Language Learning, Power, Race and Identity

ENCOUNTERS

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Language Learning, Power, Race and Identity

White Men, Black Language

Liz Johanson Botha

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Part 2: The Life Histories

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Preface: Autobiographical Origins of This Book

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.
Nelson Mandela

I am a white woman, born in South Africa in 1947, descended on both sides of the family from Christian missionaries. My father's parents were of Scandinavian origin, and my mother's parents came from Scotland. My husband is an Afrikaner, whose earliest ancestors came to South Africa in the 17th century. All of this means that I am inextricably enmeshed in the racist discourse and 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1991) of white South Africans which is, to a large extent, the subject of this book. While I have tried to approach my themes from an academic standpoint, the book is subjective and autobiographical, its constructions of 'reality' emerging not only from my research, but also from the norms of my white life. The urge to conduct the research recorded here emerged directly from experiences and concerns of my own, described in this preface, which also revolve around the racial realities of our country.

At the end of 1998, my husband and I moved from Johannesburg to the Eastern Cape, where I was to take up an academic post at the University of Fort Hare. Four years previously, democratic elections had brought an official end to apartheid and installed Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa. New in King William's Town, I needed to visit my bank. Crowds of people, almost all of them isiXhosa-speaking Africans and probably fairly new to banking, were standing outside the entrance to the bank. A neatly dressed middle-aged white bank employee was greeting them all and directing them to the section of the bank that they needed. I was impressed by his efficiency, by the courteous and considerate manner with which he was handling the clients, and most of all by the fluent isiXhosa that he was speaking.

I was to encounter other similar language situations in this part of the world. In a quiet suburban post office in East London, I noticed two female clerks, one white and one black, chatting companionably in isiXhosa as they

waited for customers. I overheard similar exchanges in the offices of the magistrate's court and in a butcher's shop. Even more surprising, at a party attended only by white people, I found two men laughing uproariously as they told one another jokes in isiXhosa.

These situations may be unsurprising when one considers that over 80% of the population of the Eastern Cape is isiXhosa-speaking. One needs to bear in mind, however, that for more than half a century, the apartheid government, building on the legacy of their colonial forebears, regulated almost every aspect of South African life with the aim of keeping people classified as white separated from those classified as black. The only form of bilingualism which was promoted among those classified as white in South Africa was bilingualism in English and Afrikaans,[1] the official languages of the apartheid state; the learning of African languages was not encouraged in 'white' schools. As a result, fluency in an African language is relatively rare among white South Africans. While I had frequently heard white people speaking isiZulu (closely related to isiXhosa) during my childhood in a rural KwaZulu-Natal village, it was usually a very limited and functional register of isiZulu. My father, for instance, did a lot of building and knew a number of isiZulu phrases which were useful for instructing his workmen. His parents and elder brother, on the other hand, were much more fluent in the language, using it for preaching, praying and writing books and hymns for their mission congregations. What seemed different in modern-day Eastern Cape was that the exchanges were on the one hand more fluent, and on the other hand less one-sided, than what I had heard before. The white participants, relating to their black counterparts on somewhat equal or at least respectful terms, seemed comfortable using isiXhosa in everyday contexts.

My keen interest in what I was observing also arose out of my own language learning experiences. My quest to learn an African language had begun at university in the 1960s, and I had worked in spurts, over a number of years, at developing fluency (mostly in isiZulu and isiXhosa), in an attempt to close the gap between my experience as a white South African and the world of experience of my fellow-citizens who are African language speakers.

This quest reached its peak in 1989, during a period of living in Johannesburg, when I established an organisation called Transfer of African Language Knowledge (TALK), and applied its approach to my own learning. I began by learning some basic Setswana and then focused my attention, for a good five- or six-year period, on developing my isiZulu fluency. TALK promotes the learning of African languages through interaction with

mother tongue speakers, using a method based on the work of Larson and Smalley (1972), and suggesting Schumann's (1978) acculturation theory, an approach which in some ways foreshadows current approaches maintaining that language learning takes place through participation. TALK's approach emphasises the importance of access to conversations (e.g. Norton, 2000) and engagement in a community (e.g. Wenger, 1998). The TALK organisation sees language learning as a path to reconciliation between black and white South Africans, and a way of building, among language learners and language 'helpers',[2] a more inclusive South African identity.

Schumann's theories suggest that in order to learn a language, one has to become part of the 'culture'[3] of that language, thus becoming bicultural as well as bilingual. A number of TALK's learners (including myself) found the process of learning language and 'culture' from the speakers quite a life-changing experience: one which shifted attitudes, even paradigms. Some also found it almost impossibly challenging, given the nature of South African society, at that time just starting to move out of the apartheid structures. It set up considerable tension and ambivalence, being a very exciting and personal process which often pulled in the opposite direction from the demands of personal and working life.

As I followed the TALK learning process, I began to feel that nothing short of total immersion in an isiZulu-speaking community, over quite a considerable period, was going to result in fluency for me, in spite of the fact that my commitment was considerable, that I had a fairly strong background in the grammatical structures of isiZulu and that I had spent much of my working life involved with African people in educational institutions and projects. This kind of immersion was for me, in the end, too much to ask. 'Reality', in the form of marriage[4] and the need to earn a living – in other words, the norms of my white South African society – won out over my quest for fluency in an African language.

Overhearing these fluent white Eastern Cape isiXhosa speakers filled me with envy and regret. I assumed that most of them must have learned the language in childhood, and found myself asking questions about how this acquisition took place, and about their levels of fluency and 'biculturalism'. I wondered whether their bilingualism set up tension and ambivalence in their lives, and how it affected their sense of identity and the way they related to the isiXhosa-speaking people around them.

Later, another question arose. I had encountered a perception that farmers who spoke the languages of their workers were often racist, and that they made false assumptions and assertions about how much they knew about *the natives*.[5] I was curious about this. How could this be, when our

assumption in TALK had been that learning a language was a route out of racist views and practices to better understanding?

All these questions were of great interest to me personally, and I thought that answers to them could throw light on issues of language acquisition for white South Africans like me who wanted to learn an African language, and also on the building of a more inclusive South African identity. I therefore decided to carry out research into them, this book being an outcome of that research. Now that I have gained more insight into the significant and complex relationship between power, identity and language acquisition, highlighted by recent research literature, I realise that the research also offered me a way of pursuing a greater sense of coherence within my own multiple and conflicting identities, and ultimately a way of negotiating an uneasy peace (never final and always ongoing) with the ambivalences which are part of my life as a white South African, in which relations between white and black are so deeply complicated by divides of wealth, power and language.

Map 1: Eastern Cape, South Africa, present day

Map drawn by E.K. Botha (2012).

Notes

(1) In schools for African language speakers, during the apartheid years, the home language was taught, and also used as medium in early years (for some time, until Grade 8, but later until Grade 4), but it was also compulsory for learners to learn English and Afrikaans.
(2) In TALK courses, each learner has a partner, known as a 'language helper', who was his or her primary language informant, this relationship ideally leading to wider contacts in the target language community. The course showed the pairs how to work together so that the learner could learn the language and culture.
(3) I am aware that the term *culture* is open to a number of interpretations and that the relationship between language and 'culture' is a very complex one. Both language and 'culture' adapt and change in new contexts, cultural identity is not always dependent on language for its continuity (Canagarajah, forthcoming) and one language (e.g. English) can carry a variety of 'cultures'.
(4) I married at the age of 51, in early 1998.
(5) A commonly used way of referring to black people, especially in the first half of the 20th century, this term is seen as pejorative.

Introduction

What is This Book About?

This book explores the life histories of George, Riaan, Brendon and Ernie,[1] four white South African men who were born and brought up on farms in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (see Map 1, p. xiv). All four men are fluent in the African language of isiXhosa as well as English and Afrikaans, the official languages of South Africa during apartheid. The book offers insights into the way they acquired isiXhosa, and into relationships between language, power, race,[2] identity and change in their lives, as well as in the broader South African society.

Two extracts from Brendon's story give a flavour of the narratives, and of the kind of insights which they yield. Brendon describes a typical Sunday on the farm during his childhood:

> On a Sunday, the neighbours from the shop, about 30 kilos off the road, would come. (…) I had to sort of be there for lunch, you know, (**Liz**: Mm) and I couldn't wait to get away, you know, (**Liz** *laughs*) (…) couldn't wait to get back to the compound, (**Liz**: Mm) and play with my friends, (**Liz**: Mm) or, or they were, I could see them hanging around outside, you know, waiting for me, patiently waiting, you know, cause (**Liz**: Jaa) they wanted to go hunting or swimming, and (**Liz**: Ja) I mean I'd be forced to sit through this boring meal (**Liz**:/ *laughs*/ **Brendon**: with people listening to /- what was it then called – (…) - Radio South Africa? (**Liz**: I think it must have been, Ja, ja) And then I'd have to be quiet when the old people listened (…) to the news (**Liz**: Mm) and it was all in English, and (**Liz**: Mm) I just wanted to go and put Radio Xhosa on and dance on the verandah. (**Liz**: *laughs*, Ja, ja) (B1.75)

This part of the story narrated to me by Brendon constructs a vivid sense of the conflicting worlds and identities he remembers inhabiting in the

1960s: 'this boring meal', 'I'd have to be quiet' and 'the news … in English' are contrasted with 'couldn't wait to get away', 'hunting or swimming' and putting 'Radio Xhosa on and danc[ing] on the verandah'. The description of his activities with his Xhosa friends gives a glimpse of the kinds of contexts in which he developed his isiXhosa fluency. The book examines passages such as these from the childhood narratives of all four men – very different in spite of their commonalities – in order to discover how the boys' identity construction and isiXhosa competence interrelate, and also to gain insight into the boys' isiXhosa acquisition processes.

Reflecting back on his life more broadly, Brendon says,

> but ja, all of what I do is really informed by my Xhosa background, if I must be honest (…) I can't imagine my life without - without that part of my identity (**Liz**: It's driven you really, hey?) It's it's it's driven me, it's made me feel all sorts of emotions (**Liz**: Mm) that I wouldn't have felt, um some of them not good (**Liz**: Mm). Like I've, I'm sure I've had moments of guilt, you know, about being a white person (**Liz**: Mm, mm), um, I've had moments of great emotional exuberance and excitement (**Liz**: Mm) because I can speak Xhosa and people can understand me (**Liz**: Mm, mm) (…)
>
> I don't think I could do anything that I do if I didn't have that experience (**Liz**: Mm); I'd be doing something else. I'd be a lawyer, maybe (**Liz**: Mm), you know, working in an office in you know Cape Town or Joburg (…) I wouldn't be able to – (**Liz**: Ja) have the rich experience I have in the Eastern Cape, I mean I love the Eastern Cape (**Liz**: Ja); I wonder if I'd love it as much if I didn't speak Xhosa, you know. (**Liz**: Well, there's such a lot of it that is Xhosa, isn't it?) Exactly, ja. (B1.40, 41, 43)

Here, Brendon highlights to me the pervasive influence of having grown up speaking isiXhosa, participating in a Xhosa world and developing a Xhosa 'part of [his] identity'. He presents it as having stimulated intense emotions, positive and negative, and highlighting issues of race and difference ('moments of guilt about being a white person'; 'exuberance' because Xhosa people 'understand me'). He believes it has empowered him in specific ways ('I don't think that I could do anything that I do if I didn't have that experience'), driven him into a particular career and to a preferred part of the country (the Eastern Cape). Because of his Xhosa background, characteristic South African relations of power and race work somewhat differently in his life. On the one hand, he has more power than would be typical for a white male: he can be understood by 'Xhosa people' and can choose a career and lifestyle that would be outside the scope of most white

South Africans. On the other hand, his consciousness, and perhaps his guilt, about racial privilege are intensified. The analysis of the men's stories draws attention to such relationships between language, power, race and identity, and ways in which they change over time, as political transformation causes shifts in society. The analysis gives some insight into gender and the power of being male, but language and whiteness, rather than gender, are the intended focus of the study. While the book's insights apply specifically to these four men, in the South African context, they also have relevance in other settings of societal multilingualism, particularly those characterised by deep inequalities between speakers of different languages.

Who Might be Interested in Reading The Book?

While this book should appeal to an academic readership interested in studies of language acquisition, narrative and identity, it could also draw the attention of a more general readership with an interest in South African history, multilingualism and race studies.

Those involved in the study of second language acquisition (SLA) should be interested in the analysis and findings, particularly if they are involved in debates on learning as participation (Wenger, 1998) and the role of identity and power in language learning (Block, 2003; Norton, 2000). Similarly, scholars interested in studies of identity, race and whiteness that are grounded in post-structuralist (Foucault, 1976; Weedon, 1997) or postcolonial theory (Bhabha, 1994; Frankenberg, 1993; Hall, 1992a) will be able to relate to the book. Although gender is not a focus of the study, and the data has not been examined to gain insight into the participants' 'masculinities', researchers of masculinity in South Africa will find points of interest in the data.

More general readers eager to respond to the challenge of digging deeper into South African and Eastern Cape history and current reality should also find much of interest in the 'slices of life' researched here, particularly if they are interested in language and are prepared to reflect on and question the norms which shape white South African subjectivity: constructions of self and 'the other'.

What Contribution is Made by This Book?

The situation, which is the subject of this research, is interesting by virtue of its uniqueness when compared with multilingual situations previously researched. Where language learning research has focused on the power dimension, it has usually referred to the powerful native speaker

and the relatively disempowered learner, rather than the inverse, where elites are the language learners. Internationally, there is limited literature regarding the strategies and identities of colonials who have learned the languages of colonised people, and little attention has been given, to date, to the linguistic competences of white South Africans who speak indigenous African languages, or to their identity construction.

As I have already suggested in the Preface, the four men's situation is unique in that their bilingualism developed in a society where races and speakers of different languages were deliberately kept in legislatively separated silos, with bilingualism in English and Afrikaans the only kind receiving official sanction. In all schools, pupils were required to learn these languages, while the other nine or more indigenous languages of the country were only taught in schools specifically dedicated to the teaching of so-called 'mother tongue speakers' of a specific language, who lived in a geographical space allocated to that language group. The teaching of African languages in white schools was rare, and where it occurred only the basics were taught and lessons stopped after a couple of years. Few white people tried to learn African languages, either formally or informally, and few of those who tried moved beyond basic knowledge into a level which could be called 'fluency', my experience being a case in point.

While segregation is no longer legislated in South Africa, a considerable degree of social separation is still maintained between races and language groups. Where races do mix, the language of communication is usually English. Although multilingualism is written into education policy, up until recently there has been little promotion of the learning of African languages,[3] and most language learning takes place in the direction of improving English proficiency. While the number of white people taking on the learning of an African language may have increased,[4] it is still true that they seldom move beyond the basics to a level where they use the language in everyday communication.

In this kind of situation, it is clearly noteworthy that there are a number of white people who grew up in the Eastern Cape during apartheid, who are fluent in an indigenous African language. This fluency often seems to go along with fluency in both English and Afrikaans as well. What makes this a particularly interesting multilingual situation for research into language acquisition and socialisation, linked with issues of identity and power, is not only the sociopolitical situation described above, but also the fact that this situation is different from most of the kinds of multilingual situations researched thus far.

In contrast to the more established SLA research on immigrants to Britain, the USA, Canada and Europe, who need to learn the local language, with identity implications (see Block, 2007a: 75ff.), my participants learned isiXhosa at home, as part of their routine lives. They had full access, on the farm, to a community where isiXhosa and later Afrikaans or English was used, and they were part of this community and had power within it by virtue of their whiteness, their maleness and their parents' ownership of the farm. This is in stark contrast to the situation of immigrants to European and English-speaking countries such as Canada and the USA, who often struggle for access and for the 'right to speak' and 'to be heard' (e.g. Norton, 2000).

The situation of my participants also differs from that of students on 'study abroad' programmes, also commonly researched (see Block, 2007a: 145ff.), where European and American students spend a year or more staying in a country where the language they are learning is commonly spoken. The participants in my research spent their childhood years in the physical location where they were learning the language, and were not simply visiting for a year or two. They were children, growing up in the language community, not young adults who had already learned and were comfortable with another language.

There are commonalities between my participants and children in classic diglossic bilingual situations, where mother and father are speakers of different languages, and where the languages are used with different people and for somewhat different purposes. Most of the men in my study speak of two 'mothers' or two sets of parents, one set speaking only isiXhosa, while the other set is bilingual in English (and/or Afrikaans or German) and isiXhosa. They are exposed to a world where different languages are used in very separate situations and for different purposes. Their competence is in different, separate languages, each of which they speak in fairly 'standard' ways (though it has not been possible for me to verify this adequately).

Their situation is different from multilingual situations in places such as India and urban settings in South Africa and Zimbabwe (see Makoni *et al*., 2007: 35, 36) where people with a number of different mother tongues or dialects are thrown together and have to make meaning (see Canagarajah, 2007). My participants grew up with two languages, usually used in distinct domains, and learned a third through later, or sometimes parallel, experiences. While there is evidence that most have a mindset which is disposed to making meaning, and therefore to learning new languages, they construct themselves as having command of three separate languages with very little mixing or switching among and across them.

The four men's multilingualism is also unusual in light of the fact that the norm for middle-class, white South Africans is either 'bilingualism' in Afrikaans and English, or monolingualism, whereas multilingualism[5] is more often a feature of life among black South Africans, both middle class and urban sub-elite. This mirrors, to some extent, international experience where multilingualism is more common among sub-elite urban classes.

Their situation also differs from postcolonial situations where members of colonised or previously colonised groups need to learn the 'colonial' language in order to move on in 'modern society'. Black South Africans learning English are in this situation.

While the situation of my participants is postcolonial, they are members of the 'colonial' grouping, and thus are still in positions of power. Unusually, they learn the language of the disempowered: of the oppressed (or previously oppressed) group. There are parallels with the learning situation of my participants in accounts of other colonial settings.

Grosjean (1982: 179), for instance, tells of the son of English-speaking colonials who, like my participants, had learned the Indian language Garo through interaction with 'his Garo nurse and other Garo speakers. When the family left the region, Stephen was bilingual (3 years old), Garo being the stronger language. He tried using Garo on every Indian person they met, and when he failed to communicate with them, he lost his Garo completely'.

Cohn (1996: 19), speaking of colonial times in India, writes, 'Europeans most likely to have known Indian languages well were the … "country-born" Europeans, many of whom were engaged in small-scale trading activities' or in subordinate positions in the East India Company (EIC). Other whites learning the languages of the natives were missionaries, wishing to convert the locals to Christianity, and colonial agents wishing to gain 'command of language' so as to use it as 'the language of command' (Cohn, 1996: 16). Writing of the appropriation of Swahili as a language of colonial command in the Belgian Congo, Fabian (1986: 115) quotes De Bauw (1920), 'The better the European understands the language of the natives, the better he will be able to direct them'. He notes, however, that colonial exchanges with local people tended to be 'formal … task-specific, restricted exchanges', and that a pidgin variety was best suited to this kind of communication Fabian, 1986: 138). On white South African farms, the need to command was clearly a reason for knowing the language of the farmworkers. My research suggests, however, that at least some of the men developed quite a high degree of fluency in the language, and used it for far more than mere instructional purposes.

Finally, my participants' situation is very different from that of students learning a language in second or foreign language classroom situations. Their learning definitely takes place in naturalistic rather than classroom

settings. Firth and Wagner (1997) have put out a call for research to move out of the classroom environment, and to examine language acquisition and use in natural settings. This book could be seen as one response to that call, in that my participants learned and use language in natural communicative contexts, within a broader society dominated by racialised and unequal power structures, negotiating meaning through multiple identities as they exercise multilingual competence across a range of contexts.

It seems that, up to now, very little research has been done on the language skills and acquisition processes of English/Afrikaans and isiXhosa bilinguals in the Eastern Cape, or on identity factors relating to this. There is also little literature on white South Africans learning African languages. Kaschula (1989) carried out a study on the communicative competence in isiXhosa of white farmers in a north-eastern Cape community, and Gough (1996) researched special features of the English used by white isiXhosa–English bilingual men in the Albany district of the Eastern Cape, which included code-switching with isiXhosa and, to a lesser extent, Afrikaans. Gough's study explored, among other things, the identity the farmers wished to communicate. In his introductory chapters of a fourth-year university linguistics research report, Marshall (1996) analysed (morphosyntactically) the second language variety of isiXhosa spoken by Eastern Cape farmers, discussing the historical background and socio-psychological factors affecting the acquisition process. A part of this research was also published in a volume of working papers of the University of Reading (Marshall, 1997). I have carried out a small exploratory research project seeking to profile the bilingualism of a specific group of white Eastern Cape speakers of isiXhosa (Botha, 2007).

I have argued, then, that this research opens up a new area in terms of research on bilinguals, since this group is unusual in a number of respects when compared to bilingual research participants studied in other contexts. It makes a contribution to studies of language acquisition through participation and socialisation in naturalistic settings, as encouraged by Firth and Wagner (1997), also contributing to studies using the identity approach to language acquisition as characterised by Norton and McKinney (2011), which foregrounds unequal relations of power that are structurally enforced and supported. In using the community of practice (CoP) model of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) within a post-structuralist framework, it also extends the usefulness of the CoP model for studies of identity and language learning. In addition, the study makes a contribution to the growing corpus of narrative discourse studies of white postcolonial positioning and identity, internationally and in South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Frankenberg, 1993; Steyn, 2001;

Wetherell & Potter, 1992), as well as to the study of language learning and use in settings of societal multilingualism (Canagarajah, 2007), Finally, it represents an example of research that gives attention to 'differential privilege', an area of identity and language learning studies which has been identified as needing more 'sustained attention' (Norton & Toohey, 2011: 436). Although the study is primarily an intellectual project, I believe that the research findings also have relevance for more practical projects related to language learning and the building of a broader South African identity.

How is The Book Organised?

Part 1 of the book starts with Chapter 1, exploring the socio-historical background to the men's life histories, which are deeply rooted in and intertwined with the complex and conflicted story of the Eastern Cape and of South Africa as a whole. Chapter 2 outlines the theories of language acquisition and identity and the research methodologies which have informed the analysis.

Part 2 scrutinises extracts from the stories themselves, starting in Chapter 3 with the men's accounts of their childhood years growing up on farms. These parts of their stories throw light on the identity implications of the boys' acquisition of isiXhosa through involvement in play with isiXhosa-speaking children, and joint participation with them in the farm community. This chapter also looks at the impact of their move out of this world of shared play when they go to school.

Chapter 4 examines rites of passage, such as periods at university and in the military, through which the boys pass as they move into manhood, and ways in which their language competences and developing identities interact in these situations. It also looks at the men's thoughts and experiences relating to the crucial rite of passage through which their erstwhile black companions had to pass: the circumcision ritual.

In Chapter 5, I examine ways in which language, race and power interact in the adult working lives of the four men. From similar childhood backgrounds, the men move into widely divergent careers: technical, academic, commercial and agricultural. Their fluency in isiXhosa opens doors for them and, in many situations, augments their power as white men. However, the analysis shows that this can change and can even be overturned, depending on the register of isiXhosa used and the power dynamics of the situations in which they find themselves.

In Chapter 6, I move away from the chronological organisation of the previous chapters, and consider ways in which the four men position

themselves and construct their identities as they move across the spaces, geographical, political, social and personal, of the apartheid and post-apartheid worlds which form the backgrounds of their stories.

In Chapter 7, I draw together the threads of the foregoing chapters and outline new insights that have been gained through the study into ways in which language, language learning, power, race and identity interact in South Africa in general, and in the lives of these four men in particular. Conclusions are drawn about configurations of power and participation which enable language acquisition; about relationships between isiXhosa competence, whiteness and power; about ambivalence, hybrid space and shifts in subjectivity; and about isiXhosa fluency and South African identity.

I end the book with a postscript, in which I revisit the autobiographical origins of the study and see where it has taken me, personally.

Notes

(1) These are pseudonyms, as are the names of other people (with the exception of historic figures) who feature in their personal stories. Place names in the stories are represented by a letter (e.g. B-town).

(2) Although the words 'race', 'white' and 'black' refer to social constructions, I do not use quotation marks around them because they are very powerful categories of social organisation in South Africa with very real material effects.

(3) A draft policy (Department Basic Education RSA, 2013) is currently available for public comment to promote African languages in schools. Its main aims are to:

   (a) improve proficiency in and utility of African languages at home language level, so that learners are able to use their home language proficiently;
   (b) increase access to languages by all learners, beyond English and Afrikaans, by requiring all non-African home language speakers to learn an African language;
   (c) promote social cohesion and economic empowerment and expand opportunities for the development of African languages as a significant way of preserving heritage and cultures.

(4) It is not clear that this is so, in fact. Universities report a decline in the numbers taking African languages (CHE, 2001). It is now becoming compulsory, however, for teacher trainees at universities to take a course in an African language, if they do not know one already.

(5) Here used to refer to the use of more than two languages, often used in Canagarajah's (2007) sense, to negotiate meaning.

Part 1

Background

1 The Eastern Cape, Then and Now

> *… although one is still in an area of special and outstanding beauty, it is not long before one is conscious of something more; an impression, seemingly, of a distinct and plangent power deriving from forces occult as well as visible, from an inner component of the malign set within a landscape whose natural attractiveness nevertheless has provoked more jealous antagonism and combat than any other in all Africa.*
> *Here on this frontier, between the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century, was to be found the crucible of modern South African society.*
> *Frontiers* – Mostert (1992: xxi, xxii, xxix)

The four men whose life histories are the subject of this book are all descended from members of one or other of the earliest groups of white settlers in the Eastern Cape, who were initially all farmers. In this chapter, I look at the history of these groups of settlers, of the groups of indigenous people with whom the settlers interacted and the background to inter-group relations in the area. This means examining the wars and struggles of dispossession and resistance in which the participants' forebears participated, patterns of land occupation and seizure, and labour relations and conditions on farms. Significantly too, in terms of the research, it means exploring language issues and multilingualism in the region, both historically and in the present. I do not go into detail about the more recent apartheid history, which is well known, but focus on the earlier history, linking it to current themes which feature in the men's stories. The chapter culminates in a more detailed account of each of the four men's lives. The oldest was born, as I was, around the time that the National Party took power in 1948, while the other three were born in the 1960s, when the implementation of the apartheid policy was getting into its stride (see Appendix 2).

In setting out the socio-historical context of the men's stories, I draw on seminal works on the history of the Eastern Cape (Mostert, 1992; Peires, 1981, 1989) and South Africa (Giliomee, 2003; Sparks, 1991; Terreblanche, 2002), augmenting these with more specific information and alternative constructions from other sources. I also draw on novels and biographical works (Brodrick, 2009; Gregory, 1995; Johnson, 2006; Poland, 1993; Thomas, 2007), which give further details about the history and an insight into the atmosphere and mood, as well as personal and emotional responses

to the times, often by multilingual white people. While most of the seminal works are written by white historians, I have endeavoured to include black perspectives, and to maintain a consciousness of how and by whom the events have been constructed.

Indigenous People and Early Settlers

At the time when the European 'voyages of discovery' were rounding the tip of Africa, a number of clans of the Nguni group of peoples lived on its south-eastern seaboard (Crampton, 2004; Peires, 1981). They grew some crops, but cattle formed the social, spiritual and economic basis of their society. Around 1600,[1] the charismatic Tshawe overthrew his brother, the legitimate heir to one of these chiefdoms (Soga, 1931: 7), and united a number of fairly diverse groups and fragmentary clans to form the powerful *amaXhosa* (Peires, 1981: 15ff.). Descendants of Tshawe's adherents still live in the Eastern Cape (and in many urban areas, especially around Cape Town), but the term *Xhosa*[2] is now often used to refer loosely to all the groups coming from the Eastern Cape region who speak a language related to *isiXhosa*, the Nguni dialect which was written down by missionaries in the 19th century, thus becoming regarded as 'standard' isiXhosa.

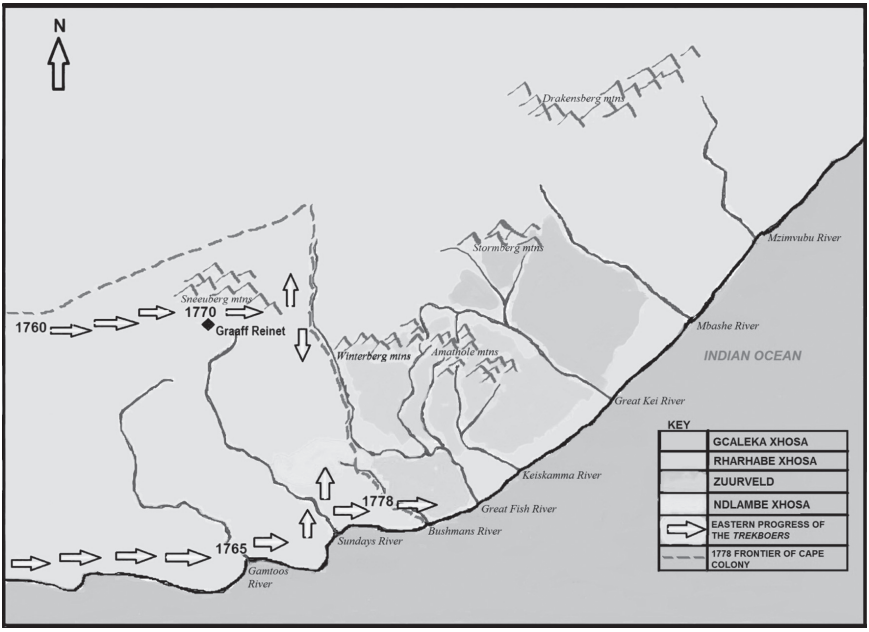
In the 18th century, a difference of opinion over the appropriate behaviour for a Xhosa king caused the powerful Rharhabe to leave his brother Gcaleka, the heir to the throne, on the north-east side of the Kei River, and settle, with a large following, south-west of the Kei. This divided the amaXhosa in two: the *amaGcaleka* and the *amaRharhabe* (Mangcu, 2012: 52) (see Map 2, p. 5). Some independent chiefdoms, also recognising Rharhabe's authority, moved across the Fish River into what became known as the *Zuurveld* (sour grassland) and beyond (Peires, 1981: 56). After Rharhabe's death, the territory of his followers, under Ngqika and his regent Ndlambe,[3] was to become a cauldron of war, as settlers of European origin moved into the area, seeking land and colonial dominion over the indigenous inhabitants.

Forebears of the four participants in this study are found in all of the main groups of early settlers to the Eastern Cape: Portuguese sailors, shipwrecked on the coast from as early as 1550 (Crampton, 2004), Dutch *trekboers* (travelling farmers) and British and German settlers.

The trekboers were descendants of Dutch, French and German settlers at the Cape, who gradually moved further and further away from the constraints of the Dutch colonial government, seeking more grazing for their cattle. Map 2 (p. 5) shows that the paths taken by the trekboers eventually led some of them to areas west of the Great Fish River, some

also moving into the Zuurveld, between the Bushmans and the Great Fish Rivers (Lubke *et al*., 1988: 395). Mostert (1992: 165ff.) graphically describes the restless lifestyle of the physically powerful trekboers, removed from the cultivated lifestyle of the Cape, beholden only to themselves and God, living and dying by their guns, and dependent on the Cape only for ammunition. In the period between the late 1820s and 1845, trekboers, motivated by a complex of reasons, most of which were related to their dislike of British domination and policies making them feel like aliens in what they regarded as their own land, moved out of the Eastern Cape in great numbers, seeking self-determination beyond the Orange River.[4] Particular grievances were the change from the loan farm system to freehold title, the emancipation of slaves and the granting of equality before the law to Khoi[5] and amaXhosa (Giliomee, 2003: 144ff., 161; Terreblanche, 2002: 220). Some trekboers remained in the Eastern Cape, and their descendants still live in the region.

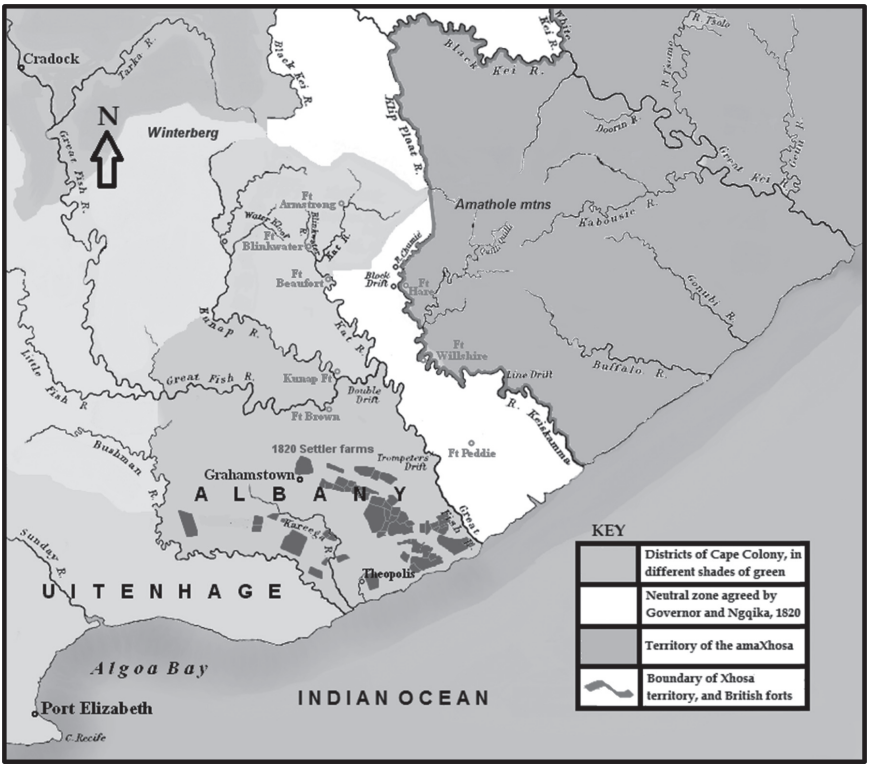
Map 2: amaXhosa and trekboers, 18th century



Map drawn by E.K. Botha, acknowledgements to Wilson and Thompson (1969: 77) and Lubke *et al*. (1988: 395).

In 1820, the British, who ruled the Cape from 1806 onwards, recruited 5000 Britons, representative of all social strata of British life, to settle on farms in the Zuurveld area, renamed Albany (Sparks, 1991: 59) (see Map 3). The purpose of this settlement, not revealed to the settlers themselves at the time, was that they form a buffer against what the colonial authorities saw as the 'inroads of the amaXhosa' from across the Fish River, the then designated boundary of the colony. British settlers continued to immigrate to the Eastern Cape, a number in the early days coming as missionaries, attempting to win converts to Christianity from among the Khoi and the amaXhosa and using 'education and literature to spread the gospel' (Ndletyana, 2008: 2).

Map 3: British settlers, 1820



Map adapted from Wikipedia.org (2007) by E.K. Botha (2012).

Sparks (1991: 58) calls the 1820 immigration scheme, which gave each settler 100 acres, 'an agricultural absurdity in the South African environment', where a completely different approach was needed from that implemented in Europe. Following farming disasters during their first three years, including drought, blight, rust, locusts and floods, many settlers abandoned their allotments and moved to Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth, to form the backbone of commercial development in South Africa. Those who remained on the land enlarged their plots by taking over those that had been abandoned and turning to cattle ranching and later sheep farming. This put them in direct competition with the amaXhosa for cattle, and constituted the beginnings of commercial agriculture in South Africa. While many 1820 descendants moved far from the Eastern Cape, some still live on farms in areas where they were originally settled.

Almost 40 years after the arrival of the '1820 settlers', when eight Wars of Resistance[6] had been fought between the colonial powers and the amaXhosa, and the boundary of the colony had been shifted to the Kei River, the new British governor, Sir George Grey, settled military veterans from the British German Legion in the area stretching inland from East London (Tankard, 2009), and from 1858 onwards, he recruited German peasants to augment this group and provide wives for the soldiers (see Map 4, p. 13). These settlers (about 3400 in total), mostly poor peasant folk with no resources of their own, were given very small farms (20 acres at £1 an acre) and little government support (Brodrick, 2009; Schuch & Vernon, 1996). In spite of severe hardships, most of the German peasants persevered on the land, though some settled in town, taking up trades such as blacksmithing and wagon making. Many became productive agriculturalists, able to make a living for themselves, and a significant number of the descendants of the original German settlers are still farming in the area, or occupy other professional and commercial positions in the 'Border'[7] area.

These groups of settlers and indigenous peoples now faced the challenge of relating to one another, on land which they all needed for their stock. The trekboers' progress into the hinterland from the Cape was characterised by fierce ongoing battles against the San[8] (hunter-gatherers) and Khoi (wandering pastoralists) over cattle. Mangcu (2012: 49) maintains that 'war between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers is inevitable because the latter want to eat what the former want to preserve'. While he notes that there were efforts on both sides to 'stand together against the *trekboere*', he also describes how the general commando combined all boer commandos[9] and pressed Khoi into service to conduct a 'genocidal campaign' (Mangcu, 2012: 47) against the San. This resulted in the trekboers becoming dominant in the interior of the Cape colony (Penn, 2005; Terreblanche, 2002: 166).

Khoi people were often attached, voluntarily or by force, to boer families as servants, *inboekelinge* (serfs)[10] (Terreblanche, 2002: 11), 'clients'[11] or even farming partners. In the early 18th century, the trekboers learned much from the Khoi ways of farming sheep and cattle in harsh, dry conditions (Terreblanche, 2002: 166), the Khoi in turn learning from the trekboers the skills of shooting and horse riding, as well as the their language (a form of Dutch). Khoi servants were thus often able to act as interpreters when the Dutch encountered new groups of people. Trekboers became notorious for their harsh treatment of Khoi servants, often similar to the way that slaves were treated in the Cape colony, except that the Khoi 'violently resisted their enslavement' (Terreblanche, 2002: 168). Attempts by British authorities and philanthropists to bring trekboers to justice for their harsh treatment were an important cause of the Great Trek of 1836.

Terreblanche (2002: 165) describes the relationship between trekboers and Khoisan as 'changeable, dynamic and complex'. Mostert (1992) comments that conventional views of the trekboers' racial attitudes obscure the

> bizarre, fundamental ambivalence that operated within trekboer society. The trekboer not only turned to Khoikhoi women for cohabiting partners, but he often raised large families by them. He was, besides, wholly adaptable to Khoikhoi society, and could shift easily between his own and theirs if circumstances required. (Mostert, 1992: 175, 176)

Reports also indicate that in the areas west of the Fish River where the trekboers settled, they soon began to live 'almost mixed together with the Kafirs'[12] (Mostert, 1992: 226). Most of the Boers became fluent in isiXhosa, the language of the people among whom they found themselves.

The British settlers, by contrast, had very little contact with the amaXhosa initially; they were not allowed to employ the indigenous people as labourers (Mostert, 1992: 541), and a series of forts had been set up along the Fish River in an attempt to prevent the amaXhosa from coming into the colony. The settlers had little idea of the prior interactions between the British administration and the amaXhosa people, which had given rise among the Xhosa to fierce anger and resentment, so for many British settlers the Fifth War of Resistance,[13] one of their earliest close encounters with the amaXhosa, was a shocking and unexpected experience. Mostert's (1992) description of the attack on Christmas Eve 1834 reflects the colonists' construction of the event:

> [They] saw the surrounding hillsides livid with menace, ablaze with the massed red bodies[14] that suddenly gathered there, and then liquid with

> scarlet movement as the whistling war-cry descended: a terrible sound, chilling in its undeviating and unmistakable purpose. (Mostert, 1992: 666)

The amaXhosa overwhelmed all white settlements, killing the men, burning and destroying houses and other property, and driving off thousands of cattle. 'Their raging desire was to drive the British back into the sea', claims Mostert (1992: 676). This war, which 'swept away the toil of fourteen years in a matter of hours', according to Butler and Benyon (1974: 259), had a brutalising effect on the British settlers. According to Sparks (1991: 62), it '… poisoned the racial attitudes of those settlers, deepening the ambivalences they had brought with them from "home"'. He elaborates on this ambivalence: while Britons believed strongly in democracy, they also believed that they were racially superior. Although British evangelical humanitarians pursued a liberal agenda, the English settlers facing the challenge of survival on a war-torn frontier had no time for humanitarianism. The war set up a burning hatred between the settlers and the philanthropists of the London Missionary Society, who promoted the cause of the indigenous peoples to the British government, resulting in equal rights legislation.

The German settlers, on the other hand, arrived on the frontier in the wake of eight Wars of Resistance and the episode known as the cattle killing (described and discussed under 'Struggles for power and territory'), all of which had left the amaXhosa hugely depleted in terms of numbers and morale. The stated aim of the policies of the then governor George Grey, unlike that of his predecessors, was to encourage the 'civilised coexistence' of black and white in the Cape colony (Tankard, 2009). German settlers lived in close proximity to the amaXhosa and the *amaMfengu*[15] people and they wrestled side by side with hardship and poverty. As Schuch and Vernon (1996: 44) state, 'The early settlers learned many ways of coping with their often hostile environment from their Xhosa neighbours. The days of employing black people on the farms and in the homes only came later'. They also comment that 'many of the German children brought up in the Eastern Cape in the early days were trilingual and spoke Xhosa fluently' (Schuch & Vernon, 1996: 46).

Struggles for Power and Territory

The trekboers and amaXhosa had very similar lifestyles and priorities and were soon in conflict over grazing land, the trekboers sometimes joining forces with one clan against another. The First War of Resistance (1779), triggered by the shooting of a Xhosa man by a trekboer called Prinsloo, cost the boers 21,000 head of cattle (Giliomee, 2003: 70). The Second War of Resistance (1792) began with a boer alliance with Ndlambe, which aimed to

expel a smaller group from the Zuurveld. For the trekboers, it led to the loss of some 50,000 head of cattle and their homes in the Zuurveld, almost all of which were burned down. This caused most to leave the Zuurveld altogether, and engage in counter-raids to recover their stock (Giliomee, 2003: 71).

Once the British were established in a dominant position in the Cape, they engaged in a massive military operation driving approximately 20,000 amaXhosa out of the Zuurveld and across the Fish River. In this, the Fourth War of Resistance[16] (1811), the British were ruthless, not only killing without mercy, but also seizing thousands of cattle and burning and trampling fields of ripe corn and vegetables (Peires, 1981: 65–66). This was the beginning of a series of increasingly violent wars over territory between the British and the amaXhosa: the Fifth War of Resistance (that of Nxele,[17] 1819), the Sixth War of Resistance (that of Hintsa, 1834–1835), the Seventh War of Resistance (that of the Axe, 1845–1847) (Peires, 1981) and the Eighth War of Resistance (that of Mlanjeni,[18] 1850–1853) (Peires, 1989).

Peires (1981) explains that:

> Total war was a new and shattering experience for the Xhosa. Wars between Xhosa chiefs or with their African and Khoi neighbours were rarely bloody… The purpose of war was not the destruction of productive resources, but their acquisition and absorption. The havoc wrought by the Colonial forces was not only cruel but incomprehensible. Instead of being subjected to the victors and incorporated into their society … the Xhosa were rejected and expelled…. (Peires, 1981: 74)

Each of the wars was longer, harder and more ruthless and bloody than the one before, and in each war the settlers were conscripted to fight. After the Sixth War of Resistance, many of the boer commandos had moved out and were no longer available to fight, but British settlers continued to be conscripted, fighting together with reinforcements brought out from Britain, while German settlers participated in the Ninth War of Resistance, side by side with Mfengu and British troops, against the amaXhosa (Brodrick, 2009: 308ff.). Conscription of white men has been a way of life for almost every generation since then; Epstein (2011: 50), writing of South Africa, asserts that 'masculinities have, historically, been implicated in forms of interpersonal and institutional violence. They have both shaped it and been shaped by it'. White men were conscripted in 1899 for the Anglo-Boer War, in 1914–1918 and 1939–1945 for the world wars and more recently, from 1957 onwards, for ever-increasing periods to fight on the country's borders against liberation forces, constructed by the apartheid regime as 'the Communist threat'. In the 1980s, these conscripts had to do duty in

the urban townships of South Africa, which were aflame with resistance struggles against the apartheid government.

While British farmers experienced setbacks as a result of the Wars of Resistance, these were only temporary. The wool trade was very profitable, and the wars offered prospects of new grants of land (Sparks, 1990: 65). The business community of Grahamstown also profited enormously from war, a factor that doubtless played no small role in the later fomentation of war.

The amaXhosa held out by retreating into the Waterkloof and Amathole Mountains, and fighting in the Fish River bush, introducing the British to guerrilla warfare. The British responded with a 'scorched earth policy', burning the homes and crops of the amaXhosa so that they were eventually starved into submission. Peires (1989: 22), describing the War of Mlanjeni, speaks of 'the progressive dehumanization of both sides'. 'Settler volunteers marched about with the word "extermination" written on their hats' writes Peires (1989: 25), and he quotes Lakeman who 'referred to members of his volunteer corps as "brutally cruel … killing without mercy … young as well as old, even braining little children"'. These experiences hardened racial attitudes on both sides.

It was estimated that 16,000 of the amaXhosa and 1,400 British troops had died by the end of the Eighth War of Resistance. Deprived of cattle and land, defeated in war, their lifestyle under threat, poverty-stricken and starving, the despairing amaXhosa turned their hopes to the supernatural (Peires, 1989). A young girl called Nongqawuse claimed to have met two strangers at the mouth of the Gxara River, who instructed the amaXhosa to kill all their cattle, to stop cultivation, to abandon witchcraft and to build new cattle kraals and grain pits. If they did this, it was said, the dead would arise, together with new herds of cattle, and the whites, the amaMfengu and unbelievers (those who did not believe the prophecy) would be driven into the sea. Although there were conflicting views among the amaXhosa, vast numbers of people obeyed the prophecy, both east and west of the Kei, with 'catastrophic effects' (Ndletyana, 2008: 4).[19]

George Grey used the resulting death and disaster to further his plans, recruiting approximately 25,000 desperate Xhosa people as labourers in the colony west of the Fish River, and clearing the few surviving Xhosa people off the lands of three chiefs who had believed the prophecies, making space for the settlement of German peasants (see Map 4, p. 13). More land was also cleared for the amaMfengu, who were British allies, in the south-west region of the Transkei.

In the Ninth and final War of Resistance (1877–1878), the British, assisted by Mfengu levies and German settlers (Brodrick, 2009), killed Sandile, chief of the Rharhabe Xhosa, and finally defeated the people of

Sarhili, paramount chief of the amaXhosa and leader of the Gcaleka Xhosa, east of the Kei (Mostert, 1992: 1252). This opened the way for the extension of the Cape colony up to the border of Natal. While there is an assumption that the colonial government's conquest of the Xhosa was 'a clean sweep', Mangcu (2012: 63) asserts that it was their 'failure to completely subdue the Xhosa' that led them to introduce a qualified franchise.[20]

By 1879, almost all of the amaXhosa had been driven over the Kei River, making the Transkei[21] very congested. Most of the Transkei territory was kept as a 'native reserve', governed through a system of magistrates (Saunders, 1974: 193–194). Some areas were designated for white farming; for example, the corridor incorporating Maclear, Indwe and Elliot was initially designed to link the white areas of the Cape colony with Natal (see Map 5, p. 16), but the territory functioned essentially as a labour pool: 'The homelands are mere reserves of labour' (Mbeki, 1964: 16).

Farm Labour, White-Owned Agricultural Land and Segregation

The wars of conquest had deprived the amaXhosa of enormous tracts of land (see Map 4), and had opened up most of this land for white commercial agriculture. Terreblanche (2002) explains 'the special relationship between power, land, and labour' in South Africa thus:

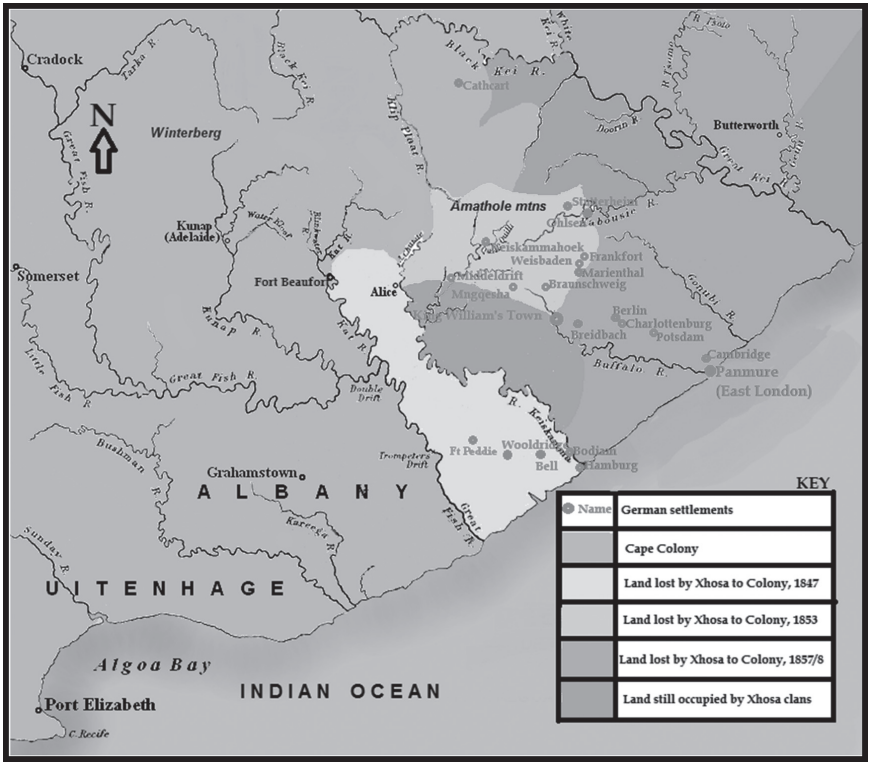
> The colonial powers and white colonists [enriched themselves] in mainly three ways: firstly, by creating political and economic structures that put them in a privileged and entrenched position *vis-à-vis* the indigenous population groups; secondly, by depriving indigenous people of land, surface water, and cattle; and thirdly, by reducing slaves and indigenous people to different forms of unfree and exploitable labour. These three threads have run ominously through South Africa's modern history, from the mid-17th until the late 20th century. (Terreblanche, 2002: 5–6)

I now explore further the way that the amaXhosa were deprived of land and turned into unfree labourers on farms.

While many boer serfs, clients and farm labourers were Khoi[22] (see Indigenous people and early settlers), Peires (1981: 118–119) indicates that Xhosa servants and clients among the boers are mentioned as early as 1777. Most of these worked voluntarily for the farmers, the men herding livestock and the women doing household and garden chores. Most served a year at a time and were paid in beads, iron and brass wire, which they could exchange for cattle back home. They suffered less abuse at the hands of the

boers than the Khoi, because it was easier for them to defect, often taking boer cattle with them. Peires (1981: 118–119) asserts that the use of Xhosa labour was consistently opposed by early colonial governments, who tried repeatedly to expel all Xhosa across the Fish River. Attempts were never completely successful because of the high demand for labour in the colony. When sheep farming began to be successful among British settlers, farmers' need for labour was such that they often allowed labourers to live on the farms with their families and cattle. So 'squatting'[23] and 'tenant farming' began. Terreblanche (2002: 188) describes how, a few days before Ordinance 50 was passed in 1828, granting equality before the law for all people in the colony and to the Khoisan 'the liberty to take their labour to the best market', another ordinance was passed allowing Eastern Cape farmers to employ Xhosas if they took out passes to do so. Xhosas thus became a labour force which was unfree and had to carry passes; this was to remain the case for 150 years (Terreblanche, 2002: 192).

Map 4: German settlements on land lost by amaXhosa, 1858



Map adapted from Wikipedia.org (2007) by E.K. Botha (2012), acknowledgements to Lubke *et al.* (1988: 403) and Peires (1989: 320).

George Grey's policies of 'civilised' coexistence in the second half of the 19th century meant that he supported mission schools and hospitals, and extended the 'equal rights policies' of the Cape government into the area between the Fish and the Kei Rivers, previously under military rule. As a result, agriculture developed by leaps and bounds in this area between 1857 and 1900. Large farms in the Kei Road and Komga area (see Map 1, p. xiv) were made available to English and Dutch farmers on a quit-rent system. The greater availability of land and the work of mission schools led to the rise of black peasant farmers, mostly mission educated and enfranchised, some of whom bought land while others practiced sharecropping with white farmers. By 1898, the small-scale German peasant farmers were losing ground to this rising group (Webb, 1993: 70–74). While Grey's policies favoured blacks who had opted for 'civilised' ways, the infamous Masters and Servants' Act, serving also as a vagrancy act, was passed in 1856 under his watch. This required employees to commit to five-year labour contracts and required labourers who deserted or broke their contract to be severely punished (Terreblanche, 2002: 200).

When Rhodes became prime minister in 1895, he brought in new policies designed to limit African agricultural land holdings in order to ensure an adequate supply of labour for the mines (Mostert, 1992: 1265). There followed a programme of subsidies and grants to promote the commercialisation of white agriculture (Terreblanche, 2002: 259) as well as a series of Acts designed to protect white agriculture and labour and force blacks off the land and into the labour force, culminating after union in the Land Act of 1913.

Wilson (1977: 21), in his introduction to a selection of papers presented at a 1976 conference[24] on farm labour, cites Rich,[25] who called this Land Act the 'turning point in black-white relations on the land', and asserted that 'it was the modernizing sectors of settler agriculture who saw the elimination of African squatting as essential to the achievement of … capital-intensive farming'. A political alliance between white commercial farmers and the English-speaking business elite, as well as the 'ultra-exploitative system of racial capitalism' were built on the foundation of the Land Act (Terreblanche, 2002: 261).

Of this act, Sol Plaatje (1916/1991: 21), the then secretary of what was to become the African National Congress (ANC) wrote: 'Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth'. The Land Act evicted all black people who were living on white farms except those employed as labourers, and prohibited blacks from buying land outside 'scheduled areas' (less than 10% of South Africa).[26] It put an end to tenant farming and

sharecropping on white-owned land, resulting in the proletarianisation of numerous small farmers, white and black (Terreblanche, 2002: 265). Black tenants and squatters had the option of handing over their stock to the farmer and accepting employment on the farm, or eviction. It also prevented farmworkers from leaving their work on farms without a permit. All of this meant that farm labourers were increasingly vulnerable and disempowered, trapped on farms and dependent on the farmer for their livelihood, something that intensified during the apartheid era.

Wilson *et al*. (1977: 11–12) cite Antrobus' research[27] which gave the average wage for a farmworker in 1976 as R128 per annum cash, which, together with rations, a bonus, clothing, medical care and housing was worth an average of R567 per annum. The poverty datum line in 1977 was R1236 per annum.[28] Labourers worked 11 and a half hours a day in summer and 8 hours a day on average in midwinter, over a 5 and a half day week. Seventy-one percent of farmers built houses for their labourers; less than 10% provided toilets; one-third of labourer families had access to running water; and 60% of farmers allowed retired workers to continue living on the farm. Plaut and Levy's research,[29] cited by Wilson *et al*. (1977: 28), showed that African children living on white farms only had access to schooling if the farmer was prompted by a 'paternalistic sense of responsibility' to start a school on his farm. Thirty percent of African farm children had access to such primary schools in 1972, secondary schooling being virtually unattainable. Many farmers feared that educated youths would leave their farms, and mistrusted schooling as a qualification for employment (Wilson *et al*., 1977: 28).

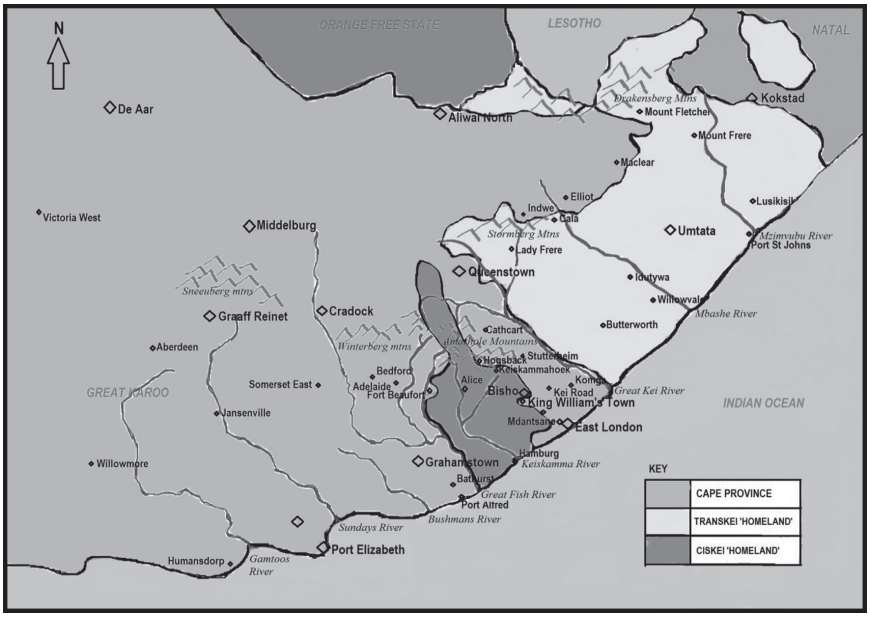
It could be argued, then, that the roots of segregation and racial capitalism in South Africa lay in the quest of white governments for white control over agricultural land and a pool of black labour for industry. The 1913 Land Act initiated a massive migration of evicted blacks off the farms and to the towns; later, the apartheid government, in implementing its 'homelands' policy, sent many of these people back to the rural areas. In the 1960s, people living in 'black spots' – farms or missions surrounded by white-owned land – were bought out or expropriated; tenant farmers were expelled from white farms, where full-time labour was enforced; and Africans were 'endorsed out' of towns, all to be relocated to bleak resettlement areas in the middle of 'homelands'.

In 1963, the Self-Government Act was passed, and 45 members (38 opposed to the Nationalist government) were elected to join 64 government-appointed chiefs in the Transkei Legislative Assembly (Mbeki, 1964: 20, 21). In 1976, the Transkei was declared 'independent', an illusory independence only recognised in South Africa (see Map 5, p. 16). The

definition of citizenship in the Transkei excluded whites and coloureds. All 'scheduled and released areas' were handed over to be administered by the Transkei government and most towns were zoned black. Certain areas were retained as part of white South Africa: Port St Johns, Elliot, Maclear and Matatiele, and a white corridor between Transkei and Ciskei. Only Transkei citizens could acquire land in Transkei. This resulted in an exodus of whites from Transkei towns and trading stations in 1967.[30] Many of these white families, traders, farmers and village dwellers had a tradition of speaking isiXhosa as well as English and/or Afrikaans (Broster, 2009: 432–439).

Tribal authorities were also established in the Ciskei[31] (see Map 5), made up of some of the old tribal lands of the Rharhabe Xhosa (SAIRR, 1969: 145–146). Between 1965 and 1990, nearly half a million people were 'dumped' in this labour pool (Sparks, 1991: 203). Plans for the 'consolidation' of the Ciskei (and the Transkei) were passed by parliament in 1975 (Bergh & Visagie, 1985: 66). These involved the expropriation of a large number of white-owned farms, many of which had been allocated to German settlers in the mid-1800s.

Map 5: Transkei and Ciskei territories, 1980s



Map drawn by E.K. Botha (2012), acknowledgements to Bergh and Visagie (1985: 68–69).

In 1987, at the time when progressive Afrikaners were initiating conversations with the ANC, a military coup in the Transkei[32] installed Major-General Bantu Holomisa as leader of the territory. Following a protest march on Mthatha by 10,000 workers, he abolished many of the old labour laws, granted trade unions freedom to organise, lifted the state of emergency, released large numbers of political prisoners, unbanned the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and allowed the armed wings of the ANC and the PAC relative freedom to operate in the territory (Cherry & Bank, 1993: 25–26). While levels of political violence were low within the Transkei during Holomisa's regime, there were instances of violence in nearby white farming areas, involving stock theft and arson. Some saw this as evidence of politically motivated land hunger (Cherry & Bank, 1993: 29).

In the new post-1994 democratic dispensation, there are no longer designated areas for race population groups, although 'tribal lands', where land is held by the chief who allocates plots to the people, still have the same system of land tenure. It is clear that the land question is key to the reversal of power relations. The Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994) was passed, providing for land claims based on the 'willing buyer, willing seller' principle (Henrard, 2002: 33). For white farmers, this has meant that their situation has become somewhat more precarious, particularly as 'subsidies and soft loans were ended [and] imports were liberalized' (Johnson, 2005: 226). As far as farmworkers are concerned, an act has been passed which regulates the conditions and circumstances under which people may be evicted from farmlands. Roodt (2007: 8) has studied the livelihood possibilities of a group of farmworkers in the Eastern Cape, showing that for these, 'the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country', it is difficult to negotiate the rights assured in this act without a good lawyer, and that there are a number of hidden benefits to remaining on farms, and penalties related to a move to the townships, where there is little option but to join the ranks of the unemployed. What this underlines is that '[t]hese laws created to protect farm dwellers were not calculated to break the power of the rural [white] elite created by colonialism and apartheid. They simply seek to improve the situation within the context of semi-feudal relations' (Mngqitama, 2001: 4). Mngqitama (2001: 17) maintains that a change in the lot of these powerless people cannot take place within a system based on the 'logic … of the market', and that the resolution of the land question has to become 'the prerogative of the … landless people themselves'.

Language Issues and Multilingualism

Postcolonial studies (Cohn, 1996; Fabian, 1986; Makoni, 2011; Makoni *et al*., 2007) demonstrate how, in countries under colonial rule, local languages and dialects become endangered and are even destroyed in their precolonial form (Makoni *et al*., 2007). Specific dialects, or syntheses of dialects, are appropriated by colonial agents 'to serve as a crucial component in their construction of the system of rule' (Cohn, 1996: 20). In their efforts to proselytise African people, and make Bibles and devotional books available to them, missionaries often combined a number of dialects to form a 'standard' written version of what they recognised as local languages (Makoni *et al*., 2007: 29). They also analysed native languages with reference to English and Latin, producing distorted versions, not corresponding to any spoken language. Colonial versions of African languages written down by missionaries, and pidgins developed in the processes of trade (e.g. Swahili) were often used to express the 'imperative commanding position' of white employer (or white Christian) over black labourer (or black heathen) (Fabian, 1986: 116). The view of Makoni *et al*. (2007: 31) is that these language registers were 'designed to constrain fluid identities within colonial contexts to facilitate European rule'. Fabian (1986: 138) states that Africans often 'adopted the restricted jargon of their European masters' as 'a matter of expediency', and adds that this was 'a widely enjoyed form of parody'. This is confirmed by Kaschula's (1989) research into isiXhosa communication between farmers and workers on north-eastern Cape farms.

From 1652, when a refreshment station was set up by the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) at the Cape, Dutch was the language of the settlers and company officials, and a form of Dutch, later to become the basis for the Afrikaans language, developed for communication between slaves, servants and settlers in the home. Khoi servants and clients, knowing this language, acted as interpreters when the settlers met new groups. As Khoi moved eastwards with the trekboers, some were absorbed into African groups, and because many San groups were exterminated, many of the Khoi and San languages fell into disuse or died. While many trekboers became fluent in isiXhosa, and maybe even in Khoi languages, it was the language of the colonials that became more and more prevalent.

Even during the early days of British rule, Dutch was still dominant in the Eastern Cape. However, 1820 settler complaints to the British government about conditions on the frontier set in motion a commission of inquiry, one result of which was that all legislative and administrative processes, which up until then had been carried out in Dutch, began to be anglicised

(Giliomee, 2003: 197). By 1840, English was the only medium of instruction in schools, and it was a compulsory qualification for a job in the civil service. The trekboers, objecting, among other things, to the suppression of their language by the new imperialists, *trekked*[33] out of reach of the British until the discovery of gold and diamonds, after which a similar Anglo-dominant language policy was imposed (Sparks, 1990: 128).

The resentment caused by the imposition of English led the Afrikaner Nationalist governments, post-1948, to insist on the promotion of Afrikaans and 'bilingual'[34] education. In an attempt to counter the dominance of English, the nationalists imputed (incorrectly) to African people a desire to promote their own languages by using them as media of instruction in schools. They introduced mother tongue instruction[35] in African schools up to the eighth year of study, after which pupils were to be taught half of their subjects through English and half through Afrikaans. This policy was perceived as a strategy for preventing African people from progressing (something seen by Africans as synonymous with a command of English) and the implementation of the 'half Afrikaans' medium in secondary schools was to spark the Soweto uprisings of June 1976, which spread across the country (Christie, 1991).

In white schools during colonial and apartheid times, the learning of African languages as additional languages was not promoted, even in areas such as the Eastern Cape, where isiXhosa was widely spoken.[36] Since the government's aim was the segregation of black and white in every possible way, and blacks were viewed as inferior, it was not seen as useful for white people to know an African language. In some Eastern Cape schools, isiXhosa was taught as a third language, usually only for a short period and mostly at primary level.

It is clear that white farmers, traders, missionaries and people who lived in rural villages in the Eastern Cape, in contrast with the vast majority of the white population, often developed familiarity with and even fluency in isiXhosa. In most cases, the register of isiXhosa learned and used was certainly the colonial register of trade, or instruction and command, but in certain cases fluency developed further than this, and individuals entered more deeply into the lives of those whose language they learned. Kaschula (1989: 100) refers to this as 'an age-old communicative process which began to develop in the early eighteen hundreds'. He maintains that this process became more widespread after the cattle-killing episode, when many destitute Xhosa people sought work on white farms in the colony. This process has continued to the present day in some environments, the tradition of speaking isiXhosa often being passed down from white parents to their children (Botha, 2007: 6–7).

In the democratic dispensation, South Africa has 11 official languages (English, Afrikaans and 9 indigenous African languages), and the policy for schools is one of additive multilingualism (South African Government, 1997). This policy is more symbolic than practical, however. In practice, English is becoming more dominant in every sphere of life, influenced by global and technological trends, and most parents aspire to send their children to a previously white, English-medium school, where there is seldom any teaching of an African language beyond the 'second additional language'[37] level. Black and white children have the opportunity to develop friendships at these schools, and little is known about how much white children learn African languages within such friendships. However, English, the language of global power, appears to be the language of choice and of status in most multilingual situations.

Prominent White Eastern Cape Multilinguals in History and Literature

It seems obvious that in the colonial Eastern Cape, where many people did not understand one another's languages, as in other areas under colonial rule, e.g. India (Cohn, 1996: 20) and the Belgian Congo (Fabian, 1986), communication must have been a problem. Mostert (1992), for instance, describes a meeting between Somerset, governor of the Cape, and the chief Ngqika in 1819:

> At the meeting Somerset spoke in English to Stockenstrom and he, in turn, spoke in Dutch to a third interpreter, a man of mixed slave-Xhosa ancestry known as Hermanus Matroos… Stockenstrom was brought up in Graaff Reinet but, unlike [the] frontier Boers …, he did not speak Xhosa; from that time to the late twentieth century, no leading white political figure[38] in South Africa ever did! In spite of his central role in the proceedings, Stockenstrom was to remain confused about what finally passed to Ngqika when he was told to surrender his territory. (Mostert, 1992: 507)

In the early days, trekboers, Khoi and people of mixed ancestry often acted as interpreters (see section 'Language issues' and earlier in this section). This section takes a brief look at the lives of some white bilinguals and 'language brokers' in history and literature.

In 1803, when the Dutch were governing the Cape, Governor Jansens visited the frontier in an attempt to understand the situation. His group met

chiefs in the Zuurveld, and across the Fish River. The trekboer Coenraad de Buys acted as interpreter at Jansens' meeting with Ngqika. Mostert (1992) describes de Buys' role at this meeting thus:

> On this occasion de Buys could afford to be proud of his unique position. He held them all in his hands. He was the only one there with complete idiomatic fluency in both Xhosa and Dutch, a master of the subtleties of each, and, as important, he understood the objectives, fears and confusions of both sides as no one else probably could. The Dutch needed him for this job of interpretation but … got very little out of him about his relations with the Xhosa; and, as de Buys well understood, once this job was done, like all previous Cape governments, they wanted to see him removed from Xhosaland.[39] (Mostert, 1992: 331)

Mostert (1992: 238) gives some details about de Buys, a legend in his own time. He had a harem of wives and concubines, none of them white, one of his wives being the mother of Ngqika, who was huge in physical frame as well as political influence. Another was of mixed heritage, boer and Khoi,[40] and a third was a member of the Thembu tribe. De Buys' progeny formed an extensive, racially mixed clan.

De Buys played many and varied roles on the frontier. In the early years, he conducted raids across the Fish River and seized Xhosa cattle, treating with ruthless cruelty those who retaliated. He lived for a considerable time in Ngqika's kraal, where he acted as adviser and confidante to the young king at the beginning of his reign. He was, in many ways, the ultimate Afrikaner trekboer: physically massive and tough; adapted to the local life and the frontier environment; and individualistic and rebellious against all authority. In the 1820s, as racial attitudes hardened, and society in the Eastern Cape became intolerant of what Mostert (1991: 239) refers to as De Buys 'cunning, sly, brutal and ambiguous' ways, he trekked with his clan towards the northern Transvaal. It is not known how he died, but his many descendants, known as the *Buysvolk* (the Buys nation), still live on farms in the northern Transvaal to this day.

Charles Brownlee, the son of one of the first white missionaries in Xhosaland, was a speaker of English and isiXhosa who played a huge role in the events in Kaffraria in the second half of the century. His appointment by Harry Smith to rule the Rharhabe Xhosa in Sandile's place was one of the causes of the Eighth War of Resistance, and he struggled long and eventually unsuccessfully to persuade Sandile not to believe the prophecies during the cattle killing episode. During the last decades of the 19th century, as First Secretary for Native Affairs in the colony, he was instrumental in

bringing all the groups in the Transkei: Mpondomise, Thembu, Gcaleka, Bomvana, Xesibe, and eventually the Griqua and the Pondo people, under British rule. In 1850, Harry Smith said that Brownlee 'speaks the Kafir language like a native and is held in high estimation by them' (Saunders, 1977: xiv), and 'it was said at the Cape in the 1880s that "the natives believed in him entirely"' (Saunders, 1977: xxvii). This may have been so in his younger years, but Saunders' (1977: xxvi) view is that 'his understanding was inevitably limited by his paternalism, and that he shared many of the stereotypes and prejudices common to the white mind in Victorian South Africa'. It would seem that any ambivalence he felt about his loyalties was inevitably resolved in the direction of his duty to the colony and, perhaps, his own ambition. In his hands, his fluency in isiXhosa became 'the ultimate instrument of colonial rule' (Cohn, 1996: 46).

In Brodrick's (2009) historical novel *Unwanted,* about a German immigrant family in the latter half of the 19th century, she describes the relationship between Carl, the youngest son of the immigrants, and Moshile, an Mfengu youth who lived and worked on their farm. Capturing the ambiguity inherent in this kind of bond, Brodrick's character Carl states,

> When [Moshile] first came to work for us, herding the stock, leading the plough oxen and cleaning the stables, I was not supposed to speak to him more than was necessary. But as the months and years went by, I not only learned his language, but slid into a kind of friendship with him – a funny thing, because you couldn't have a black for a friend. (Brodrick, 2009: 320)

A number of generations of missionary children grew up bilingual in isiXhosa and English and some were also able to speak Dutch. John Chalmers, the son of Presbyterian missionary William Chalmers, was a childhood friend of Tiyo Soga, whom Mangcu (2012: 66) calls 'the most influential Xhosa intellectual of the 19th century'. In spite of his friendship with Soga and his knowledge of isiXhosa, Chalmers wrote a newspaper article in which he referred to black people as 'indolent and inevitably drawn to extinction'. Mangcu (2012: 67) describes Soga's response as a 'precursor to the development of black consciousness'.

Marguerite Poland's (1993) novel *Shades* gives an inside view of a missionary family at the turn of the century (1899–1900). Based on family history, the book shows how the children's fluency in isiXhosa influences their lives. The son is so emotionally torn by his closeness to the Xhosa boys who are experiencing abuse in the gold mines that he ends his life. His cousin, on the other hand, exploits his knowledge of the language to get on

in the mining fraternity and the British army, fighting the Anglo-Boer War at the time. The daughter finds resolution of her ambivalence by marrying a missionary, similarly committed to working with black people and to fluency in their language.

Resident magistrates were set up in all the areas of the Transkei under British governance, many of whom were the sons of missionaries. Broster (2009: 427), herself once a trader in the Transkei, constructs them thus: '…they were born and were absolutely at home amongst the people, talking with complete understanding of their ways, habits, thoughts and customs. Each spoke Xhosa with the correct intonation'. The novel *The Native Commissioner* (Johnson, 2006), based on the life of the author's father, describes the life of a man who became a magistrate and native affairs commissioner in the first half of the 20th century. This was a man who had grown up on a farm, speaking the language of the farmworkers fluently, and who had worked all his life as a 'middleman' interpreting between the tribal laws and the governmental laws. He saw his work as supportive of black people, although there had always been a division between the world of his work and the everyday white world inhabited by his family. He experienced ambivalence when he had to impose laws that contradicted African customary laws and practices, which became unbearable when he had to implement the labour legislation of the apartheid government, leading to his breakdown and suicide.

Four white South Africans from the apartheid era, who were born on farms and speak isiXhosa, and who have achieved a level of public prominence are Donald Woods, Donald Card, Allister Sparks and Nelson Mandela's prison warder, James Gregory. Both Woods and Sparks won renown as anti-apartheid journalists and more recently as writers. Donald Card, whose life is chronicled in the book *Tangling the Lion's Tail* (Thomas, 2007), had a number of contradictory claims to fame. A detective in the South African police force, he cracked many cases involving and incriminating members of liberation movements. This made him very unpopular among leaders of the liberation struggle. Later, he became mayor of East London and introduced some controversial changes, giving blacks more freedom in the town. Ultimately, he surprised many by assisting Donald Woods to flee South Africa, escaping the security police. Both of the 'Donalds' met and had extensive conversations with black-consciousness leader Steve Biko, Donald Woods claiming him as a close friend. James Gregory (1995) experienced what he describes as a transformative relationship with Nelson Mandela, who was his prisoner on Robben Island and later at Pollsmoor and Victor Verster prisons, where he was responsible for the care of Mandela and members of the ANC 'high command'. The title of his book *Goodbye Bafana:*

Nelson Mandela, My Prisoner, My Friend, encapsulates the contradiction in terms implicit in this relationship, which echoed and recreated for him the close relationship he had with a black boy on the family farm during his childhood.

In most of the lives of these people, one can detect ambivalence, some kind of 'emotional tearing',[41] the pull of relationships and influences from both sides of the frontier, as it were, and from the worlds of different languages.

To summarise this section, the history of the Eastern Cape, seminal in the history of South Africa as a whole, is characterised by conflict and war between black and white, and by the dispossession of black people of their land. The devastation and despair wrought by these wars generated bitterness and negative attitudes on both sides. As the power of the white ruling class grew, rural black people were progressively and repeatedly rendered more powerless and landless, in the interests of white agricultural and commercial progress. The consolidation of white farms and the support of white agriculture by successive governments, leading to more and more racial segregation, have also meant that farm labourers are arguably the most dependent, trapped and vulnerable group of people in the country, bound to the farm and the farm owner by legislation, and not easily able to claim their rights, even today.

This means that by the time the apartheid government was at its height, white farmers and black farmworkers were at opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum. However, the relationships between farmer and farmworker, growing up in intimate contact on isolated farms, were fraught with contradictions and ambivalence. Farmers were often cruel, and almost always authoritarian; at the same time, there was space for unusual sympathies to develop which had the potential of being counter-hegemonic.

The imposition of language policies by successive oppressive regimes has stifled and constricted indigenous languages (including Afrikaans) and their spheres of use, caused high levels of resentment and triggered revolt and reaction. However, in spite of polarising language policies, multilingualism of one kind or another has flourished in certain exceptional environments, such as farms, trading stations and missions, where people have learned one another's languages. It is clear that the ambivalence experienced within this kind of connection, in the context of a polarised society, can be unbearable and have dramatic and even tragic consequences at times, as in the case of characters in *Shades* and *The Native Commissioner.* While the lives of my participants have not achieved the prominence of the figures from history and literature discussed above, traces of the same influences and trends can be detected in their stories.

Black Children's Lives

Before introducing the four participants in the research, I briefly describe and discuss the kind of lives that black children lived around the time that these four men were growing up. I have sourced this information from biographical works and a novel, most describing the lives of black South Africans who grew up somewhat earlier than these men.

Black children grew up in a number of different contexts during the 1960s and 1970s, when my participants were young. Some children grew up in rural 'homelands', such as the Transkei, while others grew up in urban townships and slums. Many had some experience of each kind of context, moving with their parents when they came to town for work, and back to their grandparents in rural areas for care. And then there were those who grew up spending significant amounts of time in their parents' workplaces, either on white-owned farms or in suburban backyards. I will attempt to highlight some of the characteristics of life in rural and urban contexts. The description is, of necessity, brief and cannot capture the richness of experience in each context.

Magona's (1990) autobiographical work captures some of the main features of both rural and urban contexts. She cites the first characteristic of her life as its domination by 'a plethora of laws' (Magona, 1990: 1) created by the white man, and the second as her certainty of belonging and connection (Magona, 1990: 2), not so much to a locality as to 'a group of people'.

Mandela (1994: 10) remembers that the hut of his mother, one of his father's four wives, was 'always filled with the babies and children of my relations'. He could hardly 'recall any occasion as a child when [he] was alone'. The extended family was the context in which rural children grew up, children often being brought up by a grandmother, while their parents (or their father at least) worked in the city (Dido, 2000; Magona, 1990; Mphahlele, 1959). Magona maintains that children were with their grandmothers not only out of necessity, but also out of custom. She moved easily between the homes of her maternal and paternal grandmothers, while her mother lived at the paternal home. Her father, like many fathers, was a distant stranger who worked on the mines and came home once a year.

Children, from an early age, had tasks to perform: 'sweeping, carrying water … fetching firewood, … milk[ing] the cows, goats and sheep … herd[ing] the livestock' (Magona, 1990: 4). In the evening, the whole family came together and 'one adult, usually grandmamma … would tell [them] *iintsomi*, the fairy-tales of the *amaXhosa*' (Magona, 1990: 5). When present, fathers would tell 'stories of historic battles and heroic Xhosa warriors' (Mandela, 1994: 12).

Boys, according to Mandela (1994: 11), were 'mostly left to their own devices'. He says 'I was no more than five when I became a herd-boy looking after sheep and calves in the fields … I learned how to knock birds out of the sky with a sling-shot, to gather wild honey and fruits … to drink warm sweet milk straight from the udder of a cow, to swim in clear, cold streams, and to catch fish with twine … learned to stick-fight – essential knowledge to any rural African boy…'. Sometimes, boys would play with girls, games like '*ndize* (hide and seek) *icekwa* (tag) and *khetha*' (choose the one you like)' (Mandela, 1994: 12). While times have changed, particularly since 1994, pastimes such as these were still described by rural-based students at the University of Fort Hare where I taught until 2012.

Dido (2000: 30, 31), in her Afrikaans novel, describes some of the distinctions between groups which existed in her protagonist's rural home area. Her group was looked down on by the 'other' people, and called *amaQaba*. The amaQaba were those who still followed traditional beliefs and customs, whereas the 'other' people, often amaMfengu,[42] had changed their ways somewhat, embracing Christianity and Western education. Mandela describes how the lives of most Xhosas were shaped by 'custom, ritual and taboo' and by the veneration of elders and ancestors. He explains that his mother had embraced Christianity and his father, though a traditionalist, had agreed that his son go to school (Mandela, 1994: 13, 15), the first in his family to do so. While my participants grew up about 40 years later than Mandela, education was still not compulsory for black children. Distinctions like those described by Dido still existed, and in some places persist even today.

Both Mandela and Magona observe that white people hardly came into their world at all at this time, and were experienced as 'comets … from another world' (Magona, 1990: 10) when they drove past in their cars. In town, it was a little different. Children saw white policemen and charity workers, and saw and heard a great deal more about the privileged lifestyle of white people.

Magona's life in town began with the death of her grandmother, which led her mother to move with the children a settlement of tin shacks near Cape Town, where they joined her father. In town, she experienced life in a nuclear family living in one room, where she was exposed to police raids on their home at night, fights on payday, *shebeens*[43] and drunkenness. Children continued to perform a multitude of household chores, and still played together in groups, never at a loss for something to do. Toys were rare, coming from charity organisations and women who worked in white homes as housemaids (Magona, 1990). Life in Ginsberg township among Steve Biko's peers was characterised by street fights, where groups of boys learned to defend themselves against gangs of *tsotsis* or street thugs

(Mangcu, 2012: 91). Steve Biko's brother formed a rugby club, and they practised daily in front of the Biko home.

Mphahlele (1959: 12) describes his first school as a classroom filled with 'a mighty crowd' of children, where learning consisted of chanting tables and spellings. Magona (1990: 48) also speaks of 'overcrowded classrooms' and having to buy books, which were inevitably stolen by other pupils. She came to love school on the day that she passed her first year. Mphahlele (1959: 12), on the contrary, maintains that he 'came to detest … school … associating it with physical pain'. Corporal punishment was common 'at home, at school, and even at church'. According to Magona's father, it was 'one of the ways parents showed their love for their children' (Magona, 1990: 24).

A theme of many urban childhoods is that of the single mother struggling to provide for the family. Mphahlele (1959: 24) describes how his mother did dressmaking in the day and brewed and sold beer at night, while his father 'drank like a sponge'. 'The young Steve [Biko] was much affected', says Mangcu (2012: 89), 'by his mother's daily struggles to keep the family going', after the death of his father. She was a cook at the local hospital and had to mind the burning coal furnace singlehandedly. While poverty and hardship were constants in both rural and urban contexts, Magona (1990: 23) claims that these did not necessarily prevent childhood from being 'stable and happy'.

On farms, black children were usually able to live with their parents, but they often missed out on the broader context of the extended family. Their lives were similar in many ways to those of other rural children, except that they constantly lived under the shadow of the white farmer's authority, having to do his bidding and see their parents always in a subservient position. Much depended on what kind of man the farmer was. More about these children's lives is revealed in the research participants' stories, though not, of course, from their point of view.

Introduction to the Four Participants

I now outline the main events in each of the four participants' lives, as far as I have been able to piece them together from the stories narrated to me, also adding something of the person's own assessment of himself and those who have influenced him, as well as my own personal impression of the person, in very brief terms. After introducing the four men, I introduce myself in a similar vein, and then make some comments on all five participants. Appendix 2 gives more specifics of the historical and political events through which each participant lived.

Ernie

Ernie, the eldest of the four men, is the only child of his parents, and the grandson of one of the first German settlers who arrived in the Eastern Cape in 1858. He was born and grew up on the original settler farm, and married a woman of German settler heritage, as his father had before him.

Born in 1945, three years before the Nationalist Party came to power, Ernie spent his early years playing with Xhosa boys on and around the farm. He started school as a day scholar at the local white village school in the year that he turned six. The languages he knew at that stage were German and isiXhosa, and the school was English medium and taught Afrikaans as a second language, in line with the policy of the time. Seven years later, Ernie moved to a white boys' high school in the nearby town, still travelling to school and back home every day, keeping up his contact with the farm and his farming activities, as well as his childhood friends. One of his friends was a black boy of about his age, who could not hear or speak. He stayed with the family, having sought refuge with them from abusive relatives. From the age of 10 or 11, Ernie farmed in his own right, taking responsibility for his own livestock (turkeys and sheep).

In 1964, Ernie matriculated and began work as a clerk on the South African Railways, a job he soon settled into, enjoyed and excelled at. He continued to live at home and involve himself with the work routines of the farm. Around this time, he was conscripted for three months' basic military training. In 1967, the family farm was expropriated for the consolidation of the Ciskei homeland. The family was paid out and they purchased another farm in the area. Within the space of eight years, they were expropriated again and were forced to move a second time, to a third farm. For a family which valued stability and continuity, as Ernie's seems to have done, this must have been a traumatic time.

In 1980, he married, and later the same year, still living on the family farm, the couple had the first of their two daughters. In 1985, his mother died, soon followed by Ernie's friend who could not hear or speak and who had been very attached to her. His father died a couple of years later, leaving Ernie to take sole responsibility for the farm. In 1988, Ernie took ill and had a very serious operation, resulting in his being medically boarded[44]. After a while, he took on light work in the retail trade, and in 1994, he was appointed section manager in a supermarket. At the time of the interviews, he was still working in this capacity, and keeping up his farm at the same time.

Ernie describes himself as a 'peace loving person, – can get on with any age – old or young, irrespective of colour' (E3.16). He singles out his late father as the most important influence in his life, particularly in terms of

the model he set for him of honesty (E3.4). He strikes me as an unassuming, conscientious and helpful person, rooted in farm life, faithful to his family and to the principles he has learned from them, who tries at all times to treat all those around him with courtesy and respect.

Riaan

Riaan was born in 1962, the son of an Afrikaans-speaking father and an English-speaking mother. His mother died in childbirth, and his upbringing was taken over by his uncle and aunt, who lived on a farm and had children who were by that time moving into their teenage years. Riaan's care was largely placed in the hands of an isiXhosa-speaking woman who carried him on her back during his infancy, and accompanied him wherever he went while he was a small boy. From his early days, he played with the children of the farmworkers, day in and day out, helping more and more with the activities of the farm together with his friends as he grew older.

In the year that Riaan turned six, he went to school in the nearby town. After a short and unsuccessful period of boarding in the school hostel, he became a day scholar, travelling to and from school daily, and returning to the world of work and play on the farm every afternoon, and at weekends and holidays. In his primary school years, he was taught through the medium of English, while the high school he attended was Afrikaans medium.

In 1980, Riaan matriculated and began a four-year university degree in agriculture at an Afrikaans-medium university. Directly after completing his undergraduate degree, he moved into honours studies, and thereafter studied for and was awarded a research masters. From the time that he completed his schooling, Riaan, like all young white South African men, received papers calling him up for military service. Permission could be granted for deferment of the compulsory two-year period of duty in the case of young men who were engaged in university studies. Although Riaan was offered a bursary for doctoral studies abroad, permission for further deferment was not granted, and in 1986, he reported for national service, going through basic training and officer's training. Thereafter, he was seconded by the military to conduct agricultural research in the Eastern Cape pineapple industry.

In 1988, Riaan returned to his home town and started work in agricultural extension, initially staying at home and doing part-time cattle farming. He married in 1991, the first of his two daughters being born in 1992 and the second in 1996. After the change of government in 1994, the agriculture departments of the former 'homelands' of Ciskei and Transkei were incorporated into the department of the new province of the Eastern

Cape. This meant a change from working with white farmers to working with black farmers. Starting in 1999, Riaan worked for an international rural development agency for three years before accepting a university post in another province. This move into academic life did not suit him, and he returned to the Eastern Cape to the rural agricultural development work, closely aligned with government, in which he is still engaged today.

Riaan sees himself as a man of action, rather than a thinker or a reader, even though his reflection on values and behaviour seems to signify a man who thinks deeply. He likes to keep busy and focuses on getting things done, sometimes doing a bit of 'bulldozing' in the process, he says. He tries as much as possible, he says, to 'keep people on [his] side' (Ri3.30), applying the principle of mutual respect, but he is not afraid to challenge an action or point of view. He says that the people who have influenced him most in his life are his stepfather and stepmother, and the isiXhosa-speaking foreman on their farm, who drilled into him and his playmates the principle of respect. He strikes me as a man of energy and strong principles, who has worked out clear strategies for making the best of his life, as he sees it. He sees himself as a fortunate person and is very attached to the Eastern Cape.

Brendon

Brendon's ancestors on his father's side immigrated with the German settlers in 1857, while his mother's family came from Scotland. The second son in the family, born in the early 1960s, he was a small boy when his family moved to a remote farm near the border of the Transkei. There he spent his childhood days with Xhosa children, his brother already away at school.

When Brendon was six, he was sent to the Afrikaans-medium boarding school in the nearby village, and six years later, he went to an English-medium boarding school in a bigger town much further away. After matriculating, he started his university career, studying isiXhosa as one of his subjects. Like Riaan, he was subjected to military call-ups from the time that he left school, and had his national service deferred by enrolling for postgraduate studies: an honours degree, a masters and eventually a doctorate in isiXhosa oral literature.

In 1989, when it seemed that no more deferments were possible, and call-up papers still kept coming, Brendon sought refuge in the 'independent' Transkei, where the then leader of the 'homeland' organised a research post for him at the local university. From there, under the new political dispensation, he moved back into South Africa and held various posts in African languages departments at universities, also spending a year at

an overseas university. Homesick for the Eastern Cape, he accepted a temporary post at an Eastern Cape university in 2006. He currently occupies a permanent post heading up a section at the same university.

Asked about people who had been influential in his life, Brendon mentioned an array of different people of different races, ranging from his childhood friend and other current friends to oral poets, teachers and influential academics, also acknowledging the influence of his parents. Brendon sees himself as unconventional in his life and thinking, but is driven by a desire to serve the greater good and see other people happy: 'a challenging, engaging person who thinks out of the box but is – unselfish in many ways'. I see him as a person of high principles and idealism, driven to restore, in his own life and more broadly, a multilingual society such as he experienced as a child.

George

George's forebears came from mainland Europe 'long ago'. He is not clear about the details of his family history, but knows that his earliest ancestor in South Africa was of Portuguese extraction (likely an early castaway). His grandfather and father both married women of German extraction, as did George. He sees himself as belonging in the Eastern Cape, and is comfortable in a rural, small-town or farm environment.

He was born in 1968 in the Transkei, the 'baby' in a large family of 'yours, mine and ours'. He started school around the time when the Transkei 'homeland' took 'independence' from South Africa. Much of his early childhood was spent on his grandfather's farm, where he imbibed isiXhosa from the woman who sang and chatted while she carried him on her back, busy about the housework, and from her son and other *kwedinis*,[45] with whom he spent happy days playing in the *veld*.[46]

After a difficult period following his parents' divorce, he accompanied his father to a small Karoo[47] town. There, his middle school years, spent in an Afrikaans-medium school, left him trilingual (isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans). In the early 1980s, he became a boarder at a technical high school, further to the north-east, where he matriculated.

George's first job was on the South African Railways. The jobs that he has had since then have made use of his technical skills as well as his trilingualism. He has worked in government and municipal departments and in the private sector, mostly in practical and outdoor-oriented occupations, sometimes managing groups of workers.

George married in the early 1990s and fathered three sons. He sees himself as very much part of his extended family: grandparents, parents,

siblings, wife and children, all of whom have some degree of fluency in isiXhosa. The greatest influence in his life has been his father, of whom he says, 'he's not only my father, he's my doctor, (**Liz**: Mm) he's my lawyer, (**Liz**: Mm) he's my best friend' (G3.79). Among black people who have influenced his life, he mentions one work colleague who gave great help and support to him and his family during a tough time when George was undergoing treatment for stress (G3.94).

George describes himself as 'Very loud. Out-going. Um, Helpful (…) friendly with everybody' (G3.102). I have experienced him as a spontaneous, friendly and very obliging person, with a ready and hearty laugh. He seems to enjoy his life, revelling in pursuits such as 'fishing, hunting, (**Liz**: Mm) outdoors' (G3.86), introduced to him by his father and now shared with his sons.

Liz

Liz was born in 1947 in Ixopo, a village in present-day KwaZulu-Natal, near the border of the Eastern Cape. Her forebears on her father's side were Scandinavian missionaries, arriving in Zululand in 1860, while her mother's parents were Church of Scotland missionaries, coming to South Africa around 1900. An only child, Liz attended the local school where both her parents taught. English was her mother tongue, and she learned Afrikaans at school. Family life revolved around school and church. Hers was a stable, happy childhood, and bonds of love and loyalty built up between Liz and the children of family friends who farmed in the area, as well as numerous cousins living in and around Durban. Regular visits were also paid to an uncle who was a professor at Fort Hare University, in Alice, Eastern Cape.

Enrolling at the University of Natal in 1964 with the intention (somewhat reluctantly) of following her parents' footsteps into the teaching profession, she registered to study isiZulu in first year, and practised what she had learned with their isiZulu-speaking domestic worker at weekends and holidays. She became more politically aware during these years, when a number of academics were banned and undertook marches to protest against some of the actions of the apartheid government. Towards the end of her years at university, her mother died of cancer, a traumatic experience for the small family.

Involvement in progressive non-racial Christian movements[48] during her final years at university influenced Liz in taking up a teaching post at a high school for African girls, one of the few in South Africa still run by a mission organisation. This experience of living and working in a multiracial

community was life changing for her, and gave rise to a desire to bridge more of South Africa's divides. She enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch, a dominantly Afrikaans university, for an honours degree in English, and then taught at a number of other high schools for white children before once again teaching in African schools. Liz had another experience of living in a multiracial environment when she taught near Alice, at a time when the situation at the University of Fort Hare was liberalising somewhat in the early 1980s. Liz left Alice to study teaching English as a second language in Britain, and on returning to South Africa, she worked at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, on an English improvement project for teachers in the African township of Soweto.

In the late 1980s, a desire to move away from teaching English led Liz simultaneously in a variety of directions: studying psychology and training in voluntary counselling, establishing the Transfer of African Language Knowledge (TALK) project (described in the preface) to promote the learning of African languages and getting to know the man who was to become her husband. Liz and Hannes married in 1998, and in the same year moved to the Eastern Cape, where Liz took up a post at the University of Fort Hare. She was involved in teacher education, in-service and pre-service, at the university for 15 years, until her retirement in June 2012.

One can notice some immediate similarities between the four men's lives: they all grew up on farms, and in their early childhood had no siblings as companions, either because they were only children or the youngest child, their older siblings having already moved away to school. This meant that their childhood companions were the black children of farm labourers. All the men have families with long histories in the Eastern Cape, and all have chosen to stay in, or return to, the province, as their working and living place of choice. Although I selected them because of their fluency in isiXhosa, I found that all four participants are fluent in both English and Afrikaans as well. My own history relates to theirs in that I grew up an only child in a rural village and had close childhood friends who, like my participants, lived on farms. I have also had strong Eastern Cape connections throughout my life. My university career, at an English-medium university, gives me something in common with Brendon, as does my experience in Alice, which links, for me, with Brendon's time in Mthatha. My experiences with learning African languages and my involvement with black people were different from theirs, but these experiences were significant in my life and often led me to feel marginal.

Having introduced the five participants (including myself) and their socio-historical context, I now turn to a description of the theories and methodologies which have informed my analysis of the life histories.

Notes

(1) Peires (1981: 17) maintains that 'The story of Tshawe cannot be dated', although attempts have been made to do so.

(2) The word *Xhosa* is a stem, to which various prefixes are added (*umXhosa*: Xhosa person; *amaXhosa*: Xhosa people; *isiXhosa*: Xhosa language). When speaking English, the stem is often used loosely to refer to either a person/people or the language. When speaking isiXhosa, the term never appears without a prefix. In this book, there are times when the term *Xhosa* is used (as in common English usage) without a prefix, although when the language is referred to (except in quotations), the word isiXhosa is always used.

(3) The son of Gcaleka was Hintsa, the son of Hintsa Sarhili. The chiefs of this eastern branch were always acknowledged as paramount chiefs of all the amaXhosa. The son of Rharhabe was Ngqika, who competed for power with his regent, Ndlambe. Ngqika's successor was Sandile, whose brother Maqoma also wielded much power.

(4) This movement of people became known as 'The Great Trek', and the trekboers who moved out were known as the *Voortrekkers* (the ones who moved forward).

(5) The Khoi were a nomadic pastoral people (see section on 'Indigenous people and early settlers').

(6) Early colonial historians called these wars, 'Kaffir Wars'. This was changed to 'Frontier Wars' in more 'enlightened' times (e.g. Mostert, 1992; Peires, 1989). Black historians often construct them as 'Wars of Dispossession' (Mbeki, 1992) and, more positively, 'Wars of Resistance' (Mangcu, 2012).

(7) Vernon (personal email communication with S. Victor, 23 July 2011) maintains that *border* was never a term used in cartography, but is a term that has been used to refer to the frontier region since at least 1866.

(8) The San and the Khoi were indigenous groups who occupied vast regions of what became the Cape colony, the San being hunter-gatherers and the Khoi wandering pastoralists. Battles with the trekboers, together with the activities of the amaXhosa, resulted in the virtual extermination of the San, and the end of the Khoi as a separate group.

(9) A commando was a group of armed men who violently exercised control over those whose land and cattle they raided (Mangcu, 2012: 47). The colonial authorities supported the commando system.

(10) Terreblanche (2002: 11) explains that Khoisan children were indentured to trekker households, and a system of compulsory or indentured labour (*inboekelingskap*), sometimes called *lyfeienskap*, or serfdom, introduced by Lord Caledon, applied to almost all Khoisan from 1809 to 1828.

(11) The clientship tradition, practiced among the Nguni and the Boers, allowed someone who was poor and landless to work for a patron, and build up his herd while enjoying that patron's protection. Once he could manage independently, he could leave. Trouble began when clients were forced to stay on as serfs (Peires, 1981: 40).

(12) This term, which became extremely offensive in later times, was initially used universally to refer to the Nguni people of the Eastern Cape. It originates with Arab traders and means 'non-believer' (in Islam).

(13) The Wars of Resistance are also more commonly known as *Frontier Wars* (Mangcu, 2012: 50), a term which reflects a more colonial point of view.

(14) In war regalia, the amaXhosa smeared their bodies with red ochre.
(15) These were groups who had been driven south from the area now called KwaZulu-Natal by the disruptions around the wars of Shaka. They had formed an alliance with the British, embracing the Christian religion and fighting on the British side in the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth Wars of Resistance. In return, they were allocated certain tracts of land (Mostert, 1992: 606, 719–723).
(16) The third was an unsuccessful affair conducted by the British in 1803, during the first British occupation of the Cape (Peires, 1981: 57, 58).
(17) Nxele was a 'war doctor': a diviner who had been influenced by Christian thought, but returned to traditional spirituality and led the amaXhosa in the attack on Grahamstown in 1819 (Peires, 1981: 66–74).
(18) Mlanjeni was also a diviner who preached to the amaXhosa that they should abandon witchcraft and purify themselves so that the British could be defeated (Peires, 1989: 1ff.).
(19) Peires (1989: 288) reports that by 1858, the black population of British Kaffraria (west of the Kei) had shrunk from 105,000 to 27,500, through death and migration, and he estimates that 40,000 of the amaXhosa east of the Kei had died.
(20) 'According to the Cape constitution, [from 1853 - 1910] the franchise was open to any man – black or white – who occupied property worth at least £25 or earned at least £50 each year' (Mbeki, 1992: 2).
(21) The Transkei (as it was known then) was the area north-east of the Kei River and south of the then colony of Natal.
(22) Terreblanche (2002: 11) identifies this group as the second and third of eight unfree labour patterns in South Africa, the first being slaves.
(23) Plaatje (1916/1991: 21) defines a squatter as 'a native who owns some livestock and, having no land of his own, hires a farm or grazing and ploughing rights from a landowner, to raise grain for his own use and feed his stock'.
(24) Conference of the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), at the University of Cape Town in September 1976.
(25) An unpublished contributor to the conference: Paul Rich, African farming and the 1913 Land Act.
(26) Later, further 'released areas' added slightly to this land (Bergh & Visagie, 1985: 65).
(27) Unpublished paper delivered at the SALDRU conference: D.G. Antrobus, farm labour in the Eastern Cape, 1950–1973.
(28) A survey of earnings in the non-agricultural sector (mostly urban areas), carried out by the Economics Division of the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, Pretoria, in 1976, gave the following average earnings per annum (excluding earnings in kind): whites: R5867; coloureds (mixed race): R1895; Asiatics: R2367; Africans: R1269 (SAIRR, 1978: 206).
(29) Timothy Plaut, Farm schools for African and coloured children in South Africa; Brian Levy, Farm schools in South Africa, an empirical study (both unpublished papers presented at the SALDRU conference).
(30) In 1968, the Xhosa Development Corporation bought 126 trading stations (SAIRR, 1968: 139.)
(31) Two Xhosa 'homelands' were established by the Nationalist government, mirroring the division into Rharhabe and Gcaleka houses of the amaXhosa, and reinforcing the old dividing line of the Kei River, along which a 'white corridor' divided the two 'black' territories.

(32) A similar coup took place a few years later in the Ciskei, where the new leader Oupa Gqozo initially also introduced liberal measures but later clamped down and let loose his troops to fire on an ANC 'invasion'.
(33) Trek (Afrikaans): to travel or migrate, usually a long and arduous process.
(34) At that time, the term *bilingual* in South Africa referred to bilingualism in English and Afrikaans.
(35) Clearly using 'colonial' versions of the languages.
(36) According to the 2001 census, 83.4% of people in the Eastern Cape are isiXhosa speaking (South Africa.info, 2011).
(37) Languages are taught at three levels: home language (assumption that the learner comes to school familiar with the language); first additional language (assumption that the learner does not know the language when entering school, but probably needs it as a medium of instruction later on); second additional language: the aim of teaching here is basic communicative competence, and the assumption is that the learner does not know the language before coming to school.
(38) Mostert clearly did not regard Charles Brownlee (see section 'Prominent white Eastern Cape multilinguals') as a 'leading white political figure'.
(39) This corresponds with the suspicion with which the directors of the EIC regarded 'country-born' Europeans in India who knew local languages well (Cohn, 1996: 19).
(40) A person of mixed Boer and Khoi ancestry was known as a *bastaard* at the time.
(41) *Emotional tearing* is a term used by one respondent in earlier research that I conducted with bilinguals (Botha, 2007).
(42) See note 15.
(43) Small, informal, illegal drinking places.
(44) Retired for medical reasons, with a monthly allowance.
(45) *Kwedini*: young uncircumcised boy.
(46) *Veld:* South African grassland and bush.
(47) The Karoo is a dry, sparsely populated area in the western part of the Eastern Cape (see Map 1). Afrikaner farming families dominate the white population.
(48) The organisations with which Liz was involved included the University Christian Movement, a non-denominational and non-racial student organisation, which was later banned; Beyers Naude's Christian Institute, established to foster reconciliation between Christians of all racial groups through dialogue; and T-group Sensitivity Training based on Rogerian encounter group methods. All these activities were groundbreaking in South Africa in that they involved Christians of all races and denominations.

2 Life History, Identity and Language Acquisition

> *Identity is not something which is formed outside and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one's own self. We have the notion of identity as contradictory, as composed of more than one discourse, as composed always across the silences of the other, as written in and through ambivalence and desire.*
> *Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities* – Hall (2000: 147)

In seeking appropriate methodological and theoretical frameworks on which to base my research, I considered my participants' multilingualism against a background of the context that I have described in Chapter 1, with its strong contrasts in lifestyles and values, and deep divides in power, wealth and race. I chose a life history methodology to approach the questions that I had about the men's lives and language repertoires, because life history research acknowledges the crucial nature of the relationship between individual lives and their socio-historical and political contexts (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). I analysed the narrative discourse of the men's life histories as told to me in interviews, using post-structuralist theories (Foucault, 1975, 1976; Weedon, 1997, 2004) and postcolonial studies related to race, language, space and hybridity (e.g. Bhabha, 1994; Frankenberg, 1993; Hall, 1992a; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), in order to make inferences about the ways in which language and power impact on the men's identity construction. I was also able to search the men's narratives, using theories representing the 'social turn' in second language acquisition (SLA) studies (Block, 2003; Norton & McKinney, 2011), as well as other social learning theories (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991) for evidence of contexts, relationships, experiences and artefacts which enabled their acquisition of isiXhosa.

Narrative Research and Life History Methodology

De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012: 1) describe narrative research as 'a minefield of multiple and at times competing perspectives in a wide array of social science fields'. It can be informed by various theoretical positions, such as phenomenology (e.g. Clough, 2002; Ricoeur, 1980), dialogism

(Bakhtin, 1986; Duranti, 1986) and post-structuralism (e.g. Pavlenko, 2007; Tierney, 1993), and has been used within numerous disciplines, e.g. history (e.g. Portelli, 1991), education (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clough, 2002), psychology (e.g. Hermans & Kempen, 1993), sociology (e.g. Chamberlayne *et al*., 2000) and ethnography (e.g. Hymes, 1996), and for diverse purposes, e.g. literary analysis (e.g. Bakhtin, 1984), the collection of alternative historical data (e.g. Portelli, 1991), the analysis of cultural grammar (e.g. Polanyi, 1989), therapy (e.g. White, 2011) and the study of identity (e.g. Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Bruner, 2001).

The field of life history research (e.g. Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Hatch & Wisniewsky, 1995; Tierney, 2000) is closely related to and overlaps with the fields of biography and autobiography studies (e.g. Brockmeier, 2000; Freeman, 2001; Pavlenko, 2007) within the more general area of narrative research (e.g. Bruner, 2001, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012; Gee, 1991, 1997; Labov, 1972; Ochs & Capps, 2001), with its numerous dimensions. Goodson and Sikes (2001) explain that a life story is an individual's account of his or her lived experience over time, and that this becomes a life history when located in the processes and power dynamics of its socio-historical context. Life history research acknowledges that the relationship between individual lives and this socio-historical and political context is crucial. This is why life history research itself is often associated with post-structuralism, is concerned with relationships between language, subjectivity, social organisation and power, and has proved an appropriate methodological framework for my study.

In analysing narrative, a wealth of diverse approaches have been adopted, e.g. sociological, sociolinguistic, psychological, literary and anthropological (all described in Cortazzi, 1993), as well as post-structuralist discourse analysis, such as that used in discursive psychology studies (e.g. Durrheim & Dixon, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). One school of analysis regards narrative as a text type, focusing on its structure. While Labov and Waletzky (1997), pioneers in the field of narrative analysis, took this approach, the seeds of a move from structure to performance were implicit in their work (Bamberg, 1997; Wortham, 2000). The concept of stories as performance flowered in the work of researchers such as Sacks *et al*. (1974) and Goodwin and Heritage (1990), whose conversation analysis (CA) school viewed narrative as part of the interaction between narrator and audience within the discourse environment. While CA's main focus has been 'small' stories embedded in naturally occurring conversation, recent scholars (e.g. Bamberg, 2006; De Fina, 2013) have extended the field

to include narratives arising out of research interviews. This has directed attention to the context of the interview, both local and sociopolitical, and to the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, throwing new light on how identities are constructed through narrative (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012).

Personal narrative is regarded by many as one of the techniques that individuals use in an attempt to construct coherence in the midst of the ambivalence created by multiple and fluid subject identities, both ascribed and assumed, pulling them in different directions (e.g. Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Bruner, 2001, 2002; Freeman, 1998, 2001). There is evidence of such a quest for coherence in many life stories, including those of my participants, although 'the ethical narrativity theory', commonly espoused in accounts of biographical identity, which maintains that a coherent life is 'a good life', is clearly problematic (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012: 160). Recent interactional approaches to narrative identity which draw on positioning theory (e.g. Bamberg, 1997; Depperman, 2013) have emphasised more fragmentary and multiple views of identity, discursively constructed in distinct ways in diverse contexts, in relationship with different people. I examine the dialogic discourse which links the past to the present in my participants' accounts (Bakhtin, 1981), in order to identify ways in which they position themselves (Bamberg, 1997; Davies & Harre, 1990; Depperman, 2013; Wortham, 2000) and other actors, including myself, as they tell their stories at that moment in time, in their interviews with me.

Selection of participants

In selecting the participants, I drew from a 'snowball'[1] sample of 24 respondents to a survey-type study of white isiXhosa-English/Afrikaans bilinguals which I conducted in early 2007 (Botha, 2007). I chose to focus on men when it became apparent that the amount of data emerging from a single participant would make it impractical to work with a fully representative sample (age, gender, class, etc.). As men (71%) and 40- to 59-year-olds (67%) predominated in the original sample, I decided to focus on middle-aged men, selecting from the original sample those who claimed that their oral isiXhosa was 'very good' or 'excellent', and creating some balance in terms of social class by selecting two men with tertiary education and two without. While masculinity is an inescapable dimension of the participants' identity, it was not an intended focus of the study.

Interviews and participants

In acknowledging my serious responsibility towards each of the men who told me his story, I carefully negotiated with the four participants before embarking on the interviews, being as open as possible about all aspects of the research process and purpose.

In eliciting the stories, I used biographic interviewing methods and the three-interview model developed by Wengraf (2001: 113ff.). In the first interview, I asked the participants to give me an overview of their lives, relating it particularly to their ability to speak isiXhosa. Once they had outlined their life stories, I asked them to describe in some detail the situation within which they became speakers of isiXhosa: the environment, the people and their relationships with them, the kinds of activities and experiences that they engaged in and what it was like for them. I tried not to interrupt either of these narratives, except to clarify details. In the second interview, I asked them to focus on key experiences, involving their use or understanding of isiXhosa which had affected or changed them. I went on to ask them to expand on certain aspects of the original story related in Interview 1. In doing this, I followed Wengraf's (2001: 120) advice, ensuring that every question asked was a 'story-eliciting' one, and that all questions arose out of the participant's original narrative. The third meeting took place once the transcription of the first two interviews was complete, and the participants had had a chance to read them through. At this meeting, they had a chance to respond to what they had read in the transcripts, and to correct, clarify or add to their story in any way they wished. They also had a chance to reflect on their story and the experience of telling it, and its meaning for them. I also took the opportunity to ask more 'story-eliciting' type questions, this time basing them on Interview 2, and I also asked a couple of other questions related more directly to my research questions. In conclusion, I asked them a question related quite directly to how they saw themselves. (See Appendix 3 for more detail on the interview questions.)

Goodson and Sikes (2001: 26) point to the importance of the researcher being the sort of person that others want to talk to, and recommend Rogerian person-centred skills as helpful: 'listen, reflect back, ask questions which encourage further reflection and [be] non-judgemental'. Wengraf (2001: 113) similarly recommends that after the initial question has been posed, the interviewer limits his or her responses to 'facilitative noises and non-verbal support'. He indicates that behind this lies the Gestalt principle, 'which requires the spontaneous pattern of the speaker to complete itself fully and so be fully exposed for analysis' (Wengraf, 2001: 113).

While I attempted to follow this advice in the interviews, hoping to create an empathic environment where the participants felt free to express themselves fully, it is clearly problematic to think that, as interviewer, I was uninvolved and did not influence outcomes. In spite of my intentions to retain an impartial stance, there were occasions when I showed support for the participants' views, and delight in or fascination with their stories, and I may, on occasion, have conveyed a sense of disapproval. At times, I identified quite strongly with some of the experiences and feelings that the men recounted, and could not resist, on occasion, expressing strong agreement or even starting to narrate a parallel experience. Recent developments in positioning theory within the CA field (e.g. Bamberg, 1997; De Fina, 2013; Wortham, 2000) offer a useful way of looking at and analysing the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Bamberg (1997), in his elaboration of positioning theory, posits that the process of positioning occurs at three levels:

- The characters are positioned in relation to one another in the reported events of the story.
- Narrators position themselves in relation to the audience (in this case, the interviewer).
- Narrators position themselves in relation to themselves; in other words, they present a local answer (valid in that time and space and with that particular audience) to the question, 'Who am I?'.

Level 2 positioning clearly means that the interviewer, in a narrative research project such as mine, plays an important role in the construction of the story, and Level 3 positioning indicates that the narrator's identity, constructed for that particular audience, in that time and space, will be specific to that situation. While I made little reference to my own story in interviewing the four men, I acknowledge that, as Wengraf (2001: 106) says, my '"personal reality" and social identity combine[d] to be the "instrument" with which' I carried out the interview research. The men's stories and the identities they presented in them were affected by my purposes, the way I elicited their stories and responded to them, by our relationship and also by the context within which they were told (Lieblich *et al*., 1998: 8). As Wortham (2000: 3) says, 'Autobiographical narrators *act* like particular types of people while they tell their stories'; the narratives which my participants told and the identities they presented to me, a white English-speaking South African woman descended from Christian missionaries, who works at an academic institution, is married to a man with an Afrikaner background and grew up in a rural KwaZulu-Natal village, must

have differed in many subtle, and maybe not so subtle, ways from those they would have presented to someone else, in another circumstance. In Barkhuizen's (2011: 3) words, 'I was not merely passively listening to the … participants' stories, I was actively involved in constructing them'. The men and I were co-authors of the stories (Duranti, 1986). The inclusion of my summary 'life history' at the end of Chapter 1 is an acknowledgement of this co-authorship.

Before proceeding with the analysis, I wrote up the longer version of my 'life history', using a similar framework to that which I had asked my participants to follow, with the aim of enhancing my own self-awareness. I also tried to interrogate, as Wengraf (2001: 94) recommends, my 'own prejudices, stereotypes, phantasies, hopes and fears, ideological and emotional desires and purposes', and recorded some of these, as well as observations about my 'conscious and unconscious interest in the field' (Wengraf, 2001: 94) in a journal, which I kept somewhat sporadically. This process played an important clarifying role, 'creating a space in which the data of the research project [could] take issue with' (Wengraf, 2001: 94) my own half-conscious purposes, desires and assumptions.

De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012: 148) remind us that stories are not 'a transparent record of what has "really" happened and as such a point of entry into establishing the truth'. Rather, 'every telling is locally occasioned and ultimately shaped by the teller's current perspective and their relationships with the storytelling participants'. I tried to remain aware of this as I analysed the data, and to make explicit my role in the construction of the narratives, and my inescapable involvement in certain discourses and ideologies, through my positioning in South African society.

Transcription conventions

In transcribing the data, and reproducing extracts in the analysis chapters, I have retained most of the conventions of written language, such as punctuation and paragraphing, in order to make the transcription of spoken language into writing more readable, and to convey my understanding of the spoken words. For the same reason, I have included my own minimal responses in brackets within the longer contributions of the participants. My questions, or longer contributions as a participant in the conversation, are each written in a new paragraph. Paragraphs are numbered to facilitate reference to particular parts of the extract. Additional conventions used in transcribing the spoken data appear in the following table:

//	Indicates overlapping speech
Underlining	Shows word stressed
Re:ally	Colon (one, or more than one) shows a lengthened sound
[pause]	Used to indicate a noticeable but untimed pause, longer than two seconds
-	Used to indicate a short untimed pause or break in speech
[raises hand] [inaudible]	Square brackets used to include additional significant information, for example the physical movements or gestures of participants, or comments by the transcriber
Laughs	Laughter indicated in italics
Mens (people)	Italics indicate a word spoken in Afrikaans or isiXhosa with an English translation in brackets. This is sometimes placed in an endnote
(...)	Parts of data omitted
{kids}	Indicates a word which has replaced the original word, perhaps because the original word was not clear, or to protect the identity of the participant
Name:	Indicates the name of speaker
xx(**Liz:** Mm)xx	Minimal responses are included in brackets in the main speaker's texts

Data analysis

As this study of identity used a post-structuralist framework, it focused on language as a primary component of discourse, and discourse as the medium through which identity is constructed. Because I am not fluent in isiXhosa myself, and therefore did not have access to my participants' isiXhosa discourse, I was restricted to analysing my participants' discourse in English about their lives. This means that I have had to examine constructions of identity in their talk about their multilingualism rather than in their actual practices of multilingualism. It also needs to be borne in mind that, as described above, the men's narratives are constructed within the time and space of the interview and within their relationship with me, the interviewer. Although I am guilty at times of analysing the stories as if they are the men's actual experiences and an 'unmediated window into the teller's identities' (De Fina, 2014), this is clearly not the case. The analysis needs to be read with these limitations in mind.

In analysing the data, my initial approach was a structural one. Using Labov's model, I identified the different parts of the story structure, then

focused my analysis on the 'evaluation' sections, 'the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative' (Labov, 1972: 366), often embedded in the course of the story, and, as Wortham (2000: 14) remarks, involving 'the positioning of the narrator' in relation to the audience. As the analysis proceeded, I came to rely mostly on post-structuralist discourse analysis, often used in discursive psychology studies (e.g. Durrheim & Dixon, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), examining the ideological views of experience expressed in the 'common sense' views of 'truth' constructed in their stories (Kress, 1985: 10). Davies and Harre's (1990: 48) notion of positioning, 'the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines', was also useful. Davis and Harre's concept has recently been elaborated and used extensively by CA theorists (e.g. Bamberg, 1997; Depperman, 2013; Wortham, 2000), who employ it to analyse constructions of identity within research narratives, as well as within 'small' stories. The insights emerging from this work have influenced my analysis. Whiteness studies and discursive psychology (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Frankenberg, 1993; Steyn, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) have provided me with frameworks and precedents for examining the stories for discourses related specifically to race and whiteness.

The theoretical section that follows gives more detail of the ways in which the analysis was carried out, and theories on which the analysis was based. It also describes the ways in which I scrutinised the stories for indications of how isiXhosa was learned.

Post-Structuralist Theory: Power, Discourse and Identity[2]

Post-structuralism theorises the relationship between language and subjectivity, on the one hand, and social organisation and power, on the other. This has made it a useful paradigm to use in studying life histories impacted on and infused with oppressive forms of power and extreme differentials between societal groups.

In contrast to the liberal humanist conception of the fixed, unique and coherent self, the post-structuralist view is that identity is an 'unsettled space' (Hall, 1991, cited in Mills, 2004: 174), from which individuals express 'multiple and often contradictory' (Bhavnani & Phoenix, 1994: 9) aspects of themselves. Although identity is fluid and multiple, the 'illusion' of coherent identity is necessary for acting in the world (Weedon, 1997: 102) and 'central to the desire to be a "knowing subject", in control of meaning'

(Weedon, 2004: 21). This means that the construction of coherence is a project at which we work, negotiating between available options and making choices about the subjective positions we adopt, moment by moment.

Blommaert (2005: 205) distinguishes between identities which we 'inhabit' and identities which are 'ascribed' to us by outside agencies. While there is some room for us to make choices as to which of the multiplicity of available identities we wish to 'inhabit' at each particular moment, 'ascribed' identities, particularly those relating to class, gender and race, sometimes position us in ways we might not necessarily have chosen. We can 'assume them – or reject them – by behaviours we adopt in daily life (performativity) and by identification or counter-identification with a group or individual' (Weedon, 2004: 21). Certain identities are 'exclusive to and policed by' groups who have power (Weedon, 2004: 7). Within the heavily, discursively and physically policed environment of apartheid South Africa, racial identities were rigidly and legally 'ascribed'; current efforts to redress the inequalities of the past are also based on these 'ascribed' racial identities.

There are moments of dilemma and challenge in the lives of most individuals when the identity options available seem incompatible with one's existing sense of self, or when one is faced with impossible choices – and yet is forced to choose. Block (2007a: 22) calls these 'critical experiences', and comments that they cause unbearable ambivalence. Faced with ambivalence, one may be forced to adapt to and live with one of the seemingly impossible options, or in extremity be driven to suicide or madness. I have described examples of this in the lives of bilingual individuals in Chapter 1. In struggling for survival in an incoherent situation, one often does manage to shift into another more comfortable 'space' in which one can live out a new or 'hybrid' identity, or a more contingent existence.

Hall's (1992a: 277) view is that 'if we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or "narrative of the self" about ourselves'. In analysing my participants' narratives (and thinking about my own), I look at how they work in the interviews to construct coherence out of the different facets of their lives, lived out within a world firmly divided into black and white, as well as other polarities, like masculine and feminine, home and school. I pinpoint instances where they present themselves as exercising agency in adopting or rejecting particular identities at specific times and places, for specific purposes, through identifying with particular people or through investment in certain registers or behaviours, and I isolate experiences of ambivalence related in their narratives.

In accepting 'ascribed' identities, or in exercising our options with regard to available identities, we adopt particular discourses, which express specific ideological views of experience. While the word 'discourse' is primarily associated with language, discourse goes beyond language per se, extending to all semiotic systems, activities, practices, performances and ways of being through which we express ourselves in a context (Blommaert, 2005: 3). Foucault saw discourse as a structuring principle in society, which is made up of numerous competing discursive fields, each discourse offering a preferred form of subjectivity, but thereby implying 'other subject positions and the possibility of reversal' (Weedon, 1997: 106). Kress (1985) explains that

> In the colonisation of areas of social life, discourses attempt to reconcile contradictions, mismatches, disjunctions and discontinuities within that domain by making that which is social seem natural and that which is problematic seem obvious. … The accounts provided within one discourse become not only unchallenged, but unchallengeable, as 'common sense'. If the domination … by a discourse is successful, … it allows no room for thought; the social will have been turned into the natural. At that stage it is impossible to conceive of alternative modes of thought, or else [they] will seem bizarre, outlandish, unnatural. (Kress, 1985: 10)

I seek out conceptions of what is represented as 'natural' or 'common sense' in my participants' narrative discourse, taking these as indications of the ideologies[3] and subjectivities which they seek to construct in different situations.

As stated earlier, the post-structuralist view sees subjectivities and identities as embedded in power relations. Foucault (1976: 92–102) conceptualises power as multiple, heterogeneous and omnipresent, as well as unbalanced and unstable, always shifting and being redistributed as the flux of relations within society changes in balance. As splits and tendencies arise within this restless sea of power relations, certain forces converge and others diverge, forming systems of politics and war, which change into one another periodically. The state, the law, the church, etc., should not be seen as the source of power, according to Foucault (1976: 92). These 'major dominations' emerge from and are sustained by a multiplicity of local 'force relations' (Foucault, 1976: 92), and in turn seek to 'arrest … movement' (Foucault, 1976: 93) within these force relations, inherent in families, institutions and relations of economics, knowledge and sex, etc. Just as power is immanent everywhere, so is resistance. The existence of power

'depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance' (Foucault, 1976: 95). More often than not,

> One is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remoulding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. (Foucault, 1976: 96)

It is clear from the quote that this multiple and contested view of power relates to the post-structuralist view of multiple and conflicted identity, and the experience of ambivalence discussed earlier. In the men's accounts, I have looked for instances of the ebb and flow of relations of power and resistance, between the boys and their parents, the boys and their schools and between black and white people in the stories. I have been interested in the ways in which such relations appear to shift with time as the men mature and political situations change, and how such shifts are reflected in modifications in their discourse, signalling different identity choices.

Bourdieu's (1991) work on language and power, though not explicitly post-structuralist, has offered me concepts which complement and augment those of the post-structuralists. Bourdieu explains how command of *legitimate language*, developed through a process of struggle for *symbolic power* between groups speaking different dialects, becomes linked to one's value – on the labour market and in society, and thus to one's identity. The value of each utterance is determined in each specific situation by the relationship of power between the participants in the interchange, such that an utterance may have a different value on different markets. '[T]he whole social structure is present in each interaction (and thereby in the discourse uttered)' (Bourdieu, 1991: 67). An utterance becomes an effective speech act when spoken by someone who, by virtue of the cultural or linguistic capital that she or he possesses, has the right to speak and the right to impose reception.

Blommaert (2005: 4) refers to this kind of positive reception as *voice*: 'the way in which people manage to make themselves understood or fail to do so'. Echoing Bourdieu, he explains that making ourselves understood depends on the linguistic resources which we have at our disposal, and also on the contexts in which we are using them. For example, a person speaking isiXhosa in the southern states of the USA will probably have no voice, because there is unlikely to be the capacity for reception of isiXhosa within that context. Weedon (2004: 13–17) shows how our bodies can

be central to our 'ascribed' identity, and thereby affect our voice. We do not always 'look what we are'. For instance, South Africans do not expect isiXhosa to be spoken by someone who is white in appearance, like the men in my study, and this may influence the reception of what they say.

A white person, endowed with the power of his or her whiteness and having the ability to speak the status language of English (or Afrikaans), speaking isiXhosa to a black person or audience, could be seen positively or negatively, depending on the situation, his or her positioning in relation to the audience and the register of the language that he or she speaks. Under certain circumstances he or she might not even be 'heard' at all. I examine the stories for situations where the men's ability to speak isiXhosa appears to augment or diminish their power and audibility, and analyse how this relates to the power with which they are still imbued by virtue of their whiteness (and their maleness). I also focus on the degree of awareness that my participants demonstrate of the possible sanctions of the fluctuating markets they deal with when speaking isiXhosa in different situations and to different people, and how, on that basis, they make choices in terms of the language register that they use. Bakhtin maintains that heteroglossia[4] works against the monologic views of society which dominant social groups attempt to impose, creating 'the conditions for the possibility of a free consciousness' (Morris, 1994: 15, 16). In my participants' lives, these white men's ability to speak what South Africans might call 'a black language' (i.e. a language characteristically spoken by black people) also has the potential of undermining dominant views and practices, and opening up unexpected possibilities.

Race, Whiteness and Identity

Weedon (2004: 21) comments that 'in defining their own sense of identity, individuals also tend to fix the identity of others, working within long-established binary modes of thinking', e.g. male/female; physical/intellectual; rational/intuitive; black/white. In this study of white South Africans, I am interested in how the men position themselves, within their conversations with me, in relation to a society highly polarised with regard to race, often linked to language.

Scholars of race and racism such as Bhabha (1994), Fanon (2000), Frankenberg (1993), Pennycook (1998) and Said (2003) argue that contemporary concepts of race are largely derivative of colonial constructs of the white self over against the non-white other, developed by colonialists to explain the differences they found between themselves and the colonised, and to maintain their position of dominance over them. The 'liberation'

of colonial countries and the advent of a culture of human rights and liberalism necessitated a rejection of the essentialised biological views of race which dominated in the 18th and 19th centuries, and led to the rise in the mid-1960s of the black consciousness movement, aiming to unite people from all backgrounds finding themselves the target of racism. Hall (1992b: 253) argues that although black unity was useful as a political tool, it actually reinforces a 'language of binary oppositions'.

One response to black consciousness has been the growth of studies of whiteness (Dyer, 1988; Frankenberg, 1993; Steyn, 2001). While Frankenberg (1993: 6–7) grants that these studies run a similar risk to that of black consciousness, of reifying whiteness and encouraging a binary view of society, she claims that to name whiteness means 'to assign everyone a place in the relations of racism'. She points out that in the past, because whiteness has been constructed as normative, it has usually been the identities of Other subjects (as defined in colonial discourses) that have been the focus of interest for researchers and scholars, just as women have more often been the subject of gender studies than men (also constructed as normative). Like Pennycook (1998), she emphasises that 'Colonization also occasioned the reformulation of European selves … [T]he Western self and the non-Western other are co-constructed as discursive products…' (Frankenberg, 1993: 17).

Frankenberg (1993), in her study of white women in the USA, notes that whiteness, in terms of culture, is the 'unmarked' category, the normative empty background against which other 'bounded' cultures are seen. Dyer (1988: 45) writes, 'This property of whiteness, to be everything and nothing, is the source of its representational power'. Somewhat similarly, Morrell (2007: 613) comments that men have been a 'taken-for-granted category in South African history' until recently, and Blommaert (2005: 160) notes that 'the bourgeoisie, is a neutral, unmarked, self-evident centre', and capitalism is often seen as normative among 'isms' (ideologies with a capital 'I'). Whiteness is usually linked to capitalist bourgeois culture and ideology. My participants experience the benefits of being constructed as, and constructing themselves as, 'normative', and therefore powerful, in all of these senses: white, male, capitalist and bourgeois.

In analysing the ways in which my four participants position and define themselves in their narrative discourse, I found it useful to identify discourses about race which could be seen as normative or typical in some way. Literature focusing on race and whiteness isolates some of these.

Pennycook (1998: 55–65) describes essentialised colonial racist discourse which constructs the other as empty: inhabiting 'empty' land, and being undeveloped – lacking history, culture, religion and intelligence.

It constructs white colonists as cultured, industrious and clean where the colonised are natural, indolent and dirty; it sees white colonists as adult and the colonised as children, this being open to two interpretations: the colonised are childlike, innocent and unspoilt, or they are childish, irrational and immature. White colonists are primarily constructed as masculine: the rational man, reared in the British public school system, penetrated and assumed authority, took pride in his physical strength and prowess and rejected all that could be construed as feminine. Morrell (2007: 616) writes, 'A willingness to resort to force and a belief in the glory of combat were features of imperial masculinity and the colonial process'. The enactment of this chauvinism could be seen when white men engaged in sexual relationships with the colonised, as they often did.

Colonial racist discourse may objectify the Other, but its duality also implies the necessity of the Other to the Self, the inextricable involvement of coloniser and colonised (as with man and woman). The dichotomies described above show, on the one hand, a rejection of and revulsion towards the colonised, and, on the other hand, envy and attraction. As Hall (2000) writes, drawing on concepts from Lacan (1966):

> the structure of identification is always constructed through ambivalence… through splitting… between that which one is, and that which is the other. The attempt to expel the other to the other side of the universe is always compounded by the relationships of love and desire. …This is the Other that belongs inside me. …This is the self as it is inscribed in the gaze of the Other. (Hall, 2000: 146)

Thus, he encapsulates the conflicted nature of colonial notions of race: as we define ourselves in relation to the Other, distancing ourselves from the Other, the Other is a part of us, which we long to acknowledge and embrace. I analyse such identification and distancing in the narratives of my participants.

While racist conceptions and discourses permeate almost every aspect of public and private life (in South Africa, at least), discourse which is overtly racist, particularly in a pejorative and essentialist way, is commonly regarded as unacceptable nowadays. However, the kind of discourse that is described by Pennycook is still very widely used and continues to form the basis for many alternative discourses on race in former colonies, as well as in metropolitan centres.

On the one hand, colonial discourse has been replaced by assertions of 'sameness' which avoid speaking of race or of differences in power which are still racialised. Statements made in public about 'sameness',

often overlay or imply fundamental beliefs in racial difference, which may be reflected more overtly in utterances made in private. Frankenberg (1993) calls this 'colour-and-power-evasive' discourse. An example of this discourse, very widely used by many white people in South Africa today, would be an assertion that 'I am not a racist', side by side with laments about 'how filthy the streets are since 1994'.[5] The comments carry an unstated suggestion that black people are the cause of the dirt, in spite of assertions of non-racism.

Durrheim and Dixon (2005: 124) identify particular stylistic features associated with 'colour-and-power evasive' discourse: 'ambivalence and the use of denials, and the disclaimer'; 'equivocal' expressions, 'peppered with conditional and limiting terms and qualifiers'. Stereotypes are softened by being 'expressed in a covert or implicit manner … not explicitly tied to race' (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005: 128). There is 'support for the principle of desegregation but concern for the way in which it is implemented' (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005: 129), or about practicalities of implementation. This allows people to seem non-racist while being opposed to integration. Wetherell and Potter (1992: 92) note similar inconsistencies: shifts between arguments based on principle and those based on practice, between liberal and conservative values.

Often closely allied to the 'color-and-power evasive' discourse, are new explicitly stated beliefs in difference, often based not so much on race as on 'culture' and ethnicity (including language), which I call 'culturalist racist discourse'. '…[M]anifestations of race are coded in a language that aims to circumvent accusations of racism… coded in terms of "difference" and "culture"' (Back & Solomos, 2000: 20). These take a variety of forms and arise out of a number of different impulses. Gilroy saw 'multiculturalist and antiracist' policies and projects in Britain as colluding with this new racism, which he viewed as '[located] in the core of politics' (Gilroy, 1987, cited in Gilroy, 1992: 52).

Wetherell and Potter (1992), discursive social psychologists, analyse white discourse in their study of racism in New Zealand, and South African studies such as those of Durrheim and Dixon (2001, 2005) and Steyn (2001) use a similar analytical approach. Steyn identifies five 'narratives' of white identity in the discourse of her participants. In my analysis, I make use of some of the discourses on race described above: essentialised racist discourse, 'colour-and-power-evasive discourse' and culturalist racist discourse, as well as some of the 'narratives' of white identity described by Steyn (2001). I make use of features such as those identified by Durrheim and Dixon (2005: 128, 129) to guide me in identifying instances of various kinds of discourse in the narratives.

Identity in Time and Space

The concept that identity is constructed within power relations in society and societal groups implies that it is situated in time and space. Blommaert (2005: 136) reminds us that all instances of discourse are *on* history and *from* history, and Voloshinov[6] (1929: 59) shows how dialogic relations existing within language form links in a chain going back through human history. The lives of my four participants are rooted in a historical situation, and inexorably shaped by it. The narratives and identities which they present to me are also constructed in relation to the time and space in which they are told.

Additionally, narratives such as those which comprise the data of this study present a sequence of events in time which differs in a number of ways from a chronological time sequence. Ricoeur (1980) describes how narrative activity inverts natural time order, bringing past and present together, because the recollection of the story is governed by its way of ending. Narrators, 'interested in projecting an image' rather than constructing history, 'shape' their stories in different ways (Portelli, 1991: 64–70), often moving from past to present and back again in a cyclic or spiral fashion (Freeman, 1998: 42), creating cyclical, and sometimes linear or fragmentary timelines (Brockmeier, 2000: 53). I identify and discuss this kind of phenomenon in the stories of some of the participants.

Blommaert (2005: 221) describes space as 'a framework in which meaningful social relationships and events can be anchored and against which a sense of community can be developed'. Borrowing the term *centring institutions* from Silverstein (1998: 404), he describes the way that each institution occupies and develops ownership of its own 'space', sometimes literal (geographical) as well as figurative, and there are many spaces within spaces and spaces overlapping with other spaces. Centring institutions are characterised by particular discourses and are 'organized in "regimes" of ownership and control' (Blommaert, 2005: 74). Their spaces have boundaries which include and exclude, some in more uncompromising ways than others. Norms are established within each space, and others have to orient to these in order to have significance and be heard (to have voice).

Under colonial and postcolonial regimes, spaces are often demarcated, by law or custom, for the use of either black or white people, the other group being in some way excluded. This is true in an especially literal sense in apartheid South Africa, where black communities who lived in places surrounded by white-owned land were forcibly removed to 'homelands', part of the attempt made to deprive all blacks of citizenship within white

South Africa. 'One might say that Apartheid … was all about ensuring that people kept to their proper places' (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000: 34). I examine the spaces in which the four men in my study spend time, and from which they speak, constrained as they are in many ways by the divisions of apartheid space.

Those in power in a colonial or postcolonial context are preoccupied with demarcating boundaries, and balancing association and differentiation. Boundaries feature prominently, of course, in the history of the Eastern Cape, and I analyse ways in which boundaries feature in the narratives of my participants. Durrheim and Dixon's (2001, 2005) analysis of discourse around South African beach desegregation, and the similar study of Dixon and Reicher (1997) focusing on white reactions to the relocation of a squatter camp, revolve around the issues of boundaries, showing that when the rigid legal boundaries of apartheid are lifted, white South Africans[7] still demarcate areas for themselves, retreat from spaces which appear to be becoming predominantly black and tend to experience desegregation as a violation of boundaries and an invasion of their territory. Desegregation is experienced as loss: loss of place identity (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000) and loss of home (Steyn, 2001: 156). Some of these themes also surface in my participants' stories.

Recently, a body of literature on language brokering has developed, most of it examining the experiences of the children of immigrants who find themselves positioned on the boundaries between their culture of origin and the culture and lifestyle of a 'host nation' (e.g. Hall & Sham, 2007; Tse, 1996; Weisskirch, 2006). While the four men's situation is different from that of immigrant children, the stories often portray them on the boundary of white and black spaces, in brokering roles, both in childhood and adulthood, usually with peers. I explore the nature and identity implications of this, in the lives of the four boys/men.

A number of writers, most of them drawing on postcolonial theory, study identities that are multiple, marginal or 'hybrid', in terms of race, ethnicity or group membership, specifically within the postcolonial context. These have helped me to look at the situation of my participants, whose language competences give them multiple and marginal membership of racial groups within racially divided South Africa.

Hall's (1992a: 310) work on cultural productions highlights identity formations which are 'the products of the new diasporas created by the post-colonial migrations'. These diasporas have 'translated' (translate meaning 'bear across') certain people forever from their homelands, though they retain links with those places of origin and their traditions.

> They must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them. Cultures of hybridity are one of the distinctly novel types of identity reproduced in the era of late-modernity, and there are more and more examples of them to be discovered. (Hall, 1992a: 310)

Hall (1992a: 310) indicates that this kind of '"hybridity" and syncretism – the fusion between different cultural traditions' is seen by some as a source of creative power, but by others as having dangers, attached to the '"double consciousness" and relativism it implies'. My participants could also be seen as 'translated', descendants of settlers in colonies where they are outnumbered by local indigenous peoples, but maintain ties to the culture of their origin (English, Afrikaans or German). In their stories, I look for the fruits of that 'translation': instances where their hybridity is seen as dangerous, and occasions when it is a source of creative power.

Bhabha (1994) says of postcolonial identity,

> we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion… These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.
>
> It is in the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. (Bhabha, 1994: 1–2)

This quote encapsulates some of the reasons why I was interested in the experience of white multilinguals who could speak isiXhosa: I was fascinated by the possibilities of 'new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration' in their lives; the possibility for negotiation of 'the idea of society' and of 'nationness' in South Africa (Bhabha, 1994: 1–2).

I associate Hall's concept of hybridity and Bhabha's of 'in-between' spaces with Bakhtin's notion of carnival. In his analysis of the work of Rabelais, Bakhtin (1981: 206) describes its folkloric bases as being in a 'pre-class, agricultural stage in the development of human society' in which, he says, 'life is one' (Bakhtin, 1981: 209), and there is not yet any stratification into social classes, any distinction between public and private or sublimation of elements such as sex. Folkloric time was re-enacted in the

carnival festivities of medieval times when 'a second world and a second life outside officialdom' was created, 'a world in which all medieval people participated … during a given time of the year' (Bakhtin, 1965: 6). During this time, all hierarchies and norms of decency were suspended; all truth and authority became relative. Carnival laughter was ambivalent: gay and at the same time mocking. Bakhtin (1981: 236) maintains that laughter is the one thing that could not be deformed, falsified or sublimated, as other aspects of the folkloric life were, as stratification took place. Laughter still has the capacity for the 'radical destruction of all false verbal and ideological shells that had distorted and kept separate…' (Bakhtin, 1981: 237). Laughter can take things down from their 'high' contexts, and laugh separations 'out of existence' (Bakhtin, 1981: 240).

Bakhtin's (1981) 'second world' of carnival can also be associated with a kind of space identified by Bourdieu (1991: 71), within private, as opposed to public life, where 'laws of price formation… are suspended', becoming valid again once the participants re-enter formal markets. These concepts enable me to analyse episodes in the narratives where colonial and apartheid hierarchies seem to have been suspended,[8] and to detect instances where the participants' background and linguistic competences give them access to carnival or hybrid spaces.

Language Learning as Participation

The theories of language acquisition that I have found appropriate for this study come from the 'social turn' in SLA (Block, 2003) which give much more attention than mainstream approaches do to 'the complex relationship between relations of power, identity and language learning' (Norton Peirce, 1995: 17).

Mainstream SLA studies have tended to see the acquisition process as one where the individual learner uses strategies to deal with input (see Ellis, 1994; Krashen, 1981, 1982, 1985) and interaction in the target language, in order to be able to produce output (the input-interaction-output [IIO] model). While I do not doubt that language learning involves cognitive processes working on interactive language 'input' and 'output', facilitated or constrained by 'affective' and other contextual and personality factors, the data that I am examining offer much more insight into the social context of learning than into cognitive processes.

The emphases of SLA theories which, up until recently, have constituted the 'mainstream', also do not speak to certain vital features of the unique situation which I am examining. The first of these is that although isiXhosa is not the language of inheritance (Leung *et al*.,

1997: 555) of the four men, it is also not quite accurate to call it their second language, as they learned it before or simultaneously with their heritage language. Secondly, much of language acquisition theory has been based on the assumption that most 'normal' people are monolingual, and that multilingualism is exceptional. This ignores the vast number of sociocultural communicative situations across the world where meaning and identity are negotiated (Block, 2003: 74–81) using and mixing multiple varieties of language, in communities of prolific 'heteroglossia' (Bakhtin, 1981: 115). For these four men, multilingualism is a normal part of their lives. Thirdly, until very recent times, SLA has been seen predominantly as an individual cognitive process that takes place in institutional settings, rather than a social process that takes place in naturalistic settings, such as those within which my participants acquired isiXhosa. Finally, as already mentioned, mainstream SLA theories have placed little emphasis on issues of social identity and power (Norton, 2013; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995), clearly key in the Eastern Cape farming context and in this study.

Language learning theories from the 'social turn' emphasise language learning as participation and socialisation, involving identity, within relations of power (e.g. Atkinson, 2011; Block, 2003, 2007a; Canagarajah, 2007; Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004; Norton, 1997, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), and draw on a number of disciplines outside of applied linguistics to enrich understandings of how languages are learned. These theories are not committed to a Chomskyan concept of a dedicated language faculty or 'universal grammar' within the brain, but either challenge (Watson-Gegeo, 2004: 333) or leave this question open, focusing on learning as a social activity, closely identified with use or practice, and linked with identity.

Norton (1997, 2000, 2013), a key theorist in SLA, finds mainstream cognitive constructs inadequate (see also Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2001, 2011). Her pioneering studies draw on feminist post-structuralist theory, and bring a more complex understanding of identity and power to the centre of focus in SLA. She supports Spolsky's (1989: 166ff.) argument that 'extensive exposure to the target language, in relevant kinds and amounts, and the opportunity to practise the target language are essential for second language learning' (Norton Peirce, 1995: 14), but rejects Naiman *et al.*'s (1978: 12) assumption that the amount of contact that learners have with target language speakers is a function of their motivation. She points out that affective factors are often 'socially constructed in inequitable relations of power'. Power relations affect

learners' 'voice', expanding or limiting the 'right to speak' and be heard in 'target language' communities, and can 'enable or constrain the range of identities that language learners can negotiate ...' (Norton, 1997: 412).

Departing from the concept of motivation, Norton introduces that of *investment*, relating this term to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital'. She argues that second language learners have an 'investment' in learning the target language, believing that they will gain something (material or otherwise) through knowing it. '[T]he notion of investment … [signals] the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it' (Norton & Toohey, 2001: 312). Learners may invest in the language itself, in certain varieties of it or in their 'own social identity, which changes across time and space' (Norton, 1997: 411). At certain stages in the learning process, learners will weigh up the costs of the investment against the benefits that it is likely to bring them, in certain cases withdrawing from the enterprise completely.

The men in my study certainly have a relationship to isiXhosa which is 'socially and historically constructed' (Norton & Toohey, 2001: 312), one which goes back through time and is fraught with contradictory identities, such as 'friend', 'supervisor', 'mentor' and 'privileged white superior'. In analysing their stories, I use Norton's concepts to explore their narratives for indications of ways in which they manage these contradictions and ambivalences through investing in particular language registers, roles and identities.

Important influences on the social turn in SLA have been sociocultural theories of learning, based on the writings of Vygotsky (e.g. see Lantolf, 2000, 2006, 2011), ethnographic language socialisation studies originally based in the discipline of anthropology (e.g. Duff & Talmy, 2011; Watson-Gegeo, 2004) and the model of situated learning or learning as participation (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Norton Peirce, 1995; Toohey, 2000; Wenger, 1998).

In looking at the accounts of the childhood activities and relationships of the four boys in my study, I identify evidence of the kind of sociocultural mediation and cultural artefacts mentioned within sociocultural theory (SCT), although I do not carry out detailed data analysis using this theory. I also make use of the sociocultural analysis of Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) in looking at accounts of shifts which require my participants to 'translate' themselves into new environments, at particular stages of their lives. Pavlenko and Lantolf examine autobiographies of bilingual writers, 'all of whom learned their second language as adults' (Pavlenko & Lantolf,

2000: 161), identifying phases of loss and reconstruction of identities which the immigrant writers go through as they 'struggle for participation' (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000: 155) in their new country.

Duff and Talmy (2011: 98) summarise the '(second) language socialization [LS] perspective', by asserting that 'social interaction with more proficient members of a particular community centrally mediates the development of both communicative competence and knowledge of the values, practices, identities, ideologies and stances of that community'. Watson-Gegeo (2004: 339–340) emphasises that this is a process in which learners are active agents, and that the activities in which language learners engage are always by their very nature political, and their contexts multidimensional and complex. '[C]ontemporary LS theory,' she says, 'is concerned with participation in communities of practice and learning, more specifically the learning process which Lave and Wenger (1991) called legitimate peripheral participation' (Watson-Gegeo, 2004: 341).

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) are not part of the SLA field of study, and do not emphasise the power dimension. However, their social learning theories have been utilised by researchers within the 'social turn' of SLA (e.g. Morita, 2004; Norton, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Norton, 2006; Toohey, 2000), and I have used them extensively in my study. Their concept of situated learning through peripheral participation in a community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998) speaks clearly to the process of learning within the context of the farm, described in the men's narratives. It is also relevant to the men's continued process of language learning and maintenance as they move into adulthood and the work environment. My research, like that of the contributors to Barton and Tusting (2005), who set out to critique and develop the CoP model within the linguistic field, has necessitated the insertion of a much stronger focus on inequitable power relations into the CoP paradigm.

People working in many different contexts have found Lave and Wenger's CoP model appealing and useful, and it has been used in a number of ways. Some have criticised the theory and identified its limitations, suggesting adaptations and expansions to it. According to Lave and Wenger (1991: 29), all learning is situated, and is part of social practice, which takes place in communities of practitioners or CoPs. The definition of CoP is somewhat fluid and ambiguous across works explicating and applying this theory, something which has been criticised. Barton and Tusting (2005) call Wenger's (1998) concepts 'slippery and elusive', but Cox (2005: 549), while criticising certain ambiguities in the definition of a CoP, notes that this ambiguity could also be a source of the 'longevity and fecundity of the

concept'. Wenger's (1998: 73–78) definition of a CoP is: 'a joint enterprise' characterised by 'dense relations of mutual engagement, organized around what the people are there to do', and a 'shared repertoire', including 'routines, words … ways of doing things … symbols… discourse … as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members' (Wenger, 1998: 83).

I choose to use the word 'community' more broadly, including in it Blommaert's (2005: 74) 'centring institutions', mentioned earlier, Wenger's CoP, institutions such as schools, universities and the military, as well as reified imagined communities such as 'isiXhosa speakers', 'white English speakers', 'white Afrikaans speakers' and 'white South Africans', as conceptualised by the architects of apartheid. In my analysis, I use the term *CoP*, where the type of community referred to fits well, according to my judgement, with Wenger's description above. Otherwise, I use the more general term *community*. The communities in which the four men in my study participated as children were the family, the farm and the school and local groupings of the broader abstract 'communities' of white and black South Africans. The farm, as the men describe it, fits well into Wenger's aforementioned CoP definition, as will be shown later. As far as the school is concerned, the classroom curriculum is irrelevant to 'situated learning' as defined in the CoP model; the practices being acquired in schools are those of 'schooled adults' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 97). As they moved into adulthood, my participants became part of a number of new communities, such as universities, the military, their own families, nuclear and extended, and recreational and workplace CoPs. According to Wenger (1998: 126), CoPs often belong to bigger 'constellations of practice', all involved in similar practices (e.g. Eastern Cape farms). He also emphasises that most people belong to a number of CoPs simultaneously, and that certain people take on 'broker' roles, communicating and interpreting between the members of one CoP and those of another.

Situated learning takes place, according to the CoP model, through legitimate peripheral participation in CoPs. This consists of 'modified forms of participation that are structured to give newcomers access' to the practice of the community, which is an 'on-going social interactional process' (Wenger, 1998: 100–102), involving 'the whole person, both acting and knowing at once' (Wenger, 1998: 47). This process does not stop or change for the newcomers; they participate with old-timers in a version of the ongoing practice. What legitimises the newcomer's participation can be a number of things, e.g. birth or sponsorship or some kind of application and screening process. Access to legitimate participation in the community of amaXhosa men, for instance, is through an initiation ritual. Access to

legitimate participation in a farm CoP is through ownership of the farm, appointment as a farmworker, marriage to the farmer or a farmworker or being a child of the farmer or a farmworker, as my participants and their playmates were. Access to legitimate participation in a white school during the apartheid years in South Africa was by virtue of age and skin colour.

One's identity as a legitimate peripheral participant enables access to learning. Without access, there is no participation; without participation, there is no learning; what newcomers learn *is* their practice; learning is doing. Peripherality and marginality are seen as distinct in Wenger's (1998) work. While neither constitutes full participation, peripherality assumes an 'in-bound trajectory' which everybody construes as including 'full participation in its future', whereas marginality 'closes the future' (Wenger, 1998: 166), even when it continues for a long time. An example of a marginal position is that of women who seek equal opportunity but in certain communities are constantly pushed back into 'identities of non-participation' (Wenger, 1998: 167). I explore the men's access to participation, as well as their peripherality and marginality, at different stages of their lives. As Lave and Wenger (1991: 53) say, 'learning implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person … learning involves the construction of identities … identity, knowing and social membership entail one another'. Wenger (1998: 153) maintains that identity formed through playing a role and becoming a member who is familiar with the community's repertoires, is a form of competence.

As far as language is concerned, Wenger (1998: 53) suggests that the central process involved in practice is the negotiation of meaning, something which 'may involve language, but is not limited to it'. Lave and Wenger (1991: 109) connect language with 'legitimacy of participation' rather than with 'knowledge transmission'. One has to learn to 'talk within' a practice, not to 'talk about' it. One needs to learn to talk in order to gain access to participation and then learn how full participants talk, as well as how they 'walk, work and conduct their lives' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 95).

Tusting (2005: 45) comments that 'almost all mutual engagement involves language, to a greater or lesser extent'. She believes that the role of language is inadequately acknowledged, conceptualised and analysed in the CoP theory and suggests that critical social linguistics could offer useful ways of doing this, thus extending the theory. Keating (2005: 109) also challenges the 'peripheral role that language and discourse play in this social approach to learning'. She criticises the fact that Wenger presents discourse as a resource, and language as a repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 129),

rather than seeing discourse and language as an integral part of social practice.

Eckert and others (Eckert, 1996, 2005, 2006; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, 1999; Ehrlich, 1999; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999) have used the CoP framework extensively in studies of language and gender. Moving away from abstract concepts of 'women' and 'men', and from the abstraction of gender and language practices from other aspects of people's multiple and changing identities (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992), they choose the CoP model over the concept of speech communities (Eckert, 2005) because it captures the interaction between social and linguistic change rooted in particular local communities. It also shows how people's linguistic practices change and adapt as they move from one CoP to another.

According to Wenger (1988: 90), CoPs function in order to reproduce themselves, and also to transform themselves. Newcomers participate together with old-timers, and move towards full participation, thus replacing old-timers and reproducing the CoP. In this sense, CoPs are conservative, making sure that what has been done in the past continues into the future, and that skills and repertoires are passed from one generation to the next. However, it is also possible for innovation and transformation to take place within practices, through interaction and conflict between newcomers and old-timers, and also when participants in one CoP carry skills and practices across to other CoPs in which they are also engaged, thereby introducing new practices or changing old ones. I look for instances where my participants conserve and reproduce practices and values from the farm CoP, and also instances where innovation takes place through conflict or when they move with their practices, values and language repertoires into contexts beyond the farm.

According to Wenger (1998: 173–187), people participate in communities primarily through engagement, but they can also participate through imagination and alignment. We can participate in imagined communities and take on identities as members through reading, writing and other creative and artistic activities, or through projecting hopