then?

W4: I did'nt say that...

The above difference of views is testament to Jensen (2003) reminder, that although cultural beliefs are subsumed by a broad range of beliefs and practices shared by other members of the community, this does not imply that everyone has the same views on a particular issue. Although the majority of White participants (n=6) views firearms as part of their cultural identity, the contradiction by W4 above, could indicate uncertainty with regard to this view.

Legislation and citizenship

Above all else themes surrounding legislation and citizenship suggest that all White participants would comply with the requirements of the FCA, although they are not satisfied with what it stipulates. Three participants expressed strong views in this regard. Seven of the eight Black participants agree with the intention of the FCA and have internalized the "Spirit of the Law" as in the interests of community safety. Three Black participants have expressed their intention to hand in their firearms to the relevant authorities.

Much of the discourse surrounding legislation and citizenship seem to overlap with that of victimhood. This may be as a result of Black participants mentioning that owning a firearm

makes one a target for criminals, while White participants spoke of incidents in which firearms were used to prevent criminal activity from happening.

B2: I don't think they must issue any more guns now, because our country is very unsafe due to that issue of guns

B3: The one who has a gun, you can just sell it back to the gun shops

This was a site of difference, for even though the seven of the eight participants expressed support for firearm control legislation, there was one participant who differed:

B8: The government freed us from Apartheid, so now we have a right to get a gun, now they trying to take it away from us

W1: We didn't like it... but we did it, because you cannot regard yourself as responsible, you cannot say 'I'm serious about owning my firearm', if you are not prepared to do what is required by the ACT...

W1 qualifies his above statement, when asked his view about gun owners who refuse to comply with the Firearms Control Act as a form of protest:

W1: Dangerous, but I think its bad citizenship, even though I might not like the idea...

He goes on to say:

W1: ... I will emigrate before I hand in my firearms...because I've had them, my dad's had them. Its family...

W6: All governments basically feel that they should have the only rights to possess weapons...This is not ugmm anti-government. It's more protecting the rights of the individual, and we do feel that it's a human rights violation.

B1: ... in our townships it's very easy to lose a firearm. That's why now the crime rate is so high. I think that by saying they want to reduce the ...this crime...because the crime rate is very high because of firearms, especially in our townships.

W3: So a lot of Whites are a bit anti- with this new Law because it used to be so very easy in the past.

Now that I've looked at the differences in views concerning firearm ownership and the various themes, I will now look at the similarities, in terms of two main themes uncovered, namely that of gender, as well as citizenship and legislation.

SIMILARITIES

The similarities in themes expressed by Black and White gun owners indicate that there are common experiences by both groups which transcend the effects of Apartheid, as well as their differences, to be actively shaping their identity as South African gun owners.

Black and White participants construct their identity as protectors of their families and believe that firearms are a necessary part of fulfilling that role. They understand gender and firearms in terms of gender roles, which may appear to be patriarchal. The quote below by W4 could be interpreted as a way of affirming patriarchal notions of masculinity associated with gender roles by reverting to the claim that because it happens throughout the world in many cultures, it's therefore natural and normal. While Black and White participants differ in the degree to which they hold on to views, which some observers may understand to be patriarchal, they both subscribe to traditional masculine identities as the mans' role being that of protector of the family.

The participants were asked their views on masculine gender roles, if any:

W4: ...he's looked on as the protector and provider...I think that is throughout the whole world, no matter what culture

B1: ...we grew up knowing that you must protect your family

Although White participants (n=6) are more ambivalent toward the FCA than Black participants (n=2), both White (n=5) and Black (n=6) participants view complying with the requirements of the FCA as a symbol of good citizenship. This theme seems to be more relevant to their identity as gun owners in post-Apartheid South Africa, in which there was a renewed emphasis on the rule of Law and notions of inclusive citizenship. This coupled with the government concerted efforts to curb firearm related violence and an awareness by the participants of hefty punishments related to firearm violations, may have influenced their views concerning firearm ownership and citizenship. This could be interpreted as them having respect for the rule of Law, or they may be saying things which they perceive to be socially acceptable.

B3: ...I say it's a good thing for them to go and register their guns, so at least the government can know...

W1: We didn't like it... but we did it, because you cannot regard yourself as responsible, you cannot say "I'm serious about owning my firearm", if you are not prepared to do what is required by the ACT...

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Qualitative studies are often criticised for not being generalizable, but this is not its aim (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore a quantitative study could be constructed to evaluate the prevalence of the phenomena found in this study.

This study is limited in that it is uncovering discourses in two specific communities, whereas gun owners are much more diverse in their various identities. Future studies should apply this research question to other demographic groups of gun owners as well, so as to uncover their discourses. Many of the Black participants (n=4) asked me to repeat questions as a result of English not being their home language, as well as one White participant whose home language was Afrikaans. This may have affected their willingness to engage in the interview and to freely express themselves. Thus future studies should cater for gun owners whose home language is not English.

An additional limitation of this study would be the gender of participants. Future studies should include female gun owners who, according to the Black Gun Owners Association, comprises up to 70% of the membership of their association (Herrendorfer, 2004). Similarly, according White participants (n=3), female participation in firearm related activities is increasing.

The different interview schedules for the two groups may have meant that different themes have been 'uncovered' as a result of the questions posed, and not necessarily as a result of actual differences in themes. This is as a result of different historical factors influencing the identity of Black and White South Africans differently. For example, conscription was a reality for most White participants, but not for Black participants. Future studies should therefore standardise the questions, so as to take into account the historical differences between Black and White South Africans without "guiding" the research process.

An attitudinal scale could be developed specifically for a South African context, which could be used in Government's criteria for granting firearm licenses to the public. This could be

used to identify individuals who are at risk of acting on their attitudes and internalizing governments' policies regarding firearms control, in a manner which challenges their identity as gun owners.

CONCLUSION

It appears as though the differences between Black and White participants, particularly with respect to themes of childhood, race, Apartheid, gender, citizenship and legislation indicate the contrast in "construction" of a gun ownership identity. This, in large measure is indicative of South Africa's past, in which Black and White South Africans were treated so differently and gun owners, even more so. The differences between the two groups are so great, that it's difficult to even compare them. The similarities, however, indicate areas in which both groups have had similar influences which have transcended the effects of segregation, discrimination and cultural differences.

For White participants, it appears as though their ambivalence toward the FCA, can in some measure be traced to their identity which, in turn can be traced to the Apartheid and Colonial past, as well as their cultural heritage. This has had an effect on the childhood of White South Africans who grew up in gun owning families. It should be remembered that the conclusions reached are in no way representative of all White gun owners. The fact that the majority of gun owners in South Africa are White (Kirsten, 2008), makes it apparent that understanding how White gun owners understand themselves and how they conceive the FCA is crucially important to curbing the proliferation of illegal firearms.

For Black participants, it appears as though their acceptance of the FCA can be traced to their perception of firearms and not so much to their identity as Black firearm owners. This could be as a result of Black South Africans not having as long an affiliation with firearms as their White compatriots. This coupled with the effects of Apartheid which has placed the majority of Black South Africans in poverty-stricken, crime ridden ghetto townships has left many witness to the oppressive nature of the Apartheid state using firearms as well as the violent nature of firearm related crime in post-Apartheid South Africa. Many Black firearm owners, therefore welcome the FCA. Concurrently, there has been a sharp rise in the purchasing of firearms since 1994, and any Black firearm ownership identity which may be forming needs to be understood by government in future policy directives related to firearms control legislation.

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APPENDIX A

Advertisement for Participation

Hello, my name is Roscoe. I am an Honours student in the Psychology department of UCT doing research as part of the course requirements.

I would love to know your thoughts and views about gun ownership in post-apartheid South Africa. I am especially interested in how you perceive culture ethnicity, gender, citizenship, class etc. as shaping your identity as a gun owner and perhaps influencing your attitudes toward the Firearm Control Act.

Why is this study being done?

Some gun owners feel that government makes laws about firearms that don't take their views into account. They feel that this is because government does not understand who they are. This study tries to better understand who gun owners are by looking at how they understand themselves. How do your feelings of masculinity, ethnicity, class, and a sense of citizenship make you see gun ownership? Did the Apartheid laws relating to firearm ownership influence how you understand firearm ownership?

A better understanding of these issues is necessary to understand how firearm owners see themselves and ultimately how government should communicate with firearm owners.

What happens in the study?

If you decide to join the study,

- You will be asked for relevant personal details concerning the study e.g. age, ethnicity, self-described income bracket, firearm license etc
- Since various laws under Apartheid restricted some groups of people from owning firearms, you will be interviewed as a group of Black gun owners and as a group of White gun owners to better understand how different race groups understand firearm ownership.
- The discussions will last about 1.5 hrs and you are welcome to leave at any point.
- The discussions will be recorded using audio-visual equipment so as to make transcription (written record) easier. Only my supervisor and I will have access to this material and the transcription will make use of pseudonyms (false names), unless you would prefer us to use your real name. I will make use of a notepad to jot down information and make notes.

- It will cost you nothing to be part of this study and you will be compensated R35 for transport costs.

When and where will the discussions be held?

It will be held at the UCT film and media studios on Friday 19 June at 18:00 and light refreshments will be available. If you do decide to participate, please arrive by 17:30 so that the necessary paper work can be filled out.

Who may participate?

Any English speaking South African citizen with a legal firearm license who is 40 years old or older who identifies themselves as Black or White.

Additional information

This research study is not been sponsored or funded by any government department, NGO, pro-gun or anti-gun organizations, or UCT.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me on 021-7619655 or online at stfros001@uct.ac.za or my academic supervisor:

Professor Donald Foster

Department of Psychology

U.C.T.

Private Bag

Rondebosch

7701

If you decide to join this study, please leave your details with (liaison)

APPENDIX B

Interview schedule for Black participants

1) Thank you

2) Introduction of self and research

UCT ethics, Supervisor permission

NOTE: Issues of race is a sensitive issue with many people. As a result of our history as a country, race, as defined by South African Law, remains the most accurate proxy for culture. If you would prefer me to refer to the cultural or race group to which you belong, by any other term, please indicate this to me. Furthermore, for the sake of this interview, I will be using the words gun and firearm interchangeably.

Why is this study being done?

Some gun owners feel that government makes laws about firearms that doesn't take their views into account. They feel that this is because government does not understand who they are. This study tries to better understand who gun owners are by looking at how they understand themselves. How do your feelings of masculinity, ethnicity, class, and a sense of citizenship make you see gun ownership? Did the Apartheid laws relating to firearm ownership influence how you understand firearm ownership?

A better understanding of these issues is necessary to understand how firearm owners see themselves and ultimately how government should communicate with firearm owners.

1) Tape consent to agree to interview,

- time
- questions(explore any of the themes, do not have to answer)
- clarify anonymity and confidentiality,
- on-the-record, off-the-record,

2) Participants: please introduce yourself (if you want to)

1)What were your experience, if any, with firearms growing up, who taught you about guns?

2)What do guns represent to you?

3)What did it feel like, the first time you held a firearm in your hands?

4)How does holding a firearm make you feel with respect to:
Power...gender...righteousness...maturity...citizenship?

CULTURE:

-South Africa has a '*culture of violence*'. Do you think that guns play a role in this '*culture of violence*'?

What do you understand by the word 'CULTURE'?

2)Please describe your culture, 3)and its attitudes toward firearm ownership... how does it view firearm ownership?

Braman, Kahan and Grimmerman(2005) spoke about 3 types of culture:

- *HIERARCHICAL*: association of firearms with hierarchical social roles(father,protector, hunter and so forth) as well as hierarchical social institutions(military ,police and so forth), therefore there would be a negative attitude toward gun control,
- *INDIVIDUALISTIC (Liberalism)*: guns affirm self-reliance...Thus gun control seen as a challenge to self-autonomy.
- *COMMUNITARIAN*: support gun control, since its ownership undermines social solidarity and safety.

3) Do you believe that the above distinctions is relevant to your own culture, and has it played a role in your views about firearm ownership?

