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SHAPING A SETTLER ELITE: STUDENTS, COMPETITION AND LEADERSHIP AT SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGE, 1829–95*

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SHORTLY after South African College, the predecessor of today's University of Cape Town, opened its doors in 1829 faculty members found that they had a problem. In one meeting of the Faculty Senate alone, four students were brought up on charges that one had been 'fighting and noisy', another 'fighting – kicking open the door of the Messenger's Room', another 'writing on the Professor's desk with chalk' the words 'Ziervogel is a vagabond' as well as 'threatening the messenger with his fist', and another 'idle, insolent & insubordinate in writing class' who, in replying to a reprimand from the writing master, said: 'You may go to the Devil'. Several others were noted in the records as absent from class and lying about it. Moreover, the young college had only two dozen or so books, but already nine of them had been 'mutilated by tearing out the leaves & c'. And virtually all the means for securing property from theft – 'various locks, claps and staples' – had been 'broken in the College, apparently by some of the Students.' So intractable had the students become, in fact, that the college authorities constructed a small one-room prison with no windows on campus, which they called the 'Black Hole', in which to confine offenders who could be identified and condemned. Students were regularly sentenced to terms of three or four hours per day without bread or water, usually in the early evening, the number of days depending on the severity of the offense.[1]

Students at South African College engaged in violence and intimidation of all sorts in the first half of the nineteenth century. They attacked professors and townspeople in Cape Town, preyed on each other, stole and destroyed property, and continually disrupted the operations of the college. These were not boys striving to become upstanding citizens, yet in the end they did for the most part, largely because in organizing campus violence some SAC students produced a reputation for leadership and a constituency that followed them. And that reputation proved useful later in securing positions in the city's merchant houses and in the colonial government. Later in the century, however, the violence subsided and was replaced with different means by which to produce a reputation for leadership, mainly structured competitions among students in a debating society, in sports and for high rankings in the examinations offered by the University of the Cape of Good

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[1] Senate Minutes, 12, 20 Feb. 1830, University Archives, University of Cape Town, hereafter Senate Minutes. On the Black Hole, see William Ritchie, *The History of South African College, 1829–1918* (Cape Town, 1918), Vol. 1, 68–71.

Hope. What I wish to argue here is that the social relations created among students at South African College were important to forming elites in each successive generation. Moreover, it is important to know how these social relations were formed – mostly in competitions among students which centered around acts of violence, at first physical and later symbolic.

This story is particularly relevant to a South African historiography that in recent years has focused mainly on struggles over the subjugation of indigenous peoples and the creation of a working class on the Rand, leaving largely unexamined the question of how local colonial elites came to be white and rich and powerful. There are plenty of studies, for example, of the struggles among Cape merchants, Afrikaner farmers, English settlers in the eastern Cape and groups of missionaries which emphasize the differences among various whites in Cape Colony, but none which show how a coherent elite emerged there. Yet something did unite these disparate groups over the long haul. Each succeeding generation of whites in Cape Colony came closer to that ideal of a unified settler elite, notwithstanding even the revival of cultural differences between Afrikaners and the English in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, these were not matters peculiar to Cape Colony in the nineteenth century. In Canada and Australia, settler elites struggled not only against imperial agents and indigenous peoples but also among themselves. And, in America, southern and northern elites finally came to blows in a civil war that cost 600,000 lives.[2]

The connection between education, social status and subsequent power, moreover, may constitute a key to understanding the dominant forms of power that characterized settler societies throughout the nineteenth century. In a nutshell, the power of elite men before 1780 or so had been based on a household model, if not an actual household, but in the following century power increasingly became lodged in bureaucratic institutions. And because men working in these new institutions were largely interchangeable, there was nothing inevitable in any one man's success. Indeed, failure, particularly in business enterprises, became the common fate for middle-class men in the nineteenth century, hence, the necessity for struggle. The fight for positions of power and wealth therefore became especially ferocious in precisely those parts of Western society where a man's place was least secure – in the world of small shopkeepers and petty officials in England, among frontier planters in the American South, and especially among merchants and petty govern-

[2] On the focus of recent South African historiography, see Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past* (Cape Town, 1988), Parts 4 and 5. On the rise of a settler elite in Cape Colony, see especially Timothy Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (Cape Town, 1996), ch. 4, 5 and 7; Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, 'The origins and entrenchment of European dominance at the Cape, 1652–*c*. 1840', in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1840* (Cape Town, 1989); Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, *The Oxford History of South Africa* (Oxford, 1969), Vol. 1, ch. 7; and A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians, *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. 8 (Cambridge, 1938), ch. 5–13. The only recent work that focuses squarely on the development of elites in the Cape is an essay by Robert Ross, 'The Cape economy and the Cape gentry', which deals mainly with the eighteenth century; see Ross, *Beyond the Pale : Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1994), ch. 1. Another work on this subject, not yet available to me, is K. McKenzie, 'Gender and honour in middle-class Cape Town: The Making of Colonial Identities, 1828–1850', (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1997).

ment officials in the British colonies. In these places, young men who succeeded were those who could persuade, manipulate and intimidate their fellows around them, and these were skills that had to be be learned. Some read advice manuals like Lord Chesterfield's. But others honed their social skills at school in fisticuffs or worse. Increasingly in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, violence in schools and colleges throughout the Atlantic world subsided in favor of structured competitions – debating societies and sports, for example – that mimicked that earlier brutality, but also differed from it in significant ways. These became modern, bureaucratic venues in which students could persuade, manipulate and sometimes intimidate their peers, and in so doing produce a reputation for leadership.[3]

South African College was established to solve an imperial political problem at the Cape, not as a result of any great demand from residents of the colony. Opened in 1829, the college was intended chiefly to draw the next generation of settlers, both Afrikaner and English, into the service of the empire. The idea was to anglicize the sons of Afrikaner farmers and send them back into the countryside as magistrates and ministers, spreading English language and culture as they went. The sons of English settlers for the most part were expected to serve as clerks in the merchant houses in Cape Town and as petty bureaucrats in the colonial government. It was never, however, supposed that the college's graduates would rise to positions of real power, and in the first generation they did not. Those positions went to bureaucrats sent out from London.[4] Appropriately, then, South African College was a venture of modest size and conservative purposes when it came into being. It was hoped that the college would attract about 200 students, but it seldom did. Enrollments ranged from a high of 159 students in 1832, a level that was not surpassed until 1895, to a low of sixteen students in 1840. The college was also intended to have four professors: one English-speaking specialist in the classics, one Dutch-speaking classicist, one who could teach moral philosophy, and another to deal with all aspects of the natural world. In fact, the college seldom employed more than two men before mid-century, although their efforts were supplemented by a writing master who taught mainly penmanship – a very useful skill for aspiring clerks – and

