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"Die Eendstert Euwel" and societal responses to white youth sub-cultural identities on the Witwatersrand, 1930-1964

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ABSTRACT

The term ‘ducktail’ was originally used to denote a hairstyle. In the Post World War Two period, ‘Ducktail’ became associated with a rebellious white youth gang subculture, which rose to prominence in the major urban centres throughout South Africa. Societal responses to the subculture’s identity resulted in the generation of a moral panic which demonised the movement branding it as – amongst other things – the ‘*eendstert euwel*’ [ducktail evil]. The major aim of this thesis is to account for the way in which members of the subculture constructed and practised their class, racial, ethnic, gendered and generational identities whilst highlighting how society responded to them. The relationship of conformity, conflict and control that emerged between the ducktails and more conventional members of society such as the authorities and academics is plotted. This relationship sets the context for the final part of the dissertation, which explores the moral guardians and rule creators that became involved in the designing of youth policies. Particular attention will be given to how the ‘problem of youth’ brought religion, working mothers, morality, the state of the nation and the preservation of white supremacy under question. In this process, the National Party government formulated policies to monitor, shape and construct an appropriate form of South African whiteness.