Chapter Three
Collective Identity, Spatiality & Subcultural Visibility

Introduction
Most subcultural studies commence with an outline of how to conceptualise the term ‘subculture’. As alluded to in Chapter One, there are weaknesses with certain definitions. On the one hand, scholars at the CCCS explain subcultural affiliation in narrow class terms and perceive the actions of youth as a symbolic form of resistance. Revisionists, on the other hand, understand subcultures as creative explorations of identity. In doing so however they tend to underplay the role of factors such as class position, historical context and importantly group affiliation, all of which, are key features that not only inform the construction of identities but also render subcultures as visible and distinctive units within broader cultural systems.

This chapter centres on identifying the distinguishing and visible points of commonality between youths, which in this case partly created the ducktail youth subculture. It attempts to fill a gap in subcultural studies by exploring the, ‘nature of social identity, the nature of the subcultural group, and the relationship between the individual, social group and wider society’.

Although Ducktails’ identities varied, popular culture, the latest fashion trends, language, ritual, locality and the milieu, in which the subculture unfolded, affected the construction of a common Ducktail subcultural template. As sketched out in Chapter Two, social, political and cultural life was organised around a variety of institutions such as the school and entertainment facilities. The post-war decade witnessed the expansion of popular culture such as fashion, music (especially Rock ‘n’ Roll), film and leisure facilities aimed specifically at youths and embraced by them on an everyday basis. Subcultural identity was (and is) forged around cultural symbols such as image, style, language and social institutions in the form of places of entertainment or as Widdicombe and Woofit suggest ‘identities are produced in and through the organisation of everyday practices.’

Image (style and dress), argot (or slang), popular culture (films and music), and ritual practices (such as
frequenting the same places and venues), interacted with each other not only to produce the characteristic elements of the ducktail subculture but also marked points of entry into the subculture and encouraged commitment. Widdicombe and Woofit contend:

In the case of subcultural groups, initiation is said to involve learning and adopting the style, music preferences, lifestyle and ideological beliefs of the subculture; it also involves learning the skills of performance, that is, playing the role with sincerity (Brake, 1985). Because of the role played by such attributes in initiation and in defining the group as distinct, identification with the group should also involve commitment to style, lifestyle and ideology; this commitment should in turn ensure continued affiliation.3

It will be argued here that the labelling of youths as ducktails was based on their visibility (distinctive style) and collective (and often ritualistic) behaviour. Each of these features – style, language, lifestyle (expressed through routine ritualistic behaviour) will be unpacked and discussed in this chapter with the central aim of accounting for collective identity and spatiality.4

**Looking the Part and Living the Part**

*You had a lot of different categories of Ducktails you got the *jollers* – the main *mannie* as they would say and then you get the guys who wanted to act the part who dressed the part. Those who looked the part and those who lived it. [Hilton]5*

Hilton’s recollection notes the varied degrees of commitment in subcultures. These various levels of belonging were not a unique feature of ducktails but characterise most subcultures. The ducktail subculture bears similarities to the *Tsotsis* in that members were not always involved in crime or strictly controlled gangs. As Glaser points out,

the subculture extended to include urban youths who were neither gang members nor criminals. Subcultural identity cut across gang membership and criminality. A young male could be a ‘member of the “in-group” if he wore *tsotsis*, drank alcohol and smoked dagga freely, spoke *tsotsitaal* well and demonstrated a familiarity with the township environment.6

Glaser refers to these different groupings of *tsotsis* as clusters which included more structured criminal gangs as well as ‘street corner networks’.7
One way that ducktail sub-groupings were defined was by type and degree of access to transport (mobile and pedestrian elements). British motorbikes such as Triumphs, BSAs and AJSs were favoured although Italian bikes such as Ducatis were also popular. American cars Chevies and Fords were the most popular. Younger Ducktails often rode 50cc motorcycles such as Pegasos and Zundapps but always aspired to a faster and more powerful motorbike. Mike Malony (who was riding a 50cc Pegaso) explains what he felt after riding pillion on a BSA Golden Flash (650cc) for the first time,

After the power of the Pegaso, the BSA gave me a new perspective on speed. Doing 90 miles per hour in a 1948 Dodge, my Dad’s car, was one thing. Perched on a hot 650 behind a slightly crazy breker [wild guy] was quite another. We got to La Conga in about a quarter of the time it took me on the Pegaso. We got off the bike blinking away the tears, no one wore helmets or goggles, and Spike introduced me to the manne [guys].

Access to transport did not however unite groups of ducktails. Malony discusses one aspect of this differentiation as follows:

The biggest danger was from other motorcycle brekers or the Hot Rod Boys. Some of those Yankee V-8s could really motor and some could even handle! The jammie [car] that gave us the most grief was a Studebaker Hawk some okes [guys] in Brakpan had. They spent a lot of time at the Casbah Roadhouse and we’d cruise past and scope out the situation and sure enough, they were there, two Brakpan brekers in the Hawk with their cherries and three of their mates in a 57 Chevy, also known to be hot.

Alongside this was the deeper distinction between those who had their own transport and those who walked or caught the bus. Terry recalls in the case of the latter that disputes arose between ducktails and bus conductors:

When I was about 16 or 17 years old the bus drivers and the ducktails used to have a good go at each other. We didn’t have transport so we would walk but mostly caught the bus and we didn’t wanna pay so we would tune [tell] them…

A further category of distinction was between larger and more organised gangs and friendship groups. The latter was generally more common. Membership ranged from three or four members to as many as twenty-five. The more involved members of the subculture arranged themselves into gangs, which typically were involved in ‘anti-social’, quasi-criminal and criminal activities. The
gangs were quite rigidly organised with an identifiable leader and hierarchical structure. Working class boys were more likely to belong to gangs, but affiliation cut across class lines. Spatial location was also an important factor. In many instances the two categories overlapped. Membership of gangs was more usual for those who were closer to the city centre and who had stronger neighbourhood and community ties. In a survey of 100 youths in Hillbrow, as noted in Chapter Two, Engelbrecht found that 53 per cent belonged to gangs and that 65 per cent carried dangerous weapons, which included bicycle chains, knuckle dusters, flick-knives, rubber pipes and revolvers (although firearms were a rarity). In South Africa gangs generally took their names from the areas in which members resided. The extent of and resort to violence also provided a further marker of differentiation. Mike Malony, a Boksburg Duckie confirms that membership in gangs was more common closer to the city,

There were levels of everything. If you went to the poorer areas the guys there were bad guys there and they were in a gang situation, either part of the gang or not so… There were different levels like any social structure. The bottom level there were the guys who were struggling to survive, at the middle level there were the guys emulating those at the bottom and the top level they didn’t have much to do with it… It was a new start and there were people from all strata that wore the Ducktail clothing, walked the Ducktail walk and a lot of them were just in fashion. So they had a different attitude from the guys at the bottom end who were living in the Ducktail infested or rather gang infested area… It was a matter of survival for some guys but for others, it was a fashion.

A similar kind of pressure to join organised gangs existed for the ducktails in Italy. Max recalls:

In the area that I came from you had to join a gang, you had to do something, you had to do some act of vandalism, we were the Bovisa gang, we were from that area – Bovisa… In Italy, we just had a group area and another one that was 3 or 4 kilometres you wouldn’t go there alone. You had to prove yourself of course you didn’t want to get caught…what I had to do was to bring back twenty indicator cases not the globe, a globe you can find anywhere.

The leader of a gang characteristically possessed great physical strength and good fighting skills. Entry into the gang was based on physical prowess, pugnacity and willingness to participate in all activities. Rufus, a Johannesburg duckie, observes that,
The leader would always be the stronger guy in the group, maybe a year older or he would have a reputation for boxing and he would be the predominant guy in the club...it would take a good few slaps before you were allowed into the group. It depends how quick you could prove yourself you could work yourself in the first night if you got into a rort [fight] and you cleaned the other oke [guy] up and you were smaller than the other oke they would accept you readily.16

In this case, pugnacity and fighting skills allowed access to the group. In a sense, fighting became one passage of entry or type of ‘initiation rite’. Brown highlights the significance of initiation rites:

First, they mark the boundaries, symbolically if not actually between insiders and outsiders. Second, they constitute an apprenticeship into the normative standards and skills required of members. Finally, they elicit loyalty from the new member.17

Central to the gang was a strong bond of friendship and fierce loyalty, which included not only the defence of each other but of the gang’s territory (over space and women for example).

‘Friendship groups’ by contrast developed mostly out of friendship ties that were forged at school and in the residential locality. Friendship groups were particularly conspicuous in Pretoria, Gordon Verster maintains:

Pretoria was more loosely organised we weren’t really organised into gangs just groups of friends who dressed the same and went to the same places.18

They represented weaker or diluted versions of the gang with whom they had strong points of commonality which in turn made these numerous groupings of youths identifiable as a distinctive subculture. The most obvious common trait (in both gangs and friendship groups) was the projection of ducktail style. Style in fact was a more general form of initiation and the adoption of a particular style allowed initial entry into subcultures. Fashion was not only utilised as ‘a means of self-enhancement, self-expression for the majority’ but it was also used ‘to express group and, especially in recent years, counter-cultural solidarity’.19
Adorning the body: quiffs, stove-pipes and petticoats

‘Friday afternoons we got into our joller clothes, white shirt with the collar turned up and sleeves rolled up to mid forearm, charcoal stovepipe “rammies” (trousers or jeans) with 12” bottoms (getting into them involved some weird contortions), red and white candy stripes stocks and black Jarman brogues (wing tips in America) with steel heel tips…they only sounded lekker as you ‘jolled’ down the drag (street), ek sê [I say]. The girls wore pony tails hairstyles, with round topped dresses with wide skirts and miles of frilly petticoats, wide belts, flat court shoes or stiletto heels, white gloves and a handbag and you were ready to joll. An alternative to the wide skirt was denim stovepipe jeans or pedal pushers…” (Mike Malony)

As Malony’s testimony suggests, image and style was central to the ducktails. The projection of the image of a ducktail glossed over differences between friendship groups and more organised gangs by blurring the boundaries between the smaller units within the subculture. Brake points out that:

Style ceases to be merely informative, or taxonomic (a cultural system which indicates membership of class or subculture), and becomes open to interpretation of what it means both subjectively for the actor, and objectively in its statement about the actor’s relationship to his [her] world…It indicates which symbolic group one belongs to, it demarcates that group from the mainstream, and it makes an appeal to identity outside that of a class ascribed one.21

Adorning the body was important for male and female members alike, although their choice in fashion was very different. Projecting the correct image (in fashion and hair) was an indicator of subcultural affiliation. Boys’ fashion was diverse. A great deal of time was spent on dressing up and sculpting the hair. It took a lot of patience and care to put on stovepipes (between 12-14 inches in circumference). Attaining the perfect ‘D-A’22 at the back required considerable application and plenty of Brylcreem, La Pabros, and even sugar water to maintain this effect. Combs were used frequently to keep the hair in place. This was especially so for those Ducktails who rode motorbikes.23 Boksburg Ducktail, Mike Malony, recalls

It was very important to make the proper entrance to [sessions]. We’d arrive on five or six bikes and sit and rev the motors a few times before cutting the engines. This let everybody know that the bad guys had arrived, and we’d gather outside before walking through the door. Three paces through the door you’d stop, check out [look around] the scene, and comb your hair to show you had come on the bikes.24
Their preoccupation with appearance reflected their need to portray ducktail style and their version of male sexuality. In this instance, the new clothing styles were a ‘fashionable sort of go out, dressed up for the girls kind of thing.’

Girls had much more variety in fashion and spent a great deal of time experimenting with make-up, hairstyles and clothes. A wide array of styles, ranging from the ‘Wonder-Bra’ through to the ‘fifty-yard petticoat’ were favoured.

The ‘Wonder-Bra’ (padded bras) gave girls a more substantial cleavage. Over this tight sweaters, v-neck or off-the-shoulder shirts were worn which accentuated the body. Denim jeans, pedal pushers, or tight waisted skirts, with fifty-yard petticoats were worn with these skirts. Girls usually made their own petticoats by hand and considerable effort was required to stiffen each net layer. This alone required that they had a strong awareness and knowledge of the latest fashion trends. Els recollects:

We made our clothes ourselves, I made everything myself…skirts, tight tops…if you went out you dressed up, jeans were very much leisure wear.

Fifty yard petticoats, were the most popular and widely worn item – even by those Sheilas who rode motorcycles. This often proved to be hazardous. For example, Gordon Verster a Pretoria duckie recalls

The girls, the Sheilas, wore those petticoats now they were quite dangerous on a motorcycle. I remember after the midnight show at Capital bioscope in Pretoria a girl got onto the bike and the thing got caught and it pulled her clothes off and there she was standing in her panties and a top.

The ‘sheila’s’ – as ducktail women were known - outfits were worn with flat shoes, moccasins (‘Tom Toms’ - sometimes embellished with pictures of Elvis) takkies (trainers) and white bobby socks or the more preferred four inch leather stilettos. They accessorised their outfits with thick, wide studded belts, large plastic hooped earrings (usually clip-ons) and lots (10 - 30) of heavy bracelets. Ankle chains were worn by more ‘daring’ girls. Mike Malony remembers

Any cherrie [girl] who wore an ankle bracelet was known to be really wild! As for wearing high heels with jeans, well that was a one way ticket to hell.
Their clothes were generally made out of vibrantly coloured materials (pinks, blues, yellows and reds) which were complemented with brightly painted nails. Sheilas usually applied black eyeliner with lots of mascara on their eyes and pale lipstick on their lips. Their hairstyles included ponytails on top of the head (usually with a fringe), stylised ‘kiss-curls’, pageboys and later in the 1960s ‘beehives’.

These were the most popular and widely worn styles. However a distinction was drawn between casual wear and clothes that were worn when ‘going out’. Particular items of clothing within this broad ducktail style were reserved for certain occasions. The act of reserving items was a central part of their stylisation. Phil Cohen points out,

...despite their visibility, things simply appropriated and worn (or listened to) do not make a style. What makes a style is the activity of stylisation - the active organisation of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organised group-identity in the form and shape of a coherent and distinctive way of ‘being-in-the-world’.

Denim jeans, short sleeved shirts or sweaters, wide belts with studs and flat heeled court shoes usually made up casual wear. Getting dressed up was part of the ritual of going out. Even going to the *bioscope* was an important event causing boys to wear jackets and the girls to wear gloves and carry clutch bags. Sometimes a light lacy scarf was also worn. Dresses were sleeveless with round necks and full wide skirts. Separate wide skirts were worn with sweaters, round neck tops or off the shoulder tops with a frill around the neckline. Alternatively, sheath sleeveless dresses were worn which had round necks. The length of skirts was also an important marker and changed over time. Initially they ended mid calf. Gradually this grew shorter until in the late 1950s they ended above the knee. This applied equally to both wide and tight skirts. Stockings were worn with skirts and high heels. They were usually skin tone with seams and were held up with a girdle. In certain instances, no stockings were worn at all. This constituted a statement against authority and conventional female fashion styles. Sheilas did not dress that differently from girls that were more conformist but ‘their style was more flamboyant, skirts were shorter, heels were higher, tops were lower.’ For many
ducktails clothes and style was central to their identity and were used as a vehicle to rebel against authority:

To wear a low cut top, tight skirt, four-inch stiletto heels without stockings and an ankle chain was really tuning [telling] the establishment and parents skeef. On top of all this, to ride pillion with the bad guys was the ultimate poke in the eye of authority and was considered anti-social behaviour. Many a reputation was tarnished for much less.34

Female members engaged self-consciously in the process of formulating their ‘femininity’. Their preoccupation with their appearance reflected the need to project the correct image of female sexuality whilst functioning as a symbol of membership in the subculture. The body became ‘a primary site of identity construction; style and appearance signify[ied] consciousness in relation to social environments and institutions as well as in relation to peers.’35 Their choice of clothing and the image which certain outfits projected indicated that female members rebelled ‘at the profoundly superficial level of appearances,’36 against their peers and mainstream society more widely.

Boys too were extremely fashion conscious and utilised style symbolically to display subcultural affiliation and commitment. As mentioned earlier, the main fashion for boys consisted of mostly white, and then in the late 1950s brightly coloured, shirts (with shoestring ties) which were usually rolled up at the elbow. These were worn with ‘stove-pipe trousers’ and a comb in the back pocket.37 Over these, they sported either a leather jacket or a duffel coat. White or brightly coloured socks were a stylistic imperative and were accompanied with crepe-soled shoes or ‘Jarmans’. Usually ‘horseshoes’ or drawing pins were pinned to the soles, producing a distinctive sound whilst walking. Prop remembers:

You used to put a horseshoe on the shoe. We bought them at the bicycle shop. There was one at Germiston station. You would hear clack, clack, clack. You had a way to walk so that they would swing.38

Accessories for boys included wide, leather, studded belts with big buckles and in some cases thick chains and gold or silver rings. Tattoos of daggers, hearts, the word ‘mother’ and ‘love’ spelt across the knuckles were also favoured. Dress then was equally important for boys. As Hilton recalls:
The important thing was the dress – the trousers the stovepipes, the tighter the pants the more of a joller you were and you had to have brylcreem and gum, sideburns…and the walk – the joller walk with jarmans…You had different types of jarmans steel toes, stitched..they don’t make the range anymore…you had to have long sleeves so you could roll them up and with the collar up. If you had a tee shirt, you could roll your sleeve up for your smokes.39

School-going ducktails wore parts of ducktail attire on school premises during school hours. According to Andre - who practised the stylistic dimension of the subculture,

At Boy’s High in Pretoria you could hear the guys walking with Jarmans and the principal used to write letters and threaten the guys. It was part and parcel of the whole thing, you took your flannels to the Indian tailor who tightened them to fourteen inches - so you couldn’t get your feet into them with your shoes on...The squares [conservative youths] had 22 inch bell bottoms...we used to put on white socks with Jarman shoes (which were forbidden at school but worn anyway) and we would deliberately walk in the corridors or go to the toilet during the period, just to hear the ‘click’, ‘click’ everybody used to look....the school ties were quite wide and we used to take them to the Indian tailor in downtown Marabadstad, in Boom Street, and the guy halved the tie into a square. The fashion at that stage was one-inch (maximum) thick ties so the school tie was cut and the collar was cut away - the further up the better. Our combs were in our pockets to fix up the style but usually you had special stuff which was put on after the brylcreem so when you do your kuif [quiff] it became very hard so the wind couldn’t blow your kuif around40

Style was a pastiche and an accolade to American Rock ‘n Roll idols and actors from the mid-1950s onwards. The new fashions which emerged were adopted from outside South Africa. The sheilas for example modelled themselves on Lana Turner and Betty Grable (the ‘sweater girl’).41 Films also played a small but significant part in the ideological construction of identity. Actors who starred in Western and gangster films were most favoured by South African male youth. The string tie, for example, was taken directly from cowboy films. The ducktail male persona was epitomised in the characters that were played by James Dean in Rebel without a Cause (1955) Marlon Brando in The Wild One (1954) and Elvis Presley in Jailhouse Rock (1957). Characters played by Marlon Brando displayed fighting ability and violence, which were central components of ducktail masculine identities (discussed in the following chapter). In a similar vein, Glaser argues that
movies and comics, which were so influential in tsotsi style and imagery, provided numerous machismo role models for boys and conventionally beautiful, and helpless role models for girls; advertisements in magazines and on billboards encouraged a tough, independent image of masculinity.\textsuperscript{42}

As well as influencing style, American films also contributed to Ducktail slang which not only symbolised membership in and commitment to the subculture but also injected into the subculture a uniquely South African character.

**Vocal memes: argot & fragments of language**

*Standing on the corner in my ones and twos [shoes], Down came a joller singing the blues.*

*He clocked [looked] to the left, he clocked to the right, And out came the dagga [marijuana] as he asked for a light, Singing ducktail boogie...*

*Jolling on the corner with my razor and chain; Down came the ore [police], one took my name, He grabbed me by the collar of my charcoal float [coat], Then out came my razor as I slit his throat, Singing ducktail boogie...\textsuperscript{43}*

The above poem typifies Ducktail slang or argot. Despite the various groupings and individual differences between members of the ducktails there was a common language. Ducktail argot was an interesting synthesis of English, Afrikaans and ‘South African English’,\textsuperscript{44} loosely based on old Cockney rhyming slang (‘Rub & Tub’) combined with the incorporation of a few Americanisms from the film industry.

Slang is one of the most widely utilised forms of communication. The creation of a language or body of slang provides a clue to the subculture to which individuals belong. Von Timroth intimates:

Wherever a group of people share the same life style, they develop a uniform group psychology. Group psychology is responsible for the formation of common metaphors and metonyms in technical terms even where members of the same production group do not speak the same mother tongue. The terms are
the product of a group’s self-awareness and serve to demonstrate to the rest of society their independence and autonomy.45

Only a handful of academic studies have investigated slang, the work of Elaine Potter, Eric Partridge, Kenneth Hudson and David Maurer’s being the best known.46 There seems to be hesitancy amongst South African scholars to explore slang within South African English, which may be due to a lack of research opportunities into the spoken word. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a proper and detailed linguistic study of the slang that was commonly used by Ducktails. To do so would entail an examination of tone and accentual differences that arose between for example Ducktails from the North Rand and the East Rand. It would also require embarking on a lexicographical project in which, as Hudson pointed out in the mid-1980s

one has to be able to imagine, hear mentally, the voice in which they are spoken. The accent, intonation, pausing are an essential part of the label, which is another way of saying that the printed dictionary provides a terribly inadequate record for posterity.47

What follows is a very tentative analysis of the roots of the slang that ducktails adopted and mastered.

The crude list of argot (which appears at the end of the chapter in Table 8) was compiled from data collected in press cuttings and interviews. As noted already, their argot was ‘parasitic’ containing words that have been borrowed, adapted and ‘memetically’ transferred.48

The combination of both English and Afrikaans words is hardly surprising since the South African education system forced youths to learn both languages. As was noted in the previous chapter – by 1951, 73 per cent of youths were proficient in both languages.49 Afrikaans terms peppered ducktail argot. Words such as bliksem, boom, ore, and lekker50, are good examples. Loan words were assimilated into their body of argot and at times underwent a semantic narrowing in meaning. They were also charged ideologically with negative connotations, as was the case with words used to refer to members of other racial groups. Lexical differences
between ducktail slang and South African English are obvious. Von Timroth
contends that such languages are:

not the result of individual creativity. People normally pick up these languages
from a collective, which is distinct from their own individuality. To achieve
linguistic isolation, the pronunciation of existing standard language material is
changed, and indigenous words are replaced with loans…

Their language then was social rather than individual. If one was not acquainted with
the ‘lingo’, one would have encountered difficulty in communicating. The meanings
of many of the words used were changed from their original. The syntax moved
between English and Afrikaans.

Certain words that were incorporated into duckie slang have had a long history and
can be described as ‘memes’. A ‘meme’ refers to any cultural segment (language,
style, music) which is imitated, transferred or replicated – in its entirety or in a
fragmented form - from one generation to another. The study of ‘memetics’ has
recently gained popularity through the work of Susan Blackmore. Her account of
the process of how memes are transferred is particularly useful for a better
understanding of the evolution of slang and of particular words that have an
enduring history. When discussing the memetics of language Blackmore argues that:

stringing words together in different orders, adding prefixes and inflections, would
provide fertile niches for new, more sophisticated vocal memes. In sum, the
highest-quality replicable sounds would crowd out the poorer ones.

An excellent example of a ‘vocal meme’ is clobber which denotes clothes and has
been etymologically traced back to the 1850s. Initially it referred to smarter items
of clothing but the term expanded to embrace any form of clothing from the 1870s
onwards. An even older meme is doll which refers to ‘an attractive girl’ and has
been in circulation since the 1770s. These ‘vocal memes’ grouped together to
form a unique mode of communication – Ducktail argot or slang. Argots, explains
Maurer, ‘while secret or semi-secret, are mainly used as a means of identification
by members of the in-group who have knowledge of the sociolect of the
subculture…’ Similarly, Potter contends that, slang
proceeds from a new way of looking at things and it exercises every form of intellectual wit and verbal ingenuity...slang increases intimacy because it allows the speaker to drop to a lower key, to meet his fellow on even terms and to have ‘a word in his ear.\textsuperscript{56}

Slang both creates intimacy and privacy between speakers while accentuating boundaries between social groupings. To an outsider Ducktail language was coded and difficult to understand thereby ensuring a ‘secrecy of communication’.\textsuperscript{57} This was particularly convenient for those involved in illegal activities. The argot pertaining to crime served as a means of protection from those who could jeopardise their activities.

One of the most interesting groups of ‘vocal memes’ imitated by Ducktails was Cockney Rhyming slang. Examples include: ones and twos for shoes; almond rocks for socks; jack scratches for matches and so on. Cockney rhyming slang ‘exemplifies a highly developed ‘disguise mechanism’ in its witty and ingenious coded formulae’\textsuperscript{58} The origins of rhyming slang are a contested issue in most lexicographical work. Partridge – the best known lexicographer of slang and ‘foul language’- found scattered traces of rhyming slang in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. However he believed that it was only from the 1840s\textsuperscript{59} that it was widely used. It most probably became incorporated into Ducktail slang via immigrant youth from England. As Maurer explains:

Each meaning [in rhyming slang] is expressed by a pair of words the second of which rhymes (or rhymes imperfectly) with the meaning. The predominant rhythm of these pairs is either iambic or trochaic and usually carries over into the meaning, dinky-dirt, a shirt. The key word (a shirt) is not supplied but is left for the hearer to supply. . There is frequently – too frequently to be coincidental – a connection between the sound and the sense, or between the imagery and the sense, or both. There is a tendency…to clip one term and allow the other to carry the meaning even though it no longer rhymes, as twist, a girl, from twist and twirl.\textsuperscript{60}

Americanisms such as alkie, jive, joint, were also incorporated into Duckie slang. According to Hudson, ‘jive’ and ‘square’ were ‘originally bebop expressions associated with black communities in the 1940s. It was through ‘Rock ‘n Roll and the films linked to it [which] turned them into white talk.’\textsuperscript{61}
Most importantly, subcultural argot reflected their life-style and belief systems. This language ‘like other languages, mirrors the culture of its speakers’ Scornful words, prejudiced words and slang reveal much about the life, beliefs and perspectives of ducktails. Their hedonism, racism and bias was expressed through slang. Some of their words were offensive and described their activities (social and antisocial) and prejudices. The 140 slang words that have been collected here reflect the lifestyle and belief system of certain members of the ducktail subculture. The categories into which they can be subdivided are themselves revealing. Thus, relating to: hedonism we find *jol*, *jolling*, *joller*, *possie*, *sessions*; intoxication (mostly alcohol and marijuana induced) we find *alki*, *boom*, *cut*, *dop*, *flying*, *skuif*, *sparked*, *weed*, *zoll*; *barney*, *bliksem*, *clean up*, *lemmie*, *moer* for pugnacity; for homophobia words such as *bunny boys*, *queers*, *rabbits* and racism we find *charras* and *coolie*.

Ducktail argot also defined both the boundaries of the subculture more sharply and subgroupings within it by not only excluding outsiders but also by highlighting differences within the subculture through the adoption of regional dialects. Although argot was understood by most members, geographical location and region also shaped it. In Johannesburg for example, a road was referred to as a *drag* whereas in Durban it was called a *gully*. In Johannesburg, a girl was referred to as a *goose* whereas in Durban they were called *cutties*. Locality therefore intersected with argot. Spatiality and territory were important elements shaping subcultural identity. The next part of this chapter discusses this spatial dimension more fully.

**Mapping Subcultures: Territoriality, Spatiality and Place**

The Ducktails’ lifestyle centred on the pursuit of pleasure which was routinely and ritualistically accessed at a range of entertainment facilities. Pleasure ‘became a conscious and essential content of their leisure activities and became a central value in their behaviour. The outward signs of this were the car, the party, the petticoat and the pony-tail.' This section traces the cultural use of public leisure spaces (such as dance halls and cinemas) in Johannesburg. At times street corners
and public parks became contested spaces that were regulated not only by members of the subculture but also by the authorities. With this in mind, it is surprising that most studies exploring subcultures downplay the significance of spatiality in the construction of subcultural identities. Exceptions to this general tendency are the path breaking studies published in Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures. The collection stresses the importance of exploring the ‘geographical constitution of cultures,’ and seeks to ‘capture the geography of influences (both inward and outward), their evolution over time, and the power relations,’ which subcultures experience.

Post-structural and postmodern theory has contributed much towards an understanding of the relationship between space and identity in the past ten years. Recently South African scholars have followed suit. The first ‘postmodern’ analyses of ‘spatiality’ or spatial identities in South African locales were presented at a symposium hosted by the University of Sussex in April 2002. These works build on studies (notably local social histories) written in the 1980s by historical geographers (such as Alan Mabin and Sue Parnell) and social historians (Shula Marks, Peter Delius and Phil Bonner for example). Collectively the latter ‘tradition’ insists ‘on the inextricability of material conditions, consciousness and culture’ whilst emphasising ‘the empirical investigation of ‘real’ places and the avoidance of ahistorical and atemporal abstractions.’ New investigations take cognisance of and expand on this to uncover the: ‘power of cultural imaginings’, the interconnectivity of theory and the subjects of study, trans-national discourses and ‘networked conception[s] of place and identity’ However, one major problem with these new geographical histories is that ‘spatiality’, ‘space’ and ‘place’ are used interchangeably and are rarely conceptualised.

In the context of this study, spatiality refers to how one’s locality, temporal positioning and experiences of and encounters with place in everyday life shape identity. More often than not places have multiple ambiguous meanings and can simultaneously be sites of pleasure and pain. Spatiality ‘is an articulation of social
demarcations, relations of power, meanings, myths, histories, and practices, and relates to the quotidian of place. It is also intertwined with and influences other identities – racial and gendered for example- which are expressed in different places and contexts. Identity, is therefore produced in the context of interactions with physical locales such as neighbourhoods and places of entertainment. Abbot-Chapman and Robertson contend that the:

social construction of space and place by youth is complex and many layered. Situated knowledge of home, neighbourhood, schools and related spaces of leisure activities can be both private (such as own bedroom, nature site) and public (such as shopping mall) embracing communal and individual experiences. Reference systems and related beliefs and values are likely to reflect these localised place contexts.

They argue further that ‘space and place thus have physical, social, temporal and experiential dimensions. Public and private spaces and associated individual and communal activities in real time can be identified. The ‘spatial axis of youth culture’ and the way in which it can be a determining factor in the construction of identity and in this case study collective identities needs to be uncovered. This section seeks to map out - with a particular focus on ducktail leisure places and how these geographical spaces were appropriated by youths - the way in which urban experiences of the city and a ‘sense of place’ shaped spatial identities and group or collective identities in the subculture.

Within the subculture – which as pointed out earlier, was not confined to a single specific geographical location – different groups territorialised neighbourhoods and public places. Members of these groups attached specific meanings to certain places (for example, the street became a site for assaults and the bioscope a place to ‘make-out’). This is indicative of the way in which space, place and the city were given meaning through human experience, of the way relations of power influencing these meanings, and of the way perceptions of spatiality were ‘an important element in building a social identity.’ As Ingram et al, observe

Each person’s “map” is usually part autobiography, part mythology, and part the embodiment of tensions concerning forms of marginality, such as sexual politics, gender, race, ethnicity or culture. Each map constitutes a page in the
ongoing atlas of individual life and communal history. It contains emotional, political, and economic dimensions and involves both individuals and groups. Together with political and economic forces, individual and group experiences of place and space provide a more complete understanding of the city. Shields explains the importance of uncovering the quotidian:

Understandings and conceptions of space cannot be divorced from the real fabric of how people live their lives. To do so would be like saying that culture is made up of beliefs and traditions but has no impact on how people live their lives. Their concrete, non-discursive, practices are both informed by and go on to provoke modifications in this cultural discourse of the spatial.

Similarly, for Lefebvre human experience of space is as valuable as discussing the state’s policies and strategies that govern space. He believes that there are two interrelated elements central for an understanding of ‘space’; that of urban reality and everyday life:

everyday life and the urban, indissolubly linked, at the same time products and production, occupy a social space generated through them and inversely. The analysis is concerned with the whole of practico-social activities, as they are entangled in a complex space, urban and everyday, ensuring up to a point the reproduction of relations of production (that is, social relations).

The ‘experiential dimensions of place’ therefore accord meaning to spaces. For Manuel Castells experience ‘is the action of human subjects on themselves within the various dimensions of their biological and cultural entity in the endless search for fulfilment of their needs and desires.’ Experiences and interactions with specific places were not always based on desire and the pursuit of pleasure. Often obstacles, conflicts and forces were encountered which helped to shape experience further. The spaces (physical or abstract) in which experiences are lived, created and recreated should therefore be considered for a better understanding of spatiality and spatial identities.

Friendship and/or gang networks were usually established according to geographical locality and/or neighbourhood ties. Most of the members of the subculture had ties to a particular gang or friendship group. One of the major activities of both groups, was inter-gang fighting which occurred between groups from rival areas.
However at times these neighbourhood gangs would co-operate with one another in defence of larger areas on the Witwatersrand. Like members of the Tsotsi subculture, Ducktail identity ‘overlapped with spatial familiarity’. For youth gangs and members of the Ducktail subculture particularly, territorialisation and spatiality were the axis (or at least the central components) of their identities. The strong connection between space and neighbourhood affiliation, was reflected in the names chosen for these gangs, the bulk of which were based on the areas in which the members resided. There was a ‘Jeppe Gang’, a ‘Fordsburg Dip Gang’, a ‘North End Gang’ and the ‘Primrose Boys’ in Germiston to name but a few. Prop’s recollections reflect this sense of locality clearly:

The main ducktail area was in Jo’burg. Braamfontein was where the bad ducktails were – the Braamie Boys. It wasn’t a very rich area so you had a lot of working class guys: they would be operators but they wouldn’t keep a job for long…Wayside paddas and the Alex guys were the two groups in Germiston. You wouldn’t joll in the other’s territory. The Alex boys were the Malvern guys.

Naming gangs after residential areas was also typical of the duckies European counterparts. Chris Bucholtz – a German ducktail – recalls, ‘the gangs or groups were called after township names: Wandshecker, Billsteder, and Actemaar.’

Even within the subculture, dissimilarities existed according to locality and spatiality, in argot for example. Such regional differences also included preferences in alcohol. In Johannesburg brandy was favoured whereas in Durban cane was the most popular. Subtle stylistic variations can also be detected, for example in Jeppe stovepipes had a higher waist line and were shorter by design. For those based in Johannesburg, sleeves were rolled up outwardly in contrast to in Durban where they were rolled inwardly. At times, this identification with places became ‘somewhat confining and ‘localist’ in the sense of people having restricted spatial horizons.

This ‘localism’ became intertwined with territoriality which at times was expressed violently. For example Ducktails from the East Rand would group together in defence of their territory against Ducktails from the South Rand. Clashes between rival groups of Ducktails frequently occurred. Groups from
Jeppe teamed together to fight those groups that were from the South. At the same time, Ducktails within the East and South Rand would fight with each other. Hilton recalls there were:

a lot of rough guys came from Mayfair, and Fordsburg, they were white areas then...In Yeoville you had the Purdy brothers. There was a lot of inter-area fighting. Have the South versus the North the Grove against Yeoville or the Greenside guys. Guys would stand together. It was more territorial...Braamie boys who were the motorbike gang then, the Braamie boys I was petrified of them. There guys like Les Tennon, Johnny Snyman..there wasn’t really biker gangs the bikers were the jollers at the sessions.

The above quote also shows how certain areas became associated with notorious members of the Ducktails. For example, Johnny Snyman was feared in Yeoville. George the Duke from the East, the Hot Rod Gang and the ‘Brakpan Brekers’ both from Brakpan and Brian Callum from Mayfair gained reputations for their pugnacity and commanded respect from their peers. Malony was especially wary of Johnny Snyman:

Johnny was a really hard bastard. He was short and slightly built and wore Buddy Holly glasses but he was completely ruthless in a fight. He carried a switchblade he’d bought in Lorenco Marques and had a sawn off broom handle below the seat of the Ducati...he was as unpredictable as hell.

Gang culture and spatiality embodied ‘discipline, identity, and the command of space.’ Defence of territory was a major activity of the gang and many fights were initiated due to territorial ‘invasions’. According to a Primrose Ducktail, Bones:

You couldn’t have ten okes from Germiston go to the south or vice versa ‘cos your gonna have trouble...Jeppe, Troyeville, all those areas you couldn’t go there.

Besides defending space, invading another group’s territory was a major pastime for most Ducktails. As Mike Malony explains of an incursion to Germiston:

The best jol was to ride to another town and pull up outside a session where a lot of bikes were parked. We’d sit on the bikes revving the motors and watching the door. The local jollers would burst through the entrance, see that we were from Boksburg and go for their bikes. We waited until they’d almost got started, drop the clutches and thunder off into the night.
Intruding into another group’s territory usually resulted in races between rival groups either in cars or on motorbikes. A typical example is the race that occurred outside the Casbah roadhouse in Brakpan between Mike Malony and his four friends from Boksburg who were riding bikes (including a BSA Golden Flash, 350 Gold Star, Matchless and Ducati) and the Brakpan ‘Hot Rod Gang’ with their V-8 Studebaker Hawk and 57 Chevie. As Mike Malony describes:

We pulled up about three bays away and these jollers in the voemies [cars] started checking us out skeef [suspiciously]. Naturally we started tuning them about how slow the jammies [cars] were and before too long, Spike [who was riding a BSA] was lined up next to the hawk in the street, engines revving, pointing to the circle at Mandy’s engineering. Eddie waved Spike’s white scarf and with white smoke pouring from the Stud’s rear tyres, they rocketed off towards the circle...As they disappeared into the night we could see that Spike was falling behind. We heard the roar of the V8 motor off in the distance, some squealing tyres and Spike’s headlight emerged about ten yards ahead of the Studebaker...Back at the roadhouse, the oke with the hawk was tuning how he’d actually won as his car was faster. When Johnnie stepped up, a head shorter and 60 pounds lighter, and moered [hit] this oke on the side of the jaw. He went down without a sound and all hell broke loose.96

In this context territoriality can be viewed as ‘lived or experienced inside of power relations.’97 Through these repeated invasions and defences of territory, certain areas gained reputations for being ‘dangerous’. Fainstein and Campbell contend, place

although the product of creative activity, spatial relations once formed take on a seeming fixity, a life of their own...Having been identified on the basis of their residents’ characteristics, they become a defined territory a perceived area of danger or source of exotica for outsiders.98

The southern suburbs was considered by most ducktails to be one of the most dangerous areas to enter. Malony recalls:

I never went alone. The only time I went to South was to meet a friend of mine. He would joll with me I would joll with him... You had to be careful where you were going if you saw a bunch of guys on the side of the road and you weren’t with your mates you would cross over just in case.99

Similarly Hilton, then based in Orange Grove, recalls:
We were very territorial. You would not go to the south alone otherwise you would just get bugged [beaten] up. We would joll with about thirty guys at a time.106

Another form of territorialisation can be seen in the popular pastime of gatecrashing parties. If Ducktail gangs heard of a party or other social event, regardless of any connections between themselves and the hosts, they would gatecrash the party, vandalise their property and other possessions, and fight anyone who got in their way. They were usually armed with flick-knives, knuckle-dusters and clubs on these excursions. The gangs which gatecrashed parties came from both within and from outside the neighbourhood. For those from other areas, it was a symbolic breaking down of boundaries and infiltrating on the rival group’s zone of control or turf. According to Freed, the situation became so bad that the principal of a Turffontein school called in the police to stand in at school dances. In 1956, ‘about 50 “ducktail boys” and their girlfriends “gatecrashed” a church function for children held in Yeoville.’101 In another instance, approximately fifty Ducksails invaded a party being given by R.S. Harpur of Saxonwold on 11 January 1958.102 Hilton remembers:

On Saturday nights, we would walk thirty or forty kms from one party to another or the bus would take us to Hilbrow. We were never invited we just heard there was a party and rock up there…but there were socials on Saturday nights depending on the area.103

Vandalism was also a symbolic form of claiming space. Ducktails expressed their right to control property in public places within their territory by frequently damaging signs, public telephones, and parks. For example, at Rhodes Park in Kensington, a local gang was responsible for destroying newly planted flowers and for smashing globes in the little open-air theatre.104 Vandalism also intersected with the destructive and violent behaviour which permeated the culture. Terry remembers:

There was a lot of vandalism, we used to slash the seats on the buses, go to the bioscope [cinema] and tear the place to pieces, break the ashes, jesus [Jesus] we were little shits...the police seldomly caught us and if they did you would just pay a fine.105
Public space, and in particular the street, was clearly an important area that shaped and informed spatial identities. For some it was a means to express territoriality and for proving masculinity whilst for others it was a meeting place and a source of entertainment. The multiplicity of meanings attributed to the street should be accounted for because it is ‘synonymous with the modern city: a spatial and temporal microcosm of modern complexities and contradictions, hopes and sufferings, dreams and nightmares – both individual and collective.’\textsuperscript{106} The street itself became the scene for the widely played – although often dangerous – game of ‘chicken’. Terry recalls:

\begin{quote}
We used to play chicken the \textit{oke} [guy] who pulls out last is a chicken, you know how many times we came short, oh my god! I've got scars on me to show how I came short. Motorbikes, cars, some \textit{okes} used to go and stand in front of a bus jump out there at the last minute. We did it just to prove that we weren’t scared, life didn’t mean that much to us then.\textsuperscript{107}
\end{quote}

The street was also a site of entertainment and enabled young people to have more freedom, as there were no adults monitoring their movements. It became the host for ‘joy-riding’, the most popular street at that time being Jules Street which stretched from the East Rand to the city centre. Main Reef Road stretching from the East to the West Rand was another favourite. Joy rides involved ‘borrowing’ someone’s car and either racing through the city or playing chicken, often without a valid driver’s licence. Between 1945 and 1954 offences against the Driver’s Licence Legislation (code 087) constituted 50 per cent of all crime committed by white ‘juvenile adults’.\textsuperscript{108} Racing through the streets and playing ‘chicken’ was a common form of competition and of ‘devilment’ between Ducktails:

\begin{quote}
these dark games that you played called chicken were like in the James Dean movie and its the cars over the cliff, they were not quite that serious but you would play anything where you could see if you could best the next guy\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