[3] On the means for manufacturing elite status, see *Letters to His Son by the Earl of Chesterfield, On the Fine Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman* (ed. Oliver H. Leigh, New York, 1901), esp. 179–83, 280–3; and George Brauer Jr., *The Education of a Gentleman: Theories of Gentlemanly Education in England, 1660–1775* (New York, 1959), ch. 5. See also Michal J. Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville, 1988); Judy Hilkey, *Character is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in the Gilded Age in America* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1992), ch. 2, 3; and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago, 1987), ch. 5. On students and violence at South Carolina College, Harvard and Princeton, see Daniel Walker Hollis, *South Carolina College* (Columbia, SC, 1951), 155–6, 168–9, 196–8, 209–11; Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Princeton, 1746–1896* (Princeton, NJ, 1946), 137–44, 168–9, 176–7, 315–7; and Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (Cambridge, MA, 1936), 208–11.

[4] On the administrative history of South African College, see Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 1. On the introduction of representative and responsible government, see Newton and Benians, *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. 8, ch. 15 and 17.

occasionally a French language teacher or a drawing master. As for the curriculum, it consisted of the standard fare for early nineteenth-century colleges and universities, including a handful of Latin and Greek texts, a textbook on the evidences of Christianity, and some elementary training in algebra and trigonometry. No one supposed that this education was equivalent to that offered in the best European universities, and indeed the few students who went on to university enrolled as first- and sometimes second-year students, mainly at Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh and Leiden. The point of an education at South African College was not to produce finished scholars, but rather to give students the marks of distinction that set them apart from their inferiors in the Cape. Given the state of education and culture in the Colony, the task was neither difficult nor strenuous.[5]

When South African College opened there was no existing disciplinary regime to regulate competition among students, no tradition of social relations to follow. In fact, the College bylaws contained only a single reference to the subject of discipline. It specifically prohibited faculty from inflicting corporal punishment on students. This was an important rule, however, because it set SAC students apart from their younger 'chums' in private academies where physical abuse was considered a necessary adjunct to a teacher's authority. It assumed that the college's students were gentlemen – adults capable of making at least some of their own decisions and of facing the consequences of those decisions. It also assumed that as gentlemen in the making, they possessed a reputation for honor, a key marker of a powerful man and an identity which precluded physical chastisement. To have inflicted corporal punishment on an adult male would therefore have placed him in a class of dependents, with women and children and servants. Finally, gentlemen were not supposed to be terribly gentle. In adult life they would wage wars, command inferiors, and generally dispatch opponents of all kinds. Hence, contests for dominance lay at the heart of a young gentleman's education at South African College.[6]

On 31 March 1830, the college's English-language classics professor, Edward Judge, presented a case of 'gross breach of discipline' which, he argued, was 'an invasion of the authority of all the teachers in the College'. Specifically, he said, some student had written on the wall of his assistant's room: 'Mr Colliens is een schelm een deif'. (i.e. the assistant was a knave or rogue and a thief). Apparently the professor knew the identity of the offender, but he hesitated to inflict 'any punishments on the present occasion, lest, as the insult offered was of a personal nature, any punishment ordered by him might appear to proceed from vindictive motives'. In other words, the professor wished to make this case a test of wills between the student and the college, not the professor and his student. In this, the college authorities agreed. They authorized him to punish the offender and to double any punishment given out for a similar breach of discipline during the next seven days.[7]

There remained, however, the question of specific rules. How exactly would the will of the faculty as a whole be imposed on students? The answer

[5] On the organization of the college and the curriculum, see Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 1, ch. 3.

[6] 'Report of the Proceedings of the Council of Directors', document 113, Vol. 1, Council Minutes, University Archives, University of Cape Town.

[7] Senate Minutes, 31 Mar., 31 Apr. 1830.

came in the aftermath of a conflict between the 'writing master' who taught mainly penmanship, a Mr Bendall, and the students in his class. In a nutshell, Bendall reported that there were great 'irregularities' in his class 'in consequence' of his 'having no power of restraining improprieties' and that his students had been 'dreadfully disorderly, noisy, and inattentive, irregular in their attendance, frequently absent, and generally late'.[8] In response to these complaints, the Senate enacted a lengthy and detailed list of measures for controlling the behavior of students in the writing class. Finally, it should be noted here that in November 1830 the Senate resolved to ask the SAC Council, the governing body of the college, to consider authorizing the use of corporal punishment against students. The council, however, declined.[9]

These actions taken together established a disciplinary regime, but they did not end all conflicts in the college. In October 1831, when the college commenced a new academic year, some students began to disrupt the Senate's disciplinary regime in organized groups for the first time. At first, these students directed their actions chiefly against the French instructor, a Mr Fabe. In January 1832, Fabe told the Senate of 'the shameful conduct of the students', charging that 'for the last three months the greatest irregularities have taken place amongst them'. He complained especially that 'the noise which is generally made at the Gate of the College and in the Hall between one and two Oclock is insufferable'. 'These two or three days past,' he said, 'they have assembled in the Hall and shouted & hissed at me at my going out of the College.' There were six students in this group whom Fabe singled out for special complaint, and who were subsequently convicted of 'shouting & hissing' and 'also of knocking so loud at the door as to prevent him from going on with his class'.

Later, in November 1831, there occurred a serious case of theft in the college. The college janitor, successor to the old messenger, reported that 45 Rixdollars had been stolen from him after he had sold a number of books to some of the students. He said that he had put the money in a handkerchief and had left the handkerchief in a drawer in his desk in the Senate room at about a quarter past nine in the morning. When he returned for the money at one in the afternoon he found it gone. He reported that the drawer had no lock and that the door to the room had been left open while he counted the money, implying that some of the students might have seen where it had been placed. He listed four or five students whom he had seen in the Senate room that morning, and denied that there were any strangers seen in the college grounds at that time.[10]

Two things connected these cases and distinguished them from common incidents of assault or petty theft on campus. First, the students' actions in both cases were directed at servants of the college. The French teacher was an underpaid temporary employee, a marginal gentlemen if that. And the janitor was no gentleman at all. Throughout the nineteenth century he was always hired from among the tradesmen and artisans of Cape Town. These, then, were not attacks on legitimate authority but crude attempts by young gentlemen to dominate men whom they deemed their social inferiors, yet

[8] Senate Minutes, 8 May 1830.
[9] Senate Minutes, 14 Nov. 1829, 13 Feb., 13 Apr., 12 June 1830.
[10] Senate Minutes, 9 Nov. 1831, 25 Jan. 1832.

men who nevertheless exercised some disciplinary power over them. In short, the students by their actions argued that the authority vested in these men by the college was illegitimate, that power and authority resided in the person not in an institution and its agents. This confusion of authorities, of course, was an endemic feature of colonial societies and one of the chief dilemmas that a SAC graduate would face throughout his life. However fully qualified for authority an old boy from the college might think himself to be, he would forever face the prospect of obeying inferior men sent out from England to govern him. Second, the students had organized themselves into gangs. In the cases of theft, the janitor suspected a group of four or five, and in the case of the French teacher, Mr Fabe identified six as having committed most of the mischief.

The College faculty early on recognized the danger which organized violence posed to its infant disciplinary regime. In January 1832, the Senate determined to 'adopt some severe measures to prevent the like insubordination in the future', and two days later issued to the Janitor a long list of 'strict charges respecting the conduct of the students'. Specifically, he was to shut the college gate 'during the time the classes are engaged' so that no student might 'be allowed to pass through unless specially permitted'; to make sure that no one 'be suffered to stroll about' the college grounds while classes were in session, whether students or outsiders; to see to it that during lunch from twelve to two o'clock, 'no student disengaged shall be allowed to remain in the college, unless with the Janitor's permission and for whose conduct he shall be responsible'; to 'punctually' confine any student ordered into the Black Hole by the faculty; to 'keep a record of all the pupils placed in confinement, the reasons why, and their conduct during the time they are under punishment'; and to admit no student to a classroom 'unless when engaged in the different classes'. The Senate also resolved that the 'President of the Senate should reprove and admonish disobedient students in the presence of the whole College and of their parents and guardians in the College'.[11]

The immediate results of this new disciplinary regime were two-fold. First, the vigorous defense by the Senate of its temporary instructors had the unfortunate effect for a time of shifting the contest towards the permanent faculty. In December 1832, one student was accused of having 'held up his fist to his professor when his face was turned from him in examining some of the other students'. Another student who had been ejected by a faculty member from his classroom for being late, returned and 'endeavoured to interrupt the professor & annoy his fellow students by taking from his pocket a handful of shot and scattering it about the room'. And a third when sent to the Black Hole by a professor 'replied the more I am punished I will be the worse – and when put in confinement he said I will now go to sleep in the most insolent & impertinent manner'. Second, the organization of students into gangs collapsed. By the following year individual students had begun to prey on each other instead. In July, a boy named Landsberg was convicted of having stolen a fellow student's book. And in September a student named McDougle was accused of having thrown a stone in the face of a fellow student named Syme, the stone having 'severely hurt and disfigured the boy'. McDougle later greased a new jacket of one of his classmates with a

[11] Senate Minutes, 25 Jan. 1832.

tallow candle. A month afterwards, John Roux was tried before the Senate for 'seriously hurting Jacobus van der Berg by throwing a pewter inkstand against his head'. Landsberg was in the dock again for having stolen books from another student. Finally, in April 1834, Jacob Kachethofer struck William Harold with a stone on the head and 'severely' injured him, 'after which he threw several stones at Bam', another college student.[12]

Why did the new college rules fail to stop the violence? And why did the nature of these conflicts change? What happened was this: in not permitting the students to discipline their inferiors, the senate had undermined their claims to being gentlemen. And, if they were not to be gentlemen, the students decided that they had no alternative but to act in the most ungentlemanly of ways – they would attack their superiors instead of their inferiors and each would act in his own interest at the expense of his fellow students. With their new disciplinary regime, in fact, the faculty had destroyed the possibility of creating the social relations of an incipient elite by setting the boys against themselves. The polite and mannered manipulation of one's fellows recommended by Lord Chesterfield now disappeared altogether. Moreover, the faculty had denied their students the very social distinction – recognition as a gentleman – that they had come to the college to achieve in the first place. Not surprisingly, a kind of anarchy ensued, each student grasping for individual advantage. And this only led to further violence among the students. By August 1835, many had begun to carry knives onto campus and to use them in fights. As a result, the college suffered a severe decline in enrollment – from about 140 students in 1834 to 61 the following year – and in tuition receipts; two professors were fired; all the assistants were let go; and the college sank into disrepute and insignificance for two decades.

Faculty members claimed that they did not understand the reason for this 'marked decrease', as they put it, yet they did leave some clue. In seeking to explain why 'the discipline of the college' had been 'much improved' after the decline in enrollment, the Senate noted 'this may be partly ascribed to the attainments of the generality of the students having been of a higher description and their number having been much fewer than former'. In other words, all the troublemakers had left. Those young men who hoped to find a place in the colonial elite apparently now sought other venues in which to demonstrate their fitness for leadership. Here was the predicament of all settlers in Cape Colony writ small. How could they organize themselves and the colony in their own interests if the very institutions that governed them were run by men of inferior status, as colonial bureaucrats often were? Not only did these interlopers represent interests often opposed to those of the settlers, but they contradicted the social relations of power on the ground. What, then, was the point of aspiring to leadership? Moreover, what exactly was the point of attending South African College? Most students and their parents in fact decided that there was none, at least until the mid-1850s and the advent of representative government.[13]

The end of direct rule by the Crown marked the beginning of a new era in Cape Colony and in the history of South African College. The demand for

[12] Senate Minutes, 5 Dec. 1832, 10 July 1833.

[13] Senate Minutes, 30 Sept. 1835. On the long term consequences of this debacle, see Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 1, ch. 9–15.

representative government arose in the early 1850s in the midst of an economic boom that followed on the heels of a dramatic expansion of Cape Colony's territorial boundaries to the east, by means of several frontier wars against the AmaXhosa. The new territory and the African laborers that came with it in short order produced a rush of trade in Cape Town which, in turn, created a constituency for an expansion of the functions of the colonial government. There were calls from settlers, English and Afrikaner alike, for a permanent army or mounted police to protect their gains on the frontier, and for an infrastructure in the western Cape to support further economic development. As part of these demands, the Cape Town breakwater and Victoria and Alfred harbour were built, the first railroad opened and public schools established, all of which required public officials to plan and administer the enterprises. The result was a sudden demand for university-educated men, not necessarily trained in specific skills such as engineering, but in leading others and in creating a constituency for themselves and their purposes and projects – that is, in directing public affairs, whether economic or political. South African College, feeble as it was, had the good luck to be the only source of such men in all of Africa.[14]

Good luck, however, did not mean good fortune, at least immediately. South African College went through a painful and tumultuous reorganization in the 1850s that began with a battle royal between J. C. Adamson, a professor of longstanding in the college and in the 1840s the only man actually teaching classes there, and Langham Dale, the young, headstrong classics professor recently hired from the Queen's College, Oxford. The specific details of the conflict need not concern us here, but the outcome was crucial to the direction of the college. Adamson resigned in October 1849 and Langham Dale became the leading force for reform in the college throughout the 1850s. In short order, several new professors were hired, enrollment began to climb steadily, and the curriculum was updated to serve a rapidly expanded market economy more closely, especially with courses in book-keeping and geography, the latter mostly focused on remote parts of the colony where students might be expected to go in their first posts. Finally, students took part in all of this by reworking the basis of social relations on campus, shifting contests for dominance from individual conflicts back to depredations by gangs and later to non-violent forms of competition.[15]

The origins of the new conflict between students and faculty, however, lay as much in the reorganization and expansion of the college itself as in any rise in student initiative. Power was increasingly concentrated in the Senate as it began to focus its efforts on reorganizing the college along bureaucratic lines instead of disciplining students directly. Meanwhile, the older centers of

[14] For an antiquarian but nonetheless very useful account of the economic impact of eastward expansion and representative government in Cape Colony, see R. F. M. Immelman, *Men of Good Hope : The Romantic Story of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, 1804–1954* (Cape Town, 1955), ch. 15–25. See also Newton and Benians, *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. 8, ch. 13 and 14; Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, ch. 5–8; H. C. Botha, *John Fairbairn in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1984), ch. 7 and 10; and John Noble, *South Africa, Past and Present : A Short History of the European Settlements at the Cape* (Cape Town, 1877), ch. 8–9.

[15] Senate Minutes, 15 Aug. 1848; 2, 3 Apr., 29 Oct. 1849. On the transition from Adamson to Dale, see Marti Borman, *Die Kaaplandse Onderwysdepartement/The Cape Education Department, 1839–1989* (Cape Town, 1989), 70–1; Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 1, ch. 10.

personal power, the janitor and the professors themselves, ceased to serve as enforcers of discipline and morality in the personal conduct of students. The new professors hired in the 1850s concerned themselves almost entirely with their teaching and their books while the janitor and his role in the college seemed simply to degenerate. There were complaints as early as 1854 about 'a want of attention bestowed by the Janitor on his most important duties, keeping order among the pupils, and having the College opened at the proper time'. Moreover, there were charges that the janitor had made one student the 'bearer of certain messages' to the student's young sister which the Senate considered 'unbecoming & presumptuous conduct' and 'an insult to his whole family'. Not surprisingly, this janitor was soon replaced, but only by a man who himself promptly suffered a nervous breakdown and had to retreat to the country. His successor, in turn, had to be continually reminded of his duties, as he absented himself 'for hours from his duties without leave', and in the end also succumbed to 'nervous disability' for which he was granted a month's leave of absence for a 'change of air and scene'.[16]

Into this disciplinary void South African College students stepped quickly, organizing themselves each year into several gangs of eight or ten students, each of whom subsequently terrorized allcomers – faculty, fellow students and residents of Cape Town and its suburbs as far afield as Rondebosch. The conflict began in July 1859 with students peacefully but adamantly defying a professor's direct order. It seems that Professor Pappe, the colonial government botanist, had found himself facing an empty classroom three times in one day when his students refused to quit playing cricket in the paddock, a playing field adjacent to the college grounds, and this after he had 'repeatedly sent' for them. This was followed by the organization of a gang by a student named Walsh which became the model for such organizations for the next decade. He and four others, described in the records as ringleaders, organized the entire botany class to give Pappe trouble again, which finally climaxed in a general mêlée at an agricultural fair in the paddock.

The difficulty at the fair turned on the question of who should control the paddock grounds. Students at the college had for generations tried to persuade the governor to allow them its exclusive use for their games, but the governor had always refused on the grounds that it was one of the privileges of his office and the only place left in the city where he could graze his cattle. But in recent years SAC students had occupied the grounds by default and now considered it their turf – literally. At any rate, they objected when the governor gave permission for use of the paddock for the fair, and Walsh and his boys took the opportunity to become heroes to the majority of students – which they did. But Walsh's days were numbered. The next spring he was expelled after he 'with others' attacked a student in the paddock, pulling down his pants and treating him 'dirtily'.[17] Walsh and his gang, however, did not lack for imitators and successors in the following years.[18]

[16] Senate Minutes, 10 May 1854, 20 Aug. 1857, 23 Apr. 1858. On the upturn in the college's fortunes, see Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 1, ch. 11.

[17] Senate Minutes, 28 July 1859; 6 Aug. through 13 Dec. 1861; 18 May through 5 June 1862. On the conflict in 1859, see also J. H. Hofmeyr, *The Life of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr* (Cape Town, 1913), 29–30.

[18] Senate Minutes, 24 Nov. 1862; 4 May through 14 Sept. 1864.

Gangs, however, were only one route to positions of leadership at SAC after 1860 or so, and by the mid-1870s gangs on campus had almost disappeared. The reason was simple enough. The establishment of representative government in Cape Colony created a vastly expanded structure of opportunities for young, well-connected white men of good reputation. Specifically, growth of the colonial bureaucracy in Cape Town and elsewhere produced a demand for clerks and administrators. And the spread of state-supported schools throughout the colony vastly increased the number of teaching positions open to college graduates. Moreover, the discovery of diamonds brought to an end a twenty-year depression and resulted in a bonanza of jobs in commerce, mining and the law. The question now became how to get those positions, and for the first time few employers seemed to find a reputation for violence and predatory behavior a good recommendation for prospective employees. Just why employers in Cape Colony in earlier years had found a reputation for being something of a tough good reason to hire a young man, is clear enough. During the first half of the century in a rough-and-tumble colony, physical aggressiveness turned out to be a real asset. But as the colony's merchant houses, government agencies and corporations organized themselves along bureaucratic lines that same personal violence became a liability. By the 1870s, aggressive behavior was useful only if it could be channeled along fixed lines of authority. Therefore, it became necessary to produce a reputation for leadership by peaceful means and within well organized institutions, and to form connections with powerful patrons in the colony's new bureaucracies. Hence the emerging value of a debating society, sports clubs and even university examinations. Each produced leaders and reputations through a structured conflict, essentially ritualized violence, and each included some of Cape Town's most powerful men as spectators, men who might later be counted upon for a letter of recommendation or a tip leading to a satisfactory position.[19]

Beginning in 1860, the South African Debating Society had a membership ranging from a dozen or so to fifty or sixty students, meeting on Saturday mornings in the 1860s and Friday nights in the 1870s, mostly to hear set speeches read by the boys. These were supposed to be original compositions and were judged mainly on the quality of their delivery, not on the truthfulness of their content. It was, in fact, considered something of a triumph if a student could work in a fake quotation or two and pass it off as genuine. The point was to win a vote of the students present, the vote being taken on whether or not the speech was persuasive. This procedure, however, changed in the 1870s as the society began to pair speeches on a single topic so as to produce something like a real debate. This innovation was crucial because it set students into a competition out of which would come only one winner. By contrast, in the old format it was always possible

[19] On the economic impact of representative government and the mineral revolution in Cape Town, see Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town: Group Identity and Social Practice, 1875–1902* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. 2–3; 'Cape Town at the advent of the mineral revolution (*c.* 1875): economic activity and social structure,' *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 6 (1988), 61–82. On the expansion of schooling in Cape Colony in this period, see Borman, *Die Kaaplandse*, 67–117; and J. Chr. Coetzee (ed.), *Onderwys in Suid-Afrika, 1652–1960* (Pretoria, 1958), 68–78.

that all students who spoke might win an approving vote. And the production of winners created a hierarchy of leaders. Students who dominated the debates in the society became leaders in other activities on campus. They also impressed local 'old boys' from the college, mostly colonial bureaucrats and advocates in Cape Town who, beginning in the 1870s, were allowed to join the Debating Society and to participate in all of its events.[20]

But such contests also produced a multitude of losers, disaffected students who in no way formed a constituency for student leaders, as did gangs. These students constantly drifted away from the society and throughout the late nineteenth century membership levels waxed and waned dramatically. In addition, there were those students in the society who turned to verbal abuse and the destruction of property. In 1880, for example, student debaters engaged in a general conflict with the janitor, who was required by the senate to be present in order to lock up the building after Friday night meetings. One student at least was convicted of using 'grossly insulting language to the Janitor'. A little over a year later, the society was admonished for allowing its members to carve up the furniture in the hall in which they met. The Senate also complained about smoking in the building during meetings and of the students becoming a 'nuisance outside the Hall'. The result was that the Debating Society did indeed provide a structured competition that allowed some students at least to demonstrate their leadership and to rise to the top of a student hierarchy. But the structure of opportunity created here was very small indeed and that led to considerable instability in the society, both in terms of membership and in the behavior of its members. It also resulted in the founding of alternative student organizations, such as sports clubs,[21] where young elites could be formed.

By the mid-1870s, games of cricket and football had become a matter of consuming interest among the students at South African College and an alternative to the Debating Society. Since the 1850s, cricket had been played in the paddock on and off, but it was not until about 1872 that the game came to be organized as a college sport. In that decade for the first time, the students fielded a team that represented the college as a whole, and played against various amateur teams in Cape Town wherever an open field could be found (the paddock itself being too small to form a proper oval and being anything but level). But, unlike teams which played after 1894 when records were first kept of the games, these matches remained a matter of individual effort rather than team play. This meant that any player could distinguish himself in a game. In the 1880s and 1890s, one alumnus later recalled, all the students but especially the younger ones viewed 'the first team man' as a 'hero, and his predecessors in glory had a flavour of the divine about their memory'. So unimportant was the actual outcome of the game, as opposed to the performance of individual players, that it was only with difficulty that anyone could be persuaded to keep score. As one old boy from SAC recalled:

[20] Senate Minutes, 7 June 1860; *Jubilee Souvenir of the South African College Debating Society* ([Cape Town], 1915), 1–9. On the Debating Society in the 1860s, see John Kotze, *Biographical Memoirs and Reminiscences* (Cape Town, 1934), 84. The first mention of a debating society at SAC was in 1860; see Senate Minutes, 7 June 1860.

[21] Senate Minutes, 1 Nov. 1880; 13, 20 Sept. 1882.

A score book or a loose leaf was handed to some unfortunate follower. After a great deal of persuasion he was induced to score, then a pencil was commandeered and for a few minutes the unfortunate scorer kept his promise. Thereafter he would induce someone else to take it on, and so it went on the whole day.

'As for sending scores to newspapers,' he went on, 'that only happened now and again.' Similarly, the dress of the team reflected the importance of individual feats of skill and daring, not the planning and organization of team play. In fact, cricket players for South African College in the 1880s wore whatever they liked on to the field, including 'shirts of all and sometimes many colours; black, tan, and every conceivable kind of boots'. 'White buckskin' worn uniformly along with a blue-and-white striped shirt after 1894 'was quite unknown'. The point is the outcome of the game was only incidental to the performance of individual players. Reputations could be made or lost in any game, no matter whether the home team won or lost, and they were by several students in each game.[22]

The same could be said of football. First played in the early 1870s at South African College, the game consisted of a mixture of rules and practices that would later be divided between rugby football and soccer. This was a physical and violent sport played on a open field with two goal posts at each end, but no cross bar between the posts, the object being simply to get the ball between the posts, whether on the ground or in the air. The game began with a scrum, but for it the players were formed not into a circle as they are today, but into two lines ranged across the field, the players standing shoulder-to-shoulder, much as in American football. Then the referee tossed the ball between the two lines and the players all rushed forward, shoulders and heads down, butting each other until one or another managed to control the ball with his feet. At that point, the player with the ball would attempt to dribble it with his feet towards the goal; if in the course of play the ball bounced off an opposing player, the one who caught the ball could either run with it or take a free kick at the goal. This was not a subtle game and required no particular strategy or cunning. 'Individual play ruled and there was little combination', one former player recalled in later years. It was mostly just a matter of players putting their bodies in harm's way. As one former player put it, 'shouldering was a great feature' of the game.[23]

Like cricket, football was an opportunity for individual students to exhibit their strength, fortitude and determination to their fellow students, and of course to the spectators who watched from the sidelines, many of them old boys from the college, now occupying prominent positions in government and business. But unlike the earlier violent activities associated with gangs, football and cricket were not just a matter of bullying behavior. Cricket matches required enormous stamina and patience because they ordinarily consumed an entire day, beginning at about ten in the morning, with only a

[22] Senate Minutes, 17 July 1867, 16 May 1889. On the development of cricket teams at SAC, see Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 2, 680–91.

[23] Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 2, 691–3. See also an unsigned essay titled 'Football', H. A. Close, 'Secret of success in life', *The Student's Journal*, 27 Apr. 1888, and M. N. Keys, 'School and college life', *The Student's Journal*, 31 Aug. 1888, SAC Debating Society, Essays and Journal Records, University Archives, University of Cape Town. *The Student's Journal* has no page numbers and was simply copied out in long hand to be circulated among the students at South African College.

short break for tea and sandwiches between the two innings, at around two in the afternoon. Football games, although lasting only an hour and an half, also required great energy and strength over a sustained period of time. Moreover, both games required skill, if only skills utilized by an individual and not by the team as a whole. Both sports had positions that required much preparation and practice if they were to be filled with any distinction in the field. Bowlers in cricket in particular gained fame for technique and ball control acquired only through hours of tedious practice, and footballers who could dribble the ball with accuracy and dexterity were especially prized by their peers. In short, any tough might organize a gang, but a sports hero had to strive and struggle to improve himself. He disciplined himself instead of relying on the college faculty to do it for him, and thereby became the exemplar of a new kind of student leader on campus.[24]

Finally, a third route to student leadership emerged in the 1880s in addition to debate and sports – scholarship – a means to success very much in line with the shift in the focus of college life from character building to intellectual work. As one student put it, 'If he [a student] be not of the kind that indulge in sport, genius is sufficient to pardon him that shortcoming, and when he does well at examinations he is lauded for he has made a name for the College and his Professors show him their gratitude'. This was possible because the new University of the Cape of Good Hope, a degree-granting body modeled explicitly on the University of London, had created a national competition among students from South Africa's several colleges by means of its standardized examinations, none of the colleges being authorized to grant any sort of degree. Just as a cricket player through his individual effort could make a name for himself with an exemplary performance at the Oval, so a bookish student at South African College could now become famous by posting a high score in the University examinations. Indeed, the results of each examination were published in all the colony's newspapers and the names of the superior students noted widely, especially among a student's fellows. But there was more to the heroic student scholar than just achieving a high grade. Like football and cricket players, student scholars did not win solely by means of their natural talents; they had to practice and strive to perfect themselves. As one student put it, 'the mass of the famous are those who by steady and fixed aim towards self-improvement, having settled on one special subject for study, have adhered to it for a lifetime, not allowing themselves to be drawn off it by other attractive studies'. In this, scholarship was no different than sports. Both were means for producing a reputation for leadership through individual hard work and subsequent achievement which was validated through a structured competition.[25]

[24] Ritchie, *History*, Vol. 2, 680–93. On the social values embodied in cricket and football, see Richard Holt, *Sport and the British : A Modern History* (Oxford, 1989), ch. 2 and 4; John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870–1914* (Manchester, 1993), ch. 3; Albert Grundlingh *et al.*, *Beyond the Tryline : Rugby and South African Society* (Johannesburg, 1995); and John Nauright *et al.* (eds.) *Making Men : Rugby and Masculine Identity* (London, 1996). On sports and social values in Cape Town, see Floris J. G. Van der Merwe, '"Athletic Sports" and the Cape Town Society, 1652–1900', *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, 19 (1988): 28–39.

[25] Senate Minutes, 21 Dec. 1881, 1 July 1877.

South African College officials, however, were not comfortable with leaving the production of social relations among Cape Colony's rising elite entirely to students themselves. Therefore, in 1878, when the governor of the colony offered to subsidize a cadet corps, the college Senate jumped at the opportunity. Within a year, the college had hired a new janitor whose duties for the first time included drilling students twice a week, plus accompanying them on camping expeditions. The students themselves were encouraged to volunteer for the corps, the inducement being a limited number of officer's positions and three or four prizes for good attendance and sharpshooting. And it was supposed by the government that the Cadet Corps would inculcate a strict discipline into the cadets that in turn would have salutary political effects on the students individually and on the colony as a whole. As General Sir William Cameron, the commanding general for Cape Colony in the early 1890s, put it in a speech at the college, there was just then, 'a tremendous wave of Socialism passing over the world … owing to a want of organization', and that 'sort of spirit' could only 'be combatted with disciplinary organisations' such as the college's Cadet Corps. The faculty, however, were less enthusiastic. They quarreled with the Senate and Council over whether a faculty member should be required to oversee the Corps. None wanted to do so but the Council insisted, and in the end Professor Hahn agreed to serve as a 'co-captain' alongside the janitor, mainly to keep the Corps' books. In the end, it was the subsidy that brought the faculty around. When Hahn reported to a graduating audience in December 1894 that the corps was 'flourishing', he pointed out that 'the average attendance has been very satisfactory, 100 being several times present at drill, out of a strength of 176', netting the college just over £142 sterling during the past year.[26]

Hahn's report of a flourishing Cadet Corps, however, was a hopeless exaggeration. The year after the corps was organized, students were reported to be faking illness to avoid drilling. And in 1891 a student serving as a lieutenant in the Cadet Corps sent a letter to the Senate complaining of the conduct of his fellow student cadets, and asked that the Senate direct the janitor who was then drill master, to remain on the parade ground during all drills and 'to report the students misconducting themselves'. Two years later, so few students participated that the Senate was forced to take 'steps' to 'induce students to attend the drills more regularly'. Finally, in 1895, 'various letters' reached the Senate 'from the military authorities', presumably student officers again, 'regarding the unsatisfactory state of the Cadet Corps, and threatening its disbandment unless some means were taken to insure better attendance at drill and greater efficiency'. This was followed by a long discussion between faculty members and the student captain of cadets which resulted, a week later, in making 'drill compulsory for all students save those who are excused in the usual way, and to treat absence from drill as absence from class', the repeated offense of which could result in dismissal from the college.[27]

The consequences were predictable. Students simply refused to attend drill. In March 1896, Professor Corstorphine who was then co-captain of the

[26] Senate Minutes, 27 May 1881, 5 May 1882.
[27] Senate Minutes, 6 Aug. 1878; 2, 9 Dec. 1895.

Cadet Corps, reported to the Senate that he had 'several time spoken to students who had been absent, but was powerless to enforce attendance'. In response, the Senate resolved that 'members of the Cadet Corps, absenting themselves from the morning drill without permission of the Secr. of Senate or of the Captain of the corps, should be fined 1/., which fine is to be paid on or before the next day; students in default to be suspended from all college classes'. But by the following autumn it had become apparent that the corps was a dead letter. After receiving a long and depressing report on the refusal of students to participate in drilling, Professor Hahn proposed that the Senate abolish compulsory drill, which it did. That did not produce any more enthusiasm for military discipline than earlier 'inducements' had done, and in June 1901 Professor Beattie 'brought forward' in a Senate meeting 'the question of the present languishing condition of the Cadet Corps and intimated that the officers thought the corps should be given up owing to want of support from the students'. A year later, the Cadet Corps at South African College was disbanded.[28]

The college Cadet Corps had suffered from the same defects as the debating society. It provided opportunities to develop a reputation for leadership for only a few students, relegating the remainder of the cadets to a supporting role at best. Indeed, the limited number of officer's positions and the handful of prizes offered only ensured that most students would participate just long enough to establish that they could benefit only slightly from their efforts, if at all. Moreover, the Senate's decision to make participation compulsory undercut the students' claims to being gentlemen. It rendered most of them inferiors, subject to the arbitrary orders of a superior not of their own choosing. Worse, that superior was again a man of low social standing – the janitor who served as drill master. In short, the faculty had reproduced the very error that had led to a near fatal decline in enrollment at South African College half a century earlier, making it impossible for most students to produce a reputation for leadership. Not surprisingly, the results were disaffection, poor attendance and ultimately a collapse of the organization.

There was, however, one further important change in campus social relations during the late nineteenth century. Students were no longer physically in sight of their parents or the faculty most of the time. Through until about 1860 or so, most students at South African College had come from Cape Town and lived at home with their parents; in fact, the Senate had made it a regular practice to call parents into disciplinary hearings to confirm their judgement and to approve any punishment imposed on their sons. Those few students who came from outside the city ordinarily boarded in the home of one or another of the college's faculty members. For some faculty this arrangement nearly doubled their incomes, but the chief advantage was disciplinary. It allowed faculty members to monitor the conduct of their students on a continuous basis. But beginning in the 1870s, students increasingly lived in commercial boarding houses around the city. Why that become so is not clear. Certainly, as the colony expanded ever eastward and northward, more students came from a distance, perhaps more than could be accommodated in faculty homes. Faculty and students both

[28] Close, 'The secret of success'.

complained about a lack of accommodation for the boys. Whatever the case, the college at first attempted to exert some control over these boarding houses by approving them, or disapproving of them, upon application by the proprietor. But with little means to oversee what went on there on a daily basis, college supervision of its students was minimal at best. In 1877, Professor Bindle, speaking in the Senate, 'drew attention to the unfortunate absence of any regulations with regard to the boarding out of students'.[29]

The question of supervising the conduct of students while outside the college precincts came to a head in 1881. In May of that year, a student named Rice challenged the right of professors to require attendance in class. It seems that Rice had absented himself from Professor Gill's classics class and, when called upon, offered up his own explanation but failed to produce a written excuse from a responsible adult. In the past, such an excuse would have come from either the student's parents or from the faculty member with whom the boy boarded. But Rice lived in a commercial establishment and presumably its proprietor made no attempt to keep up with the whereabouts of his boarder; it therefore made little sense to seek an excuse for absence. That, however, made Rice responsible for his own actions which Gill found unacceptable. In discussing the situation, Gill lost his composure and addressed the student in what the latter considered 'insulting langauge' specifically calling Rice's refusal to produce an excuse from an adult 'unmanly'. Two days later, the student declared his intention go over the faculty's head and to take up the matter with the college council, not the Senate, an unprecedented move. What exactly happened after the appeal was made is unknown, but we do know that the issue did not go away. The next year, two students who had been seen by a faculty member drinking in a bar were convicted by the Senate, but Professor Foot went on record as saying, 'Senate had no right to any control of the conduct of the students outside the College'.[30]

The upshot of these controversies was that the college gradually ceased to inquire into the affairs of its students outside the college grounds. SAC students were now defined as gentlemen responsible for their own behavior, not as gentlemen in the making who required close supervision and correction. Yet the college did not entirely abdicate its role in supervising the behavior of its students. In the 1880s, the Senate codified long lists of rules of behavior that were expected of students while inside the college gates, mostly to do with movement and deportment within the college grounds and the wearing of academic dress during classes. There were also clauses warning against any breach of 'good morals' and requiring that students board in houses approved by their parents. But the most striking thing about these rules is how they attended almost entirely to appearances. The Senate no longer sought to intervene in the behavior of students to prevent violence, theft and personal abuse, the staples of social relations among students through 1850, but required students only to look respectable. The practical

[29] 'South African College. Prize Distribution', newspaper clipping, Senate Minutes, 27 Sept. 1894. The clipping is dated by hand 20 Dec. 1894, which must be incorrect; it should probably be dated 20 Dec. 1893.

[30] Senate Minutes, 6 Aug., 3 Dec. 1877; 27 Mar., 26 May, 5 Nov. 1879; 23 Mar. 1891; 31 July 1893; 2 Dec. 1895.

effect of these changes was to greatly reduce the number of offenses investigated by the Senate in any given year, the purpose of disciplinary procedures now being simply to ensure no disruption in the business of the college. The deeper consequence, however, was to shift the purpose of the College from character building to intellectual improvement. Beginning in the 1880s, professors spent far less time monitoring their students and much more time in preparing lectures and writing for publication. Intellectual work became the center of college life, social relations and the formation of hierarchies of leadership being left entirely to the students themselves.[31]

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the formation of social relations among students had overshadowed intellectual work at South African College. The reason was simple enough. Its graduates would have little occasion in later life to use the knowledge passed on to them in class. Not once would they be required to read a document in Latin, the core of the curriculum, or solve an algebraic equation. Indeed, the only course of any practical use to students when they became old boys was that in writing, actually penmanship, but this was hardly a crucial skill, nor one that could not be learned easily in an ordinary academy or through private practice. Students understood all this and acted upon it by constantly ducking classes or, worse, disrupting them. They grasped early on that what might most profitably be learned and used to good effect later in life was how to organize and lead their fellow men, and how to discipline their subordinates. This they did in a variety of ways during the nineteenth century, some legitimate and approved by the college and some not. But most sought to become leaders through fulfilling a highly conventionalized role they called being a 'gentleman', and this was no easy matter for a settler boy. There were fashions to adopt, attitudes to learn, and poses to assume in order to create a convincing portrait of a gentlemanly self. But these could be gleaned from any advice manual of the day. What could not be learned from books was how to lead, that is to say, what a gentleman did – exercise power.

Early in the nineteenth century, students at South African College exercised power by rallying their peers and disciplining their inferiors, focusing especially on the writing, drawing and French masters, and on the college janitor, as ideal targets. This was so because the masters, unlike professors, had never attended a college or university and none would ever hold a position of public or private influence. Similarly, the college janitor was always merely a tradesman. Yet the masters and the janitor exercised considerable powers over the boys. The contradiction, therefore, between social standing and the exercise of power became a focal point for conflicts through the 1850s. And it was out of these conflicts that a college disciplinary regime arose. This was a regime that in the end undercut SAC students' claims to being gentlemen and, hence, their eligibility to wield power, by classing them with their social inferiors – women, children and servants – who were routinely subjected to physical chastisement. This public humiliation diminished the honor or reputation of a student, effectively reducing the likelihood that his fellow students would associate with him or, more importantly, trust him to lead. Moreover, imprisonment in the total isolation of the Black Hole prevented the boys from mobilizing their peers,

[31] Senate Minutes, 12 Mar., 1 Sept. 1896; 18 June 1901; 3 Mar. 1902.

in short, from drawing upon the social ties they had created at the college to accomplish their purpose. This was not merely punishment but rather an attack on the basic identity of SAC students. If not distinct from women, children and servants, what could students at the college be? What identity could they assume? If not leaders of their peers, what could they become? The answer was an outlaw – a man who was neither a gentleman nor a dependent, and who therefore had no honor or reputation to defend and no social ties to keep up. That is precisely how SAC students conducted themselves when they preyed upon each other.

This harsh disciplinary regime, however, faltered in the reorganization of the college which followed hard upon the heels of representative government. As demand for its graduates grew, enrollments rose again and a new generation of faculty came to power who saw little need to intervene extensively in the lives of their students. And that left a void in the social life of the college that was soon to be filled by the students themselves. They organized at first into gangs and later in a debating society and sports teams, and they took advantage of the University of the Cape of Good Hope examinations, especially after students began to take rooms outside the supervision of the college faculty. Each provided a variety of venues for rallying one's peers to a cause, in short for establishing a reputation for leadership. This was no easy task and for a time the college opposed such efforts, seeking instead to substitute the cadet corps controlled by the faculty in place of student-led organization. The hierarchical nature of the corps, however, produced the same problem that early efforts at debating had done. Competition for a very limited number of leadership positions created more losers than winners, losers who soon became disaffected, some simply disappearing and others causing trouble. In the end, the college authorities recognized the value of student organizations and began to accord them official status, for example by granting holidays for cricket matches.

South African College, then, was one of the key institutions by which a settler elite in Cape Colony was reproduced in each succeeding generation, chiefly through student competitions structured around violence – whether actual or symbolic. Moreover, this case study suggests that such competitions may have been essential to producing a ruling elite, not only in Cape Colony but elsewhere in settler societies during the nineteenth century. In Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and what became South Africa, middle-class elites seldom controlled the usual means to power – a bureaucracy to run the state, an established church to police the poor and a standing army to quell opposition. There was also no aristocracy outside of Britain itself through whose personal social connections, money and power could flow smoothly and without interruption from one generation in the next. In settler societies, local elites therefore had to be organized anew in every generation, and there were none of the usual social mechanisms on the ground to sort out all who sought place and power. Hence the need for colleges as meeting grounds for potential leaders, and as places where they could engage in competitions among themselves to establish public reputations for leadership, whether of a persuasive or a coercive kind, produced through violence on campus whether of a physical or a symbolic kind. In short, during the nineteenth century, competitions among university students were an essential part of the education of any young man aspiring

to power and position in settler societies, as well as being crucial to the formation of local elites throughout the Anglo-Atlantic world.

SUMMARY

South African College was one of the key institutions which produced a new elite among whites in South Africa in each succeeding generation during the nineteenth century. It was important not so much for what was taught there as for how students learned through struggles – some violent and others not – to establish a reputation for leadership for themselves. This reputation was crucial in gaining access to important positions in business and government, and it was obtained early in the century by means of bullying and later through success in structured competitions such as the debate society, sports and the University of the Cape of Good Hope's examinations for degrees. The means to produce such a reputation changed in accord with larger alterations in the political economy, especially with the advent of representative government in the 1870s. It is argued that the processes described here may also be seen at work at colleges and universities in settler societies in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and may be endemic to the middle classes as a whole in the nineteenth century.