4) How do you think other culture groups i.e. White culture, Coloured culture etc view firearm ownership? Explain why?

5)Most of the supporters of the ANC come from traditional African culture, which is often described as communal...is this why the government has passed mores stricter gun laws?

6) Is the FCA an attack on your culture?

IDENTITY:

According to Cock (1997), firearm ownership identity is defined differently by different groups of people i.e. the AK-47 was seen as a symbol of liberation by some liberation groups. Furthermore, many White South Africans understood firearm ownership as a symbol of their power to protect their families and property. It also gave them a sense of citizenship since the government acknowledged their 'right' to own firearms.

-this seems to imply that firearms have a symbolic meaning for different cultural groups...1).Do you think that the symbolism of firearms is changing for Black South Africans...and what is it changing to?

2) Would the way that the Apartheid government used guns against Black South Africans have influenced their views concerning firearms and firearm ownership?

3) How does the Black community view Black gun owners compared to non-gun owners? Is there a difference...why?

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED DEMAND OF FIREARMS:

Gun culture: “.guns play a big part of the culture...they love guns, talking about, shooting it etc.” e.g Afrikaaners

1)Would you say that a gun culture is busy developing among Black South African gun owners (since more are buying guns) and if so, could you explain what this Black gun culture looks like. If there is no gun culture developing among Black gun owners, why not?

2) Within traditional African culture (broadly speaking), weapons e.g. knobkerries, assegais etc. and stick fighting plays an important part of the culture, especially of boyhood. To what extent, if at all, would this cultural familiarity with weapons would make firearms more alluring to Black South Africans?

3) In your opinion, what role does the desire for some form of POWER influence Black gun owners purchasing of firearms?

5) Furthermore, do you think that firearms affect the way that people relate to each other i.e. are they more scared of you when they find out that you have a firearm? What do you think is the perception that people have of you as a firearm owner, and do you want them to have this perception of you?

GfSA website (the link at the picture of a toy gun): “When children play with toy guns, it does create in them a sense of licence, that a person can use guns to resolve conflict. This is particularly worrying to parents in township areas. There, children grow up in a culture which tolerates and even glorifies guns, and their children are regularly exposed to gun violence”

Do you agree/disagree with this statement, why?

5) Some people say that firearms are a ‘White man’s invention’ that is now causing trouble in Black townships...what are your thoughts on this?

We know that the law states that when faced with a threat, it is better to run away than confront it with a firearm. How does this the thought of running away make you feel?

FIREARMS AND MASCULINITY:

- 1) Why do you think that firearms are not as popular with females as with males?
- 2) Why do you think that there are so many cases of men killing themselves and their partners with a firearm?
- 3) Do you think that the way in which men are brought up with respect to gender roles and firearms are related? ... 'crisis of masculinity' could...
- 4) Do you know of any Black female gun owners? 1-What do you think of them 2-How do you think, their reasons for owning a gun would differ from that of a White female gun owner?

A real feminist doesn't depend on men for protection.



- 5) Please comment on the above poster?
- 6) Should women have greater access to firearms? Since African culture, generally sees the man as the protector of the family, would this influence your sense of masculinity, as a woman would no longer need a man for protection?
- 7) If women had greater access to firearms and were encouraged to own them, do you think that they would be as aggressive as men (reflect on the domestic abuse stats.)

Traditional norms of masculinity= toughness, aggression, dominance...is this what firearms are about?

-----M.K.. ANC

-----SADF whites



Militarised Masculinity

- 7) Some people say that for the Black males generally, the militant sections of the liberation movements has militarized their masculinity, while for White males, the compulsory military service in the S.A.D.F. has militarized their masculinity. Do you have any thoughts on this?
- 8) Do you think that the FCA would make men feel like less of a man...because they can't protect their families?

GUNS AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES:

Eugene Ter'r Blanche "The Boer and his gun are inseparable", while a study done by the ISS showed some African people believed that "a real man must be able to use weapons".

Do you think that gun laws should be sensitive to how cultures understand guns, or does it not matter what the cultures think?

- 2) Why, in your opinion, was the Black Gun Owners Association of South Africa formed?...why not just join together with SAGA? ...Is its formation an acknowledgement of a different identity for Black gun owners compared to White gun owners?

- 3) Would you ever join SAGA...why not?

4) Some people say that guns are part of "white people's culture"...should weapons(of any sort) be a part of people's culture?

- 6) What made you decide to join the BGOASA and not SAGA?

GUNS AND POLITICAL IDENTITY:

- "UMSHINI WHAM -- Zuma.

- 1) Why does Jacob Zuma want us to bring him his machine gun?

2) Would you say that your political allegiance has influenced your views on gun ownership (refer to culture section)?

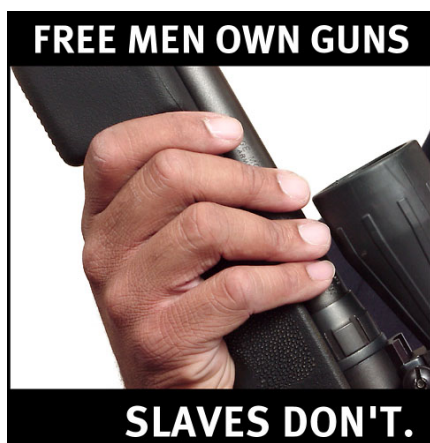
- 3) Why do you think that different political parties support or oppose gun-control legislation?

Kirsten (2008:59) "It was clear that one of the reasons that the FF+, NNP and the DP opposed the Bill(FCA 60 of 2000), was their inability to break with the past"

In declaring the DPs opposition, one of its members mentions that the ANC "had struck at the very heart of established traditions and value systems within SA (Hanshard as cited in Kirsten2008: 160)... "The issues raised in the firearm debate, threatened the very core of what it meant to be a white man in SA" (Kirsten 160)

- 4) Please comment on the above statements.

- 5) What would you say to Black Africans who say that firearms are bad since it's been used to oppress Black people by the Apartheid government and it played only a small part in liberating South Africa?



7) Please comment on the above poster?

8) Do you think that owning a firearm, should be a symbol of citizenship,?...why/why not?...Do you think that with the xenophobic attack, foreigners should be allowed to own firearms?

GUNS AND RACIAL IDENTITY:

An Institute of Security Studies survey, conducted in 1996, showed that White respondents believe that owning a gun makes you safer, rather than putting you at risk, while more Black respondents believe that owning a gun, puts one at more risk than making you safer

1) Why do you think this difference exists?

Proclamation 135 of 1958, banned the use of traditional weapons. Recently, the present government tried to ban the display of traditional African weapons in certain contexts.

2) Do you think that this would influence how people feel about themselves as Africans?

The quote below has been taken off the website of BGOASA:

“It is quite obvious that the Firearms Control Act places black Africans at a huge disadvantage - physical, educational and economically, particular those most likely to suffer from violent crime the poor and the aged. The very people who need protection the most are denied by an uncaring government and South African Police who claim to be able to protect them but do not.”

3) Do you agree/disagree with the above statement. If you do, then why do you think the ANC led government would want to place poor, black Africans, in particular, at a disadvantage?

...Class: Should poor people be allowed to have firearms, why/ why not? Do you think that poor people will have different reasons for owning a firearm compared to rich people?

GUNS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:

1) Please describe the characteristics of a typical South African gun owner, as you understand it. Is this identity busy changing, and why/why not?

. Since 1994, there has been an increase in the purchasing of guns by Blacks...Cock (1997:90) "It's a perverse indicator of changing power relations" Any views?

2) When the laws were changed, allowing you, as a Black South African, to own firearms, did it contribute to making you feel like more of a citizen?

3) When you were first allowed to legally own a firearm, what was the experience like? How were you perceived by the White gun owners (assuming you interacted with them)?

4) Do you think that guns are seen/ would be seen, as a symbol of national identity by Black gun owners?

During the transition period in South African democracy, there was much violence between the ANC and IFP, which according to Kirsten (2008) was exacerbated by the Apartheid government, supplying self-defence units of the IFP with arms. Some people say this violence would not have been as bad, had there been no weapons. Please share your thoughts.

GFSA website (the link at the picture of a toy gun): "When children play with toy guns, it does create in them a sense of license, that a person can use guns to resolve conflict. This is particularly worrying to parents in township areas. Their children grow up in a culture which tolerates and even glorifies guns, and their children are regularly exposed to gun violence"

7) The above quotes seem to indicate that children can quickly learn that guns are to be used to resolve conflicts. Some people may say that the best way to ensure that this does not happen, is to ban weapons. We would then, from a very young age, be forced to learn to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way. This would contribute in us changing the 'culture of violence' in RSA. Please comment on this matter?

Since the ending of Apartheid was brought about by largely peaceful means, this indicates that we can challenge oppression with non-violent means. Do you agree/disagree? Some would say that guns therefore serve no purpose in RSA. In terms of fighting crime, they say we need to improve the justice system and police force etc and end poverty. Guns only make things worse.; Do you have any views on this?

Mr. Bruce Shaw, a representative of SAGA has told me that most crimes committed in South Africa are by legal firearm owners. If this is true, then why should government allow people to own firearms?

Do you think that legal firearm owners who are unhappy with the FCA 60 of 2000, should not comply with its requirements? If yes, then would this not be a sign of bad citizenship?

APPENDIX C

Interview schedule for White participants

- 1) Thank you
- 2) Introduction of self , and research
 - UCT ethics, Supervisor permission
- 3) Tape consent to agree to interview,
 - clarify anonymity and confidentiality,
 - On-the-record, off-the-record ,
 - Time,
 - Questions(exploration of themes, do not have to answer),

NOTE: Issues of race is a sensitive issue with many people. As a result of our history as a country, race as defined by South African law, remains the most accurate proxy for culture. If you would prefer me to refer to the cultural or race group to which you belong, by any other term, please indicate this to me. Furthermore, for the sake of this interview, I will be using the words gun and firearm interchangeably.

Participants: Please introduce yourself (if you so wish)

CULTURE:

- 2) Please describe your culture, and its attitudes toward firearm ownership...why do think it views firearm ownership as such?
- 3) Some historians say that firearms were a part of certain European/White culture. Since you have identified yourself as White, would you feel 'less White' if you did not own a firearm, please elaborate?

Braman, Kahan and Grimmelman (2005) spoke about 3 types of culture:

- *HIERARCHICAL* :association of firearms with hierarchical social roles (father, protector, hunter and so forth) as well as hierarchical social institutions (military, police and so forth), therefore there would be a negative attitude toward gun control,
- *INDIVIDUALISTIC (Liberalism)*: guns affirm self-reliance...
- *COMMUNITARIAN*: support gun control, since its ownership undermines social solidarity and safety.

- 4) Do you believe that the above distinctions is relevant to your own culture, and has it played a role in your views about firearm ownership?
- 5) Do you think that the ANC government and other political parties, who have a large Black support base (often associated with communal African Culture), have been influenced in their pro-gun-control attitudes by the above mentioned cultural differences?

IDENTITY:

Cock (1997) views identity formation as directly related to violence, and uses the example of the AK-47 (Russian made assault rifle) to show how a firearm ownership identity is defined differently by different groups of people i.e. the AK was seen as a symbol of liberation by some liberation groups. Furthermore, many White South Africans understood firearm ownership as a symbol of their power to protect their families and property and it also gave them a sense of citizenship since the government acknowledged their right to legally own firearms.

-this seems to imply that firearms have a symbolic meaning for different cultural groups.

- 1) How do you think Black gun owners would differ in the meaning attached to firearm ownership compared to White firearm owners?

According to De Greef (2000) some White gun owners---constructed an identity as, "allies of the military and police (belief that the apartheid government would supply ammunition in case of civil war)"---Thus gun ownership, bound up with sense of citizenship.

- 2) Do you agree with this analysis, and if so, do you feel like less of a citizen as a result of the FCA?
- 3) Do you believe that the government is undermining your ability to protect your family?
- 4) If you have done compulsory military service, which was the duty of White citizens of the old South Africa, how did it mould your views concerning firearms and its ownership?

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED DEMAND OF FIREARMS:

Gun culture: "...provides a social sanction for the possession of guns, and moulds attitudes toward laws which may be perceived as threatening to the identity of the 'adherents' of this culture".

- 1) There is the perception that only certain aspects of 'White culture' is influenced by a gun culture, e.g Afrikaaners, but not 'English speaking Liberals'. Is this true, and why/why not?
- 3) There is a stereotype that some White people have an unhealthy affinity toward firearms, do you think that this stereotype is true, and why/why not?

4) What was it like ,the first time you held a firearm? How does holding a firearm make you feel with respect to power,...gender,...righteousness,...maturity,...citizenship.?

5)Do you think that firearms affect the way that people relate to each other, i.e. are people more scared of you once they find out you have a firearm, and if so, what are the common reasons given for this fear? Is this the perception you want people to have about you?

We know that the law states that it is better to run away from a threat than to confront it.

3) How does this make you feel?

On the GFSA website, there is a link at the picture of a toy gun, and states: “When children play with toy guns, it does create in them a sense of licence, that a person can use guns to resolve conflict...”

4) Do you agree/disagree with this statement? Can guns actually be used to resolve conflict, please elaborate?

FIREARMS AND MASCULINITY:

1) Why do you think that firearms are not as popular with women as with men?

Quotes from GFSA website:

“A woman a day on average is shot dead by an intimate partner, a seminar on the impact of firearms on domestic violence has heard. About 80% of the guns used are legal”.

“According to recent Gun Free SA figures, on average one woman six hours is killed by an intimate partner wielding a gun or using other means every six hours. In South Africa, there are 302 fatal shootings to every 100 000 privately-owned guns, compared with four in the United States”.

2) Why do you think that there are so many cases of men killing themselves and their partners with a firearm?

3) Do you think that the way in which men are brought up with respect to gender roles and firearms are related?

Crisis of Masculinity: “Social Dislocation and confusion about their gender identity”

4) Do you think that this ‘crisis of masculinity’ could be contributing toward the high rates of domestic violence with firearms, or is their other factors involved?

6) Many cultures see the role of a man as that of protector of the family. Would this make men feel like less of a man, since the women would not need protecting by a man anymore?

7) If women had more access to firearms and encouraged to own them, do you think that they would be as aggressive as men (reflect on the domestic abuse stats)?

- Traditional norms of masculinity= toughness, aggression, dominance(=GUN CULTURE)

8)Some people say that for the Black males generally, the militant sections of the liberation movements has militarized their masculinity, while for White males, the compulsory military service in the SADF has militarised their masculinity. What are your thoughts on this?

Please comment on the poster below:



- 4) Should women have greater access to firearms? There is a strong push in societies all over the world for women's rights and equality etc. Do you think that firearms can contribute toward this movement?
- 5) Do you think that the reasons for White females owning a firearm would differ to those of a Black female, please elaborate?
- 9) What are the differences between male and female gun owners, if any? Are their reasons for owning firearms different?

GUNS AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES:

Eugene Ter're Blanche: "The Boer and his gun are inseparable"

This highlights gun ownership identity as being at an intersection of gender ("...his gun..."), ethnicity ("The Boer...") and social construction of the population between an object and a person ("...are inseparable").

- 1) What are your views on this statement?
- 3) Why do you think that Black Gun Owners Association of South Africa (BGOASA) was formed, was it necessary?
- 4) Do Black firearm owners differ in the way that they understand firearm ownership?
- 5) Would you ever join BGOASA, why/why not?

Traditional African culture, especially Zulu speaking culture views weapons (knobkerrie, shield and spear) as an integral part of its cultural milieu.

Does this influence the reasons, or the allure of purchasing of guns? Would there be something similar in White culture, in which firearms are part of the way people live their lives?

GUNS AND POLITICAL IDENTITY:

1) Would you say that your political allegiance has influenced your views on gun ownership (Refer to culture section)?

2) In terms of your support for specific political parties, to what extent does their stance on gun ownership influence your support for them?

- Kirsten (2008, 59): “It was clear that one of the reasons that the FF+, NNP and the DP opposed the Bill (FCA 60 of 2000), was their inability to break with the past.”
- In declaring the DP's opposition, one of its members mentions that the ANC “had struck at the very heart of established traditions and value systems within SA (Hanshard as cited in Kirsten 2008, 160)... “The issues raised in the firearm debate, threatened the very core of *what it meant to be a white man in SA*”(Kirsten 2008 160).

3) In your opinion, what did this DP representative mean?

4) Why do you think that different political parties, support or oppose gun control legislation?

Most of the supporters of the Bill were ‘Black’ parties, whose constituencies were:

- denied firearms under Apartheid
- oppressed under Apartheid, under the barrel of a gun

5) If you were to encourage Black firearm ownership, what would you say to these people, who have a certain connotation of firearms (different to those of liberation fighters)?

GUNS AND RACIAL IDENTITY:

An ISS (Institute of Security Studies), 1996 showed that White respondents believe that owning a gun makes you safer, rather than putting you at risk, while more Black respondents believe that owning a gun puts one at more risk than making you safer.

1) Why do you think that this difference exists?

2) What do you think are the similarities and differences between Black and White gun owners? Why is this so?

3) During the Apartheid years, Black people were not allowed to own firearms (even though on paper, these laws were relaxed in 1984). Some say that this is the reason why Black people do not have as much of an affinity toward firearms as those White people who have an affinity toward firearms. Is this not a good thing?

GUNS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:

- 1) Please describe the typical gun owner, as you understand it. Is this identity busy changing, and if so, why/why not?

Since 1994, there has been an increase in the purchasing of guns by Blacks...Cock (1997, 90)

- 2) When the Laws prohibiting Black South Africans from owning guns were eventually abolished, what were the general sentiments within the White community regarding Black gun ownership?

Some analysts believe that for White gun owners, guns were seen as a validation of national identity.

- 3) Do you think that gun ownership should be seen as a symbol of national identity? Do you think that this was the case in certain sectors of the White community during the Apartheid years, please elaborate?

Black gun owners Association of SA---Formation of new social identities.

- 4) Would you ever consider joining Black Gun Owners Association of South Africa, why/why not?

- 5) How do you think that Black gun owners *perceive* White Gun Owners?

GUNS AND NOTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP:



Do you think that owning a firearm, should be a symbol of citizenship,?...why/why not?

Please describe your relationship as a firearm owner with the state in the old South Africa, and does it differ to your relationship with the government of today.

It has been reported in various news media that legal gun owners who were unhappy with the FCA 60 of 2000, would not complying with its requirements. Would this not be a sign of bad citizenship? Please share your views on this?

APPENDIX D**Consent Form**

I have read and understand the above details outlining the purposes of the study

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and am free to leave at any time.

I understand that my name will not be used in any way in the study .If I want my name to be used, I will let the researcher know.

I understand that I do not have to answer anything which makes me feel uncomfortable.

I understand that if I mention anything which would incriminate me with the legal system of South Africa, the researcher has an ethical responsibility to report it to the relevant authorities.

If you decide to participate in this study and have read the above and understood it, then please sign here:

----- Date: -----

Signature of person obtaining consent form

----- Date: -----

APPENDIX E

Participant Evaluation Form/Debriefing form

Dear Sir

Allow me to thank you for participating in this research study, which would better enable us to understand how your identity as a gun owner is influenced by various factors, and how this identity consequently influences your attitudes toward firearm control legislation.

In order to improve our research, we value your opinion and critiques. Please tell us about your experiences, while participating in this research study.

What do you think was the purpose of the research interview?

What do you think are the researcher's views on the topic?

Please comment on the researchers conduct during the interview?

Do you think that the questions posed by the researcher, would BEST answer the research question? Please elaborate.

Please comment on the setting and venue.

Do think anything could have been done differently, to improve the interview process, and if so what exactly?

If you have any comments to make regarding the interview process, please express them in the space provided:

Please indicate why you would or would not be prepared to participate in future studies with the researcher concerned:

Thank you again for your valuable participation in this study. If you have any further questions, please speak to the researcher or contact the academic supervisor,

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