A similar type of ‘theft for use’\textsuperscript{110} was common practice amongst Italian youths or \textit{teppismo} (hooligans) in the 1960s. As Stella observes

\begin{quote}
The \textit{teppista} who got hold of one [car] without taking definitive possession was driven to steal it by a range of impulses of desire, not by the simple taste for theft. The car was in fact a means to an end, although not an economical one: the uses made of it (driving, looking at it, showing it off, feeling it, speeding,
getting into it with friends or a girl) satisfied desires of exhibitionism, collective
fun, temporary enjoyment of someone else’s property, and sexual power. You
can do anything with a car; it is the means to omnipotence; for these young
people, it took the symbolic place of money.111

The street was therefore a significant space that youths occupied. For an East
Rand ducktail it was quite an adventure to go to Johannesburg. Two routes could
be taken to ‘Johies’:

Through Bedfordview or through Primrose and Germiston. Going through
Primrose meant going through Stanhope Dip to the top of Jules Street and then
the long drag [street] down “julesies”. Dodging the cars down Jules Street had
the added attraction of tram lines…getting caught in the tram lines presented a
real hazard which could easily bring a rider down…After riding for what
seemed like hours, down Jules street, we came out at Jeppe and on down the
hill on Commissioner Street.112

The street corner café was another popular place in which to be and to be seen. It
acted as a meeting place and a space to ‘sight out the situation.’113 The streets
outside bioscopes [cinemas], cafes, roadhouses and dance halls became the spaces
in which Ducktails indulged in proving their masculinity through a display of their
pugnacity. In Port Elizabeth, for example:

another favourite meeting place - was a place called the Red Windmill - its still
there but its changed very much. In those days it was way out of town and if
you pitched up to the Red Windmill late at night you could more or less assure
yourself that there would be a fight or there would be a race, playing chicken
was very popular.114

Gender impacted on individual and group experiences of the street. For young
women and girls the street was a place of vulnerability where they were often the
victims of molestation and sexual harassment. As noted by Connell, ‘the street is
the setting for much intimidation of women, from low-level harassment like wolf-
whistling to physical manhandling and rape...The street then is a zone of
occupation by men’ in which young men ‘are the most intimidating and
dangerous.’115 On the street, sexual harassment can be seen as a form of
entertainment in which some Ducktails regularly indulged. Thus categories such
as gender ‘impose distinctive social topographies on the urban landscape for
members of different groups.’116
As the examples of racist and sexual harassment show, the everyday encounters in the city and interactions with both space and place was not always pleasant. Exploring these conflictual relationships avoids the problems embedded in recent work on the city. Westwood and Williams point out there has been tendency to ‘romanticise the city and promote a sense of the local that is artificially distanced from the real conflicts of urban life’\textsuperscript{117}

Equally, experiences of the city were not always conflictual and spatial identities were not always enmeshed with violence. Often ‘social life’ became ‘inscribed in space and time’\textsuperscript{118} through the frequenting of places of entertainment such as bioscope-cafes, roadhouses, ‘sessions’, dance halls, billiard rooms, bars, public parks. Familiarity with places of entertainment as well as ““knowing people” from a diverse range of backgrounds can facilitate feelings of safety and movement across the invisible borders of youth territory.”\textsuperscript{119} Places therefore have conflicting meanings for individuals and groups which is reflective of the complexity of social spaces.

Physical places became the primary site for ritualistic behaviour and resulted in them being categorised as ‘ducktail haunts’. The following examples reveal how gangs and friendship groups had

\begin{quote}

a network of preferred places, interaction spaces….Individuals and groups feel their way through a city in activity space orbits with the nature and extent of circulation patterns generating and influencing images and establishing affective relationships with particular places, routes, and nodes.\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Attendance – or rather \textit{jolling} – was not spontaneous. Leisure time was strategically planned and firmly rooted in \textit{Duckie} routine and ritual. Hilton recalls:

\begin{quote}

It was all very routine, catch a movie in the afternoon, Saturday night there was a \textit{session}, Sunday out to one of the pleasure resorts for talent shows, go to the \textit{drags} [drag racing].\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

Engaging in leisure activities offers an escape from ‘the mendacity of everyday living’ (at home, school, college, university or at work). Leisure was key and socialising occupied every moment over the weekend. Malony remembers a typical weekend:
We all congregated at the Town Hall Café in Boksburg....By early evening we’d have decided what we were going to do on Saturday...Saturday night was session time. Sports clubs raised money by organising dances where people danced to records played on a radiogram...the point was you came to jive, meet girls and pose with your mates...Sunday morning was a slow time in the fifties, most things were closed [social activities on Sundays was restricted by the Sabbath Day Observance Act]. The cafés stayed open but they could only sell certain things. However by some trick, Bert’s Snooker Club managed to open on Sunday morning until 12 noon so that’s where we headed.122

Entertainment facilities provided a platform from and in which young people could construct and reconstruct their identities. As Fainstein and Campbell explain,

Urban space gains its meaning as a consequence of the activities carried on within it, the characteristics of the people who occupy it, the form given to it by its physical structures, and the perceptions with which people regard it. Consequently such space does not simply exist; it is instead a social creation.123

Social relations developed within venues thus added a more human meaning to physical forms. Interaction with public places were more often than not a highly subjective and personal encounter. Leisure experiences were often varied and characterised by diversity and mixed feelings. The experience was shaped by interrelated elements including: social interaction with other youths, music, and at times the use of recreational drugs (mostly dagga). Most often jolling was a collective activity undertaken by a group of friends. Feelings of inclusion (with friends for example) and exclusion (from other groups) were experienced. There was also a sense of affinity, togetherness, tactility and incorporeal feelings experienced within the space of a particular venue. The next section of this chapter is devoted to the popular routine rituals in which ducktails engaged - sessions, speedway, roadhouses and the bioscope.

**Ritualistic Leisure Spaces: Rock ‘n’ Roll Sessions, Roadhouses and Bioscopes**

Rock ‘n Roll sessions were arranged by churches, youth and sports clubs along with local municipal councils.124 Private sessions were also organised away from the watchful eye of adults. A session was a dance that was usually held on a
Saturday evening from 19:00 until midnight. At sessions, young people could listen to the latest popular Rock ‘n Roll tracks and dance.

The impact of Rock ‘n Roll not only on the subculture but also on the formation of identities was enormous. Aside from the work of musicologists and rock music critics (such as Peter Wicke and Simon Frith), the role of music is another theme which subcultural analysts underplay. This neglect is being addressed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose’s edited collection, *Microphone Friends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*\(^\text{125}\) is the best example of new work in the field. During the fifties, music was an important influence which united youths across the globe. Rock ‘n Roll as Hudson explains is ‘the magic carpet which has gone from country to country and continent to continent as if national frontiers and iron curtains did not exist.’\(^\text{126}\)

Rock ‘n’ Roll began its rapid revolution of musical styles in the mid 1950s. It was this new and vibrant musical genre that ducktails emphatically embraced. Other musical options were available such as jazz artists including Frank Sinatra and Tommy Steele and they may have also influenced the ducktails style. Originally, Rock and Roll was used in blues songs to describe lovemaking before it referred to a beat.\(^\text{127}\) As a musical style, it was derived from Rhythm and Blues (R & B) and the dominant instruments - saxophone, piano, guitar, and drums - were retained. Most Rock ‘n’ Roll songs have the same structure being composed of 12-bars, noisy repetitive drum beats combined with the guitar and saxophone. The reliance on stringed instruments, in particular the electric guitar, together with the use of ‘simple’ melodies, catchy refrains and the occasional use of ‘doo-wop’ backing vocals created the revolutionary sound of rock ‘n’ roll. The lyrics were centred on having a good time, partying all night and boy/girl relationships.

Rock ‘n Roll favourites included Bill Haley and His Comets; Eddie Cochran; Chubby Checker; Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley. Chuck Berry was the first black artist to receive popular support in the music industry, the press and youth. One of his most popular songs, according to Wicke, was ‘Roll over Beethoven’, which
was released in 1956. Clearly, this song challenged adults’ musical tastes. Moreover, what Chuck Berry was ‘screaming to his fans in this song…heralded a conception of music which had become aware of its own novelty and which challengingly contrasted this with all other musical traditions.’ Alongside Berry, most would agree that Bill Haley’s music not only signalled a turning point in commercial music, but also marked the beginning of Rock ‘n Roll. However, it was Elvis Presley and his youthfulness who became the central icon – at least for the ducktails and their counterparts across the world. Aside from Brenda Lee, the most popular Rock ‘n Roll musicians were male. For girls, Elvis was elevated to the status of a sex symbol, an object for girl’s to fantasise over. Boys related to his defiance and power effortlessly to attract the opposite sex. Wicke contends:

Elvis Presley embodied the uncertain and consuming desire of American high school teenagers in the fifties, the desire somehow to escape the ordinariness which surrounded them without having to pay the bitter price of conformity…Presley finally made these songs ‘their’ music, for he was one of them. It was no longer alien cultural identity which spoke through these songs, the identity of outlaws, of the Afro-American and white ‘fringe groups’ from the lower end of the social scale, but their own Teenagers had integrated this music into the context of their lifestyle, accompanied by the derogatory remarks of adults, threatened by parental bans and school disciplinary measures. Through Elvis Presley, this context was now public, sanctioned by the music business.

Hudson notes of Presley’s following,

Once Presely was there as the great cult figure, teenagers became a movement, or perhaps one should say, a large proportion of them did. They developed their own international style in clothes, habits and language…The music that surrounded the god was, from a purely musical point of view, simple to the point of puerility. This was an advantage rather than the reverse…One not so much listened to it as felt it.

Rock ‘n’ Roll was created for youths. As noted by well known academic and rock critic, Simon Frith, Rock ‘n Roll’s
good qualities were spontaneity, vitality, wit and honesty, its bad qualities were banality, crudity, cynical exploitation. It was music for dancing, courting and hanging about – silly love songs with a more or less insistent beat.
No reference to specific times or social context is made within the songs. It was this universal quality in the lyrics which made it popular worldwide. Bill Haley’s “Rock Around the Clock” released in 1955, highlights this characterisation:

        Rock around the clock tonight
        We’re gonna rock, rock, rock,
        Till broad daylight,
        We’re gonna rock, we’re gonna rock
        Around the clock tonight.

        When the clock strikes two, three and four
        If the band slows, we’ll yell for more,
        We’re gonna rock around the clock tonight.

The persistence of the dance theme is continued in Chubby Checker’s ‘Let’s Twist Again’:

        Come on let’s twist again
        Like we did last summer,
        Yeah, let’s twist again
        Like we did last year

        Do you remember when
        Things were really humming
        Yeah, let’s twist again,
        Twisting time is here.

Mike Malony believes, Gene Vincent spoke for the ducktails when he sang:

        Say mamma, can I go out tonight? Say mamma will that be all right?
        They’ve got a rockin party down the street,
        Say mamma can you hear that beat?
        Woah woah WOO woo, woah woah woo woo woah
The popularity of music was reflected through chart ratings and record sales. ‘Shake, Rattle, and Roll’ was in the top ten for twelve weeks from September 1954. ‘Rock Around the Clock’ was number one for eight weeks from May 1955 onwards. Chubby Checker’s ‘The Twist’ topped the American charts for two weeks in 1960 and again for two weeks in 1962. Between 1954 and 1959, record sales rocketed from $213 000 000 to $603 000 000. The central reason for the popularity of Rock ‘n Roll was the way in which it was inextricably linked to the mass media. Gillet asserts:

Rock ‘n Roll was the first form of music whose development was linked to radio, film and television...in the wake of a number of innovations in media technology which led to a rapid reduction in the price of records...In 1948 CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) introduced the high fidelity long-playing record (LP)...Not long after this RCA (Radio Corporation of America) brought out the 45 r.p.m. single, based on the same technology, as their answer to the competition’s LP. The single was aimed at the new teenage market and was priced within reach of teenagers’ pocket money.

In South Africa it was commercialised through radio and was affordable. According to JB:

LM [Lorenco Marques] radio is what you would listen to...people lived by the Hit Parade on a Sunday evening, David Davies ‘Ggrrrreetings to you and you and especially to you and you’...music played a very important role. A single would have cost you 7 and 6.

The popularity of Rock ‘n’ Roll in the Ducktail subculture indicates that some youths had sufficient disposable income to engage in the commercial market. Brake emphasises that,

Capitalist cultural forms contain liberating as well as oppressive elements, and rock music results from the music industry's attempts to develop new markets, and its youthful audience's attempts to find a medium to express its own experience.

More than being a response to market forces, young people related directly with the hedonistic philosophies espoused in the lyrics; they fulfilled their desires which were released on the dance floor. It was this all encompassing power of Rock ‘n Roll that distinguished sessions from bar crawling. Music, John Sheppard explains, is:
ideally suited to coding homologously, and therefore to evoking powerfully yet symbolically, the structures, rhythms, and textures of the inner life of the individual; the structures, rhythms and textures of the external social world; and the order of relations between them...Because music can enter, grip and position us symbolically, it can act powerfully to structure and mediate individual awareness as the ultimate seat of social and cultural reproduction.138

It also played a significant role in the construction of identity. Frith contends:

Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experience it offers the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives...What makes music special – what makes it special for our identity – is that it defines a space without boundaries (a game without frontiers). Music is thus the cultural form best able to cross borders – sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races and nations – and to define places; in clubs, scenes, and raves, listening on the headphones, radio and in the concert hall, we are only where the music takes us.139

Rock ‘n’ Roll became synonymous with jiving and bopping. Dancing in the ducktail subculture was expressive, characterised by a series of different dances, Hilton remembers:

At the sessions there was always a band – Mickey Most – you always danced your own Rock ‘n Roll. In Jo’burg you had the Horse were you hopped up and down. Cape Town was a different type of dancing. They pioneered new dances.140

Parts of the dance floor were ‘territorialised’ where youths danced the various styles described above. Besides being a response to the music, dancing as Malbon notes:

can provide a release from many of the accepted social norms and customs of the ‘civilised’ social spaces of everyday life, such as social distance, conformity and reserve or disattention.141

Gordon Verster stresses the role that dancing played in the subculture:

Dancing was important, bee-bop was a slower thing, dance in couples...Rock ‘n Roll was more physical...at one house party I broke a chandelier.142

In order to fulfil this performative role, it was important to be a skilled dancer and the sessions provided an opportunity for couples to show their talent:

Jiving had a little more contact than ‘modern dancing’, with about five basic moves. Good dancers had their own variations into these moves and if the
couple were dancing well, the others would form a circle around them, clapping in time to the music and shouting encouragement.\footnote{\textsuperscript{143}}

Similarly, van der Merwe reminisces:

in the Ducktail time \textit{Jirue} [Jesus] they performed, you know with the Rock ‘n Roll, they ‘swinged’ the girl around\footnote{\textsuperscript{144}}

\textit{Sessions} provided a space for girls and boys to meet. Mike Malony remembers:

The unaccompanied guys sat on one side of the hall and the babes on the other. You’d \textit{scope} them out, walk across to the chosen one and tune, “\textit{Howzit, do you wanna dance?” With luck, she’d say “yes” and you were away.\footnote{\textsuperscript{145}}

Some ducktails however came off second best. Asking a girl to dance sometimes resulted in bodily harm. For example, Terry recollects:

We went to one dance in Vereeniging had some \textit{dop} [drinks] then got there. There was this \textit{lekker cherrie} [an attractive girl] so I walked over and said \textit{Howzit} [hello] you \textit{wanna} dance? So we were dancing and this \textit{oke} [guy] then comes up to me and says ‘Hey I don’t like you dancing with my sister \textit{ek sê} [I say]. I’m gonna \textit{doner} [hit] you!’ So I said, ‘\textit{Ag} why don’t you \textit{piss off}.’ So he then \textit{tuned} [told] me to come outside so I did and he said, ‘I’m gonna \textit{fuck} you up.’ So I said you couldn’t if you tried. He lost out, I broke his nose. The next day he tracked me down and since then, we were friends.\footnote{\textsuperscript{146}}

Music and dancing, and its associated escapism from ‘everyday life’, contributed to the dimensional experience of spatiality. The use of recreational drugs such as alcohol and \textit{dagga} [marijuana] enhanced this dimensional experience further. The interrelated elements of people, music, dancing, and recreational drug use – shaped the experience of the \textit{session}. Alcohol was not permitted onto the premises of \textit{sessions}. Hilton recalls:

At the \textit{sessions}, they sold cold drinks but never liquor we carried our own..you were never allowed it in. They were more strict then…there was \textit{dagga} but no LSD you had to smoke Texan, and Gunston, Lucky Strike…\footnote{\textsuperscript{147}}

This did not prevent some Ducktails from drinking though. As Mike Malony explains:

\textit{Booze} wasn’t allowed but these \textit{brekers} smuggled in their own \textit{dop} [liquor] in a half jack bottle wrapped in brown paper. I never discovered what the brown paper was supposed to achieve, it was pretty obvious what they were up to.\footnote{\textsuperscript{148}}
Their use of alcohol and dagga was in stark contrast to more mainstream society and other youths – classified as ‘squares’ [conformist]. For some alcohol was regularly consumed:

Liquor played a big part...We had ‘Sneaky Piet’ which was a gallon of cheap red wine mixed with a bottle of Vodka...it was called ‘Sneaky Piet’ because it sneaked up on you.¹⁴⁹

A safer and calmer form of entertainment – speedway or talent shows - was reserved for Saturday or Sunday afternoons. Speedway at Wembley Stadium was well attended. Boet Ekhout, Henry Long and Buddy Fuller were the main heroes of the day. Malony describes the excitement of speedway as follows:

At Wembley (stock cars and speedway): Boet Ekhout, Henry Long and Buddy Fuller came to put together an evening of entertainment to thrill and amaze the big crowds who came to watch. It started with the stock cars, American V8 engines Fords, Studebakers, Chevs, Pontiacs…The races were about ten laps of a 500 yard dirt track so leaders were soon amongst the tail enders, barging their way through big V8’s roaring bodies grinding sparks and cinders filling the air after the stock cars the track was raked level …Nought to eighty miles per hour in thirty or so yards…¹⁵⁰

Speedway was also favoured in Pretoria. According to Gordon Verster in, Vermeulen Street there was also a ‘drag strip there…near to the Zoo there was speedway and the Rademeyers were the main manne [men] in Speedway.’¹⁵¹ Besides speedway, talent shows were also fashionable although these usually took place on Sundays. Hilton remembers:

There were talent shows on there by Bapsfontein on Sundays. Dance competitions, Rock ’n Roll competitions. They put posters up but it was territorial in those days like in Orange Grove or Braamfontein. Every Sunday night it used to be at the Braamfontein club it was great.¹⁵²

Another source of amusement was visiting roadhouses. Certain roadhouses, such as; La Conga Roadhouse in Elandsfontein, St Moritz Roadhouse, and the Dolls House in Jules Street were more popular than others. Moving between roadhouses was frequently indulged in. Malony recalls riding from the La Conga Roadhouse in Elandsfontein to St. Morits in Johannesburg:

The thing to do was to get up to the St Moritz Roadhouse over the hill near the Airport Star Drive-in a distance of almost three miles (5km). This meant leaving the La Conga around the La Conga circle, over the railway bridge, up
the ridge to a quite sharp left-hand sweep and flat down the hill to the St Moritz. Either way around the circle straight through both robots red or green, hammer down the hill to the last robot which seemed to be the finish…they shot through the last robot to pull up at St Moritz Roadhouse…

The La Conga roadhouse in Hillbrow was by far the favourite, even for Pretoria ducktails. Gordon Verster:

We used to go the Hamburger Hut, to the Wayside and especially La Conga in Hillbrow…we had a friend who worked there so we would order two burgers and get two mixed grills you know what I mean.

The roadhouse also became a place of conflict:

The closest I ever came to blood, well a serious injury, was outside the Hamburger Hut in Pretoria which used to be Bill and Wally’s and then became the Hamburger Hut. We were in an old Studebaker Silver Hawk and we sent this one guy in to buy hamburgers he came running out then we were feuding against the army there were three army guys chasing this oke and as he jumped in and slammed the door, this pursuing guys fingers got caught. Then I turned off the ignition and well this guy collapsed.

More commonly however, the roadhouse was a place for drinking a coke and meeting with friends. They were also places to which girls were allowed access which they often visited in all female groups. Gender dictated the places that could be visited. Girls and women were not allowed to go to bars in this period. Whilst their boyfriends indulged in some serious drinking with ‘the okes’ [boys]; girlfriends apparently waited in the car until their ‘men’ were ready to move on to another place. As Brake, notes girls - in the context of dance and in this case of bars in the fifties - ‘learn an important area of their lives: that of waiting. They cannot directly initiate social encounters, but can only reject or accept what is offered.’

One place that girls were allowed access to was the bioscope. For most citizens in South African cities the bioscope stood out as the most popular place to frequent. Nasson notes:

Cinema-going was unquestionably the most popular form of paid entertainment in the inter-war years, continuing to grow in attraction through the 1940s and 1950s. The local ‘bioscope’ occupied a very special niche in the recreational life of the community, a place to which both adults and children went in order
to be cocooned in the dream world of the flickering screen. Attendance was regular and habitual, as films continually widened their audience appeal and imaginative power to transport people out of themselves and the humdrum confines of their work and domestic lives at least once a week. It is important to emphasise that the ‘bioscope’ tended to be firmly local.  

Generally it was a meeting place for friends, a place of entertainment and enjoyment that ‘helped to shape the lives and consciousness of people.’ Members of the Ducktail subculture attended the bioscope at least once a week and it allegedly gave value for money; two films could be watched for a mere ten cents. Certain cinemas became more successful than others the ‘Princess Bioscope’, the old Metro Movie House (on the corner of Bree and Eloff streets) and ‘His Majesty’s’, ‘The Empire’ and ‘The Coliseum’ in the city centre for example. It was here at the bioscope that the Ducktail’s were informed of the latest trends in fashion, ideology and popular culture. Films in particular were shown with a focus on music. For example, Wicke attributes the success of ‘Rock Around the Clock’ to three films in which it appeared: the Blackboard Jungle (1955), Rock Around the clock (1956) and Don’t Knock the Rock (1957).

Presley was the greatest draw. Jailhouse Rock, brought all the manne [men] out. Unless you rocked [arrived] up three hours before and stood in a huge queue, you missed out. The street outside the cinema was packed with bikes, at least a hundred, parked at right angles to the kerb, which was full of people. The press was there, taking photos for tomorrow’s papers. The atmosphere inside was charged with excitement.

The bioscope was also a place for other activities such as comic swopping and ‘making out’ in the back rows. Terry recalls:

\[
Ag \text{ we used to go to the bioscope we used to swop comics there the older guys used to just take comics from the little guys. We also used to take our chicks [girlfriends] to the bioscope but then we would sit at the back didn’t know what was showing and still didn’t know when we got home.}
\]

However, the cinema often proved a focal point for conflict between Ducktails from different areas. As Freed wrote:

\[
\text{Gang warfare not infrequently breaks out in the southern suburbs. As many as twenty men from rival gangs have been observed in battle outside a cinema in Rosettenville. These men belonged to the South Hills and Rosettenville gangs, and met at the cinema by challenge.}
\]
Similarly in the United Kingdom\textsuperscript{166}, the cinema was often host to violent clashes,

They \textit{Teds} were very violent I remember on one occasion it was a Sunday morning and the street outside the cinema was covered in pieces of glass, bottles and trails of blood...a preferred weapon was a razor or a broken bottle, flick-knives were banned at this time in Britain...There was a lot of rock ‘n roll riots – dancing in the aisles particularly at Rock ‘n Roll movies – \textit{Jail House Rock}...There was conflict with the police, very often. But Glasgow gangs go back a long, long time ago way before the Teddy Boys.\textsuperscript{167}

\textbf{Time, Work, Leisure and Race}

Attendance at these recreational facilities indicates the central role that place plays in the creation of subcultural identities and in sustaining the commercial leisure industry. Lefebvre explains the ‘urban core survives because of this double role: as place of consumption and consumption of place.’\textsuperscript{168} Ducktails actively engaged with places and spent a great deal of their money on consumption. Their hedonistic attitudes outweighed their need to work. In fact they were quite ‘anti-work’ and hesitant about pursuing a career. The apartheid system – which placed whites in a racially privileged position – enabled them to conduct this lifestyle. As Mike Millroy points out;

They were not career orientated at all. The \textit{joll} was the thing, live for the moment live for the \textit{joll}.\textsuperscript{169}

This was not to say that all Ducktails did not engage in employment. It was also quite common for members to rotate a work schedule. For example, a group of three ducktails would take turns in working for a few months. According to Mr S.G. Norman (a Johannesburg business man and former probation officer who organised employment for some ducktails):

Three live together in a room, which they rent for three rands. A work schedule gets drawn up. Number one will work from January to April and support his two friends. Then he will retire. Number two will then accordingly work until the end of August and will support the other two. Thereafter number three gets his turn to work.\textsuperscript{170}
For many ducktails, however, regular work was an anathema. As one Southern suburb Ducktail confided to one of Engelbrecht’s students, after the formal interview had been conducted;

They told us that they were out of work because they could not find jobs. When they got to know us better they explained that they did not work because they did not want to...During the day they just loafed around and sometimes went to the bioscope.171

The racial nature of South African capitalism allowed Ducktails to reject working. The National Party’s labour policies, as outlined in the previous chapter, contained job reservation provisions. They could thus afford not to work or to engage in employment for limited periods of time.172 Their hedonism, self-indulgence and decadent behaviour were more important. Despite irregular periods of employment certain members were still able to engage with the leisure industry as consumers. Places of entertainment and the use of the street for the pursuit of leisure shows how youths carved out their own spaces, away from adult supervision, to express their collective identity and subcultural affiliation. Clarke et al note subcultures,

are not simply ideological ‘constructs’...They too win space for the young: cultural space in the neighbourhood and institutions, real time for leisure and recreation, actual room on the street or street corner.173

Conclusion

For some, Ducktailism was a way of life and an everyday reality, for others it was a ritualised practice confined to the weekends. Regardless of the degree of commitment style, language and routine rituals intertwined with one another to make the subculture visible and distinguishable from other cultural groupings. Or as Clarke phrases it:

the symbolic objects – dress, appearance, language, ritual occasions, styles of interaction, music – were made to form a unity with the group’s relations, situation, experiences: the crystallisation in an expressive form, which then defines the group’s public identity.174

The Ducktail subculture transcended local boundaries and incorporated international elements such as musical taste; dancing style and fashion revealing
the ‘undeniable interconnectedness of any space, or any culture, with others even on the other side of the world.’ More often than not the ducktails – like their international counterparts – clashed with more mainstream and conventional society especially in the context of their hedonism and disrespect for the law. These contradictions were however quite superficial; most of the time they conformed to ideologies upheld by society. This is reflected most clearly in the cultural subordination of girls and the virulent racism that permeated the subculture. Thus, ‘themes which are key to the ‘parent culture’ are reproduced at this level again and again in the sub-cultures, even when they set out to be, or are seen as ‘different’. The points of conflation and conflict become clear in the following chapter which focuses more on individual identities such as gender, race and ethnicity which were ‘negotiated differently in different places and…constructed and contested within particular spaces.’
### Table 8: Slang words and Approximate Denotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slang</th>
<th>Approximate Meaning</th>
<th>English (UK) slang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alki</td>
<td>Drinker</td>
<td>Boozer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almond rocks</td>
<td>Socks</td>
<td>Almond rocks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arvie/Arvey</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auties</td>
<td>50cc autocycles</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babes</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Doll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barney</td>
<td>Fight (usually 1 on 1)</td>
<td>Scrap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battlers</td>
<td>Unemployed ducktails</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioscope</td>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birdie</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Birdie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds eye</td>
<td>Tie</td>
<td>Birds eye</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bliksem</td>
<td>‘Bastard’ or to hit</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Hairstyle (male)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bon(oy)</td>
<td>Motorbike</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boom (Afrikaans: tree)</td>
<td>Dagga (Marijuana)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breker</td>
<td>Ducktail/ Tough guy</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunny boys</td>
<td>Homosexual men</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boep (translated to Afrikaans from Boop)</td>
<td>Prison</td>
<td>Boop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café</td>
<td>Convenience store</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café-bio</td>
<td>Café-cum-cinema</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaff</td>
<td>Chat someone up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charras</td>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>Charras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check</td>
<td>See or look at something</td>
<td>Check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherrie</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinks</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Dough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chow</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Chow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean up</td>
<td>Fight</td>
<td>Scrap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clobber</td>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>Clobber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coolie</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookies</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuttites</td>
<td>Female members</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Drunk</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickey dirt</td>
<td>Shirt</td>
<td>Dickey dirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doll</td>
<td>Girl/Woman</td>
<td>Doll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donner</td>
<td>To beat up</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dop</td>
<td>Alcoholic drink</td>
<td>Booze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag</td>
<td>Road</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drags</td>
<td>Draw on a cigarette or dagga cigarette</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dukkies</td>
<td>Ducktails</td>
<td>Greasers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slang</td>
<td>Approximate Meaning</td>
<td>English (UK) slang</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ek sê</td>
<td>I say</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Float</td>
<td>Long sports coat or jacket</td>
<td>Float</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flying</td>
<td>Drunk</td>
<td>Pissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folks</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabba</td>
<td>Friend/pal</td>
<td>Mate/Pal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gammat</td>
<td>Friend (derived from Mohammed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giepie</td>
<td>Someone who is disliked</td>
<td>Berk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghosties</td>
<td>Undercover police</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goosies</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief</td>
<td>Trouble</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grill</td>
<td>Prison</td>
<td>Shop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grub</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Grub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gully</td>
<td>Road (Durban)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hip</td>
<td>Beatnik term for ‘Okay’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Dough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoots and Toots</td>
<td>Boots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howzit or hoezit</td>
<td>Hello / open a conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron / Iron Horse</td>
<td>Motorbike</td>
<td>Iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack scratches</td>
<td>Matches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammy</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammies</td>
<td>Cars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Java</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Cuppa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jive</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Fuz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jol / jawl / jorl</td>
<td>Go out, have fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joller</td>
<td>Frequent party goer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice</td>
<td>Petrol</td>
<td>Juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraak</td>
<td>Go fast or speed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kroeg</td>
<td>Afrikaans for pub</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuif</td>
<td>Afrikaans quiff of hair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lem</td>
<td>Knife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemmie</td>
<td>Stabbed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbered</td>
<td>Put into police van</td>
<td>Mariahed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moegoes</td>
<td>Rural Afrikaaners or a ‘stupid’ person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moer</td>
<td>Hit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moffies</td>
<td>Homosexuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My blaar (Afrikaans)</td>
<td>My mate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My china</td>
<td>My mate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My ge</td>
<td>Mate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mate</td>
<td>My friend</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Slang</td>
<td>Approximate Meaning</td>
<td>English (UK) slang</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notch</td>
<td>See</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldies</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old queen</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Old dear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old king</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Old man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old toppie</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ones and Twos</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ore (Afrikaans)</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ou or oke</td>
<td>Friend (male)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ou bebop</td>
<td>Friend (my mate)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ou sekkie</td>
<td>Term of masculine endearment, mate</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outers</td>
<td>Vagrants</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pekkies</td>
<td>Vulgar term for black people</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pippi joller</td>
<td>Young ‘joller’</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pony tails</td>
<td>Female members</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pozzie</td>
<td>Place or situation</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pote</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull in</td>
<td>Go round/in</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull out</td>
<td>Leave</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quacktails</td>
<td>Female ducktails</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queers</td>
<td>Homosexual men</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbits</td>
<td>Homosexual men</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rammies</td>
<td>Trousers (Stove-pipes)</td>
<td>Drains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratting</td>
<td>Betrayal of a member</td>
<td>Dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rookers</td>
<td>Dagga Smokers</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rort</td>
<td>Fight (usually group fight)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosy Lee</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>Rosy Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessions</td>
<td>Parties (usually organised)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Steal</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scats</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>Togs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scopes</td>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>Pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (Afrikaans)</td>
<td>Complain</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>See (Sight you – See you later)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpions</td>
<td>Patrol cars</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td>Think (as in what do you think?)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shebeen</td>
<td>A place where alcohol is sold illicitly</td>
<td>Shebeen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td>Female members</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate</td>
<td>Rebellious youth (ducktail/breker)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeef</td>
<td>Askew (looking)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skop</td>
<td>Kick</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soppies</td>
<td>Café bioscope or movie</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparked</td>
<td>Feel drunk</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spin</td>
<td>Five pounds</td>
<td>Fiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square</td>
<td>Non-ducktail (‘nerd’)</td>
<td>Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeef</td>
<td>Askew ‘Don’t tune me skeef’</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slang</td>
<td>Approximate Meaning</td>
<td>English (UK) slang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skuif</td>
<td>Cigarette or a dagga cigarette</td>
<td>Puff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet</td>
<td>Good (as in lekker)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sug / Sugging</td>
<td>Betrayal of a member / Complain</td>
<td>Dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The law</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tickey</td>
<td>Former South African three penny piece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy noddy</td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toppies</td>
<td>Older people (over 30 years)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tune</td>
<td>Tell</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voemie</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vultures</td>
<td>Unemployed ducktails</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waai / Waaiing</td>
<td>Going</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed</td>
<td>Dagga</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woes</td>
<td>Wild</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yank tank</td>
<td>Big American car</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yster</td>
<td>Bike</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zol</td>
<td>Dagga/marijuana</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9: Ducktail Phrases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases</th>
<th>Approximate meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bang the ore will take a jerry</td>
<td>Afraid the police will find out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being on the outers</td>
<td>Broke (no money)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ek sê</td>
<td>I say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cock him a defter</td>
<td>Pull the wool over his eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cock them a rock</td>
<td>Hit them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cock it a rock</td>
<td>Stop your nonsense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown me a hottie</td>
<td>Light my zol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t eyeball my babe</td>
<td>Don’t look at my girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going for a power</td>
<td>Communal smoke (usually dagga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He will play the piano</td>
<td>He will have a broken nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His arse is so big</td>
<td>He is very lucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t notched you in many moons</td>
<td>I haven’t seen you in a long time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry that square</td>
<td>Look at that square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just cock him a deffy</td>
<td>Just ignore him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrases</td>
<td>Approximate meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lets get sparked</td>
<td>Lets get drunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale a jammie</td>
<td>Steal a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sighting me off</td>
<td>Admiring me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight that ou</td>
<td>Look at that guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slip on anchors</td>
<td>Proceed slowly/cautiously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spot that clot</td>
<td>Look at that ‘square’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s going to be perre actions one day</td>
<td>Full scale gang warfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you cutting to?</td>
<td>Where are going to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you setting out?</td>
<td>Where are you going?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Etymology of words extracted from the work of Hudson and Partridge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slang</th>
<th>Approximate Meaning</th>
<th>Date of Peak usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alkie</td>
<td>A ‘friendly’ term used for an alcoholic.</td>
<td>For Partridge this was used by ex-marines from 1943 onwards. Hudson dates it from 1978 onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biker</td>
<td>A rocker/greaser, used more about bikers than by bikers themselves</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bop</td>
<td>To dance/to hit</td>
<td>1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>1950s term was in popular use continuing into the 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chick</td>
<td>An attractive girl</td>
<td>Initially used in the 1920s in the USA, continues to be used today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clobber</td>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>According to Partridge this term dates back to the 1850s. However Hudson believes that it has been used since the 1930s reaching its peak usage in the 1950s and 1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doll</td>
<td>An attractive girl.</td>
<td>First recorded in the 1770s and has varied in popular use since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dope</td>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>Initially used in America in 1880 to refer to opium. From the 1950s onwards it commonly refers to marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag</td>
<td>A bore</td>
<td>Used since the 1920s it rose in popularity from the 1950s onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuzz</td>
<td>The police</td>
<td>First used in the USA and the UK in the 1920s it expanded in use from the 1950s onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>Place or marijuana cigarette</td>
<td>Referred to a place in the USA from 1905. A cannabis cigarette in the USA from the mid 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Used most commonly in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Originally an American term used in the early 1920s. It was in use in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slang</td>
<td>Approximate Meaning</td>
<td>Date of Peak usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Thought to have originated in the UK in the 1950s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>Teddy Boy</td>
<td>‘Ted’ was used by the Teddy Boys themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddy Boy</td>
<td>Teddy Boy</td>
<td>Commonly used by the press and other outsiders of the Teddy Boy subculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENDNOTES

2 Ibid.; p. 73.
3 Ibid., p. 160.

4 More research needs to be conducted into the regional differences in Ducktail style because it seems likely that nature of ducktail gangs in Johannesburg differed greatly from those in Durban and Cape Town for example. The nature of the moral panic over ducktailism and juvenile delinquency was probably also subjected to regional variations.


6 C. Glaser, ‘Anti-social Bandits: Juvenile Delinquency and the Ttosis Youth Gang.’ Subculture on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1960’ MA, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990’, p. 89. ‘Ttosis’ were trousers and ‘tsotsitaal’ was the subcultures slang.

7 Ibid.; p. 90.

8 Harley Davidsons’ were not favoured for two reasons. Firstly, after World War Two the production of Harley’s was suspended and secondly, members of the South African Police force rode Harley’s from World War Two. They increased in popularity from the 1960s onwards. This was mentioned in most of the interviews.


10 Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998.

11 Terry van der Bergh, interview, Pretoria, 13/01/1998.

12 Estimate is taken from interviews.


14 Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 12/06/1997.

15 Max Villani, interview, Kempton Park, 14/11/1996.

16 Prop, Fred & Rufus, interview, Boksburg, 11/09/96.


20 Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998.


22 The abbreviation ‘D-A’ refers to a duck’s ‘arse’. The hair was carefully moulded with two flicks which met at the back reminiscent of a duck’s tail.

23 It only became law to wear a helmet in the mid-1960s. Interview, Mike Milroy, Kempton Park, 10/04/1997.


25 Lynton Johnson, Interview, Kempton Park, 6/03/97.

26 Information on style taken primarily from the questionnaires which I received, interviews, informal discussions and scattered references in the press.

27 Pedal pushers were tight and were mid-calf in length.

28 A fifty-yard petticoat was one comprised of multi-layered net petticoats which were usually stiffened with sugar water.

29 Els de Niet, interview, Kempton Park, 17/03/1997.


31 Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998.


33 M. Malony, Untitled, July 1997.
34 Ibid.
37 In fact stovepipes were similar to the tsotsi trousers, both were very narrow at the bottom. Whereas for duckies another important element was hairstyle for tsotosis hats were important. C. Glaser, ‘Anti-social Bandits’, p. 149.
40 Andre interview, Pretoria, 7/11/96.
41 Lana Turner acted in Another Time, Another Place (1958), and Bachelor in Paradise (1961) and Betty Grable in Beautiful Blonde from Bashful Bend (1949) and My Blue Heaven (1951).
47 Hudson, The Language of the Teenage Revolution, p. 35.
48 Some words are also used today. These include: café, check, china, howzit and shebeen.
50 Roughly translated as hit, marijuana, police and nice/cool.
51 Von Timroth, Russian and Soviet Sociolinguistics, p. 13.
56 S. Potter, Our Language, p. 133.
57 Von Timroth, Russian and Soviet Sociolinguistics, p. 7.
59 Cited in Hughes, Swearing, p. 12.
60 Maurer, The Language on the “Underworld, p. 143.
61 Hudson, The Language of the Teenage Revolution, p. 43.
63 Bill Crauser, interview, Kensington, 22/07/1997.
65 The downplaying of notions of spatiality within the social sciences has been widely noted. For a detailed account see J.A. Agnew & J.S. Duncan, *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations* (USA, Unwin, Hyman Inc, 1989), pp. 1-29.
81 Term borrowed from M.A. Godkin, ‘Identity and Place: Clinical Applications Based on Notions of Rootedness and Uprootedness’ in A. Buttimer, & D. Seamon, (eds), *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1980), p. 73.
85 Chris Bucholtz, questionnaire, Cape Town, 13/07/1997.
86 These differences were alluded to in most interviews especially the one with Bill Crauser. Bill Crauser, interview, Kensington, 22/07/1997.
157

92 Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998
95 M. Malony, ‘Dance a little bit to the bop, to the bop’, p. 11.
96 M. Malony, ‘Hot Rod Gang’, 30/05/97, pp. 2-3.
99 Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 12/06/1997.
100 Hilton, interview, Rosebank, 23/07/1997.
102 NASA (National Archives of South Africa), VWN (Department of Social Welfare), 747, SW109, part III, Letter of complaint from Mr R.S. Harpur to Mr John Cope (MP for Saxonwald), dated 20/01/1958.
104 *The Star*, 28/02/1955.
105 Terry van der Bergh, interview, Pretoria, 13/01/1998.
107 Terry van der Bergh, interview, Pretoria, 13/01/1998.
109 Lynton Johnson, interview, Kempton Park, 6/03/97.
112 M. Malony, Bert’s Snooker Club, Jules Street, Braamfontein ‘and all that’, Feb 1997.
113 M. Malony, Untitled, June 1997.
114 Mike Milroy, interview, Kempton Park, 10/04/1997.
120 A. Buttimer, ‘Social Space and the Planning of Residential Areas’ in A. Buttimer, & D. Seamon, (eds), *The Human Experience of Space and Place* p. 27.
122 Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 1998/03/18.


Most musicologists point this out, see the work of Wicke, Frith, and Hudson.


In particular see Hudson, *The Language of the Teenage Revolution*, p. 41.


*Ibid.*, p. 39. He does not specify where the high record sales were, presumably he means the USA.


Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998.

van der Merwe, interview, Pretoria, 7/11/1996.

Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998.

Terry van der Bergh, interview, Pretoria, 13/01/1998.


M. Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 13/12/1997.


Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998.


Mike Malony, interview, Kempton Park, 18/03/1998.

The La Conga Roadhouse is still open today. It is located behind the Roman Catholic Church in Hillbrow.

Terry van der Bergh, interview, Pretoria, 13/01/1998.


In Benoni, the cinema was introduced in 1909, see D. Humphriss, *Benoni: Son of My Sorrow*, (Benoni, Town Council of Benoni, 1968), p. 47.


Hilton, interview, Rosebank, 23/07/1997

163 M. Malony, ‘Dance a little bit to the bop, to the bop’, p. 11.

164 Terry van der Bergh, interview, Pretoria, 13/01/1998.


169 Mike Millroy, interview, Kempton Park, 10/04/1997.

170 All translations were completed by the author. *Die Huisgenoot*, ‘Die Eendsterte kry ’n Peetpa’, [The Ducktails get a stepfather], 27/07/1958.


176 Clarke, ‘Subcultures, Cultures, Class’ p. 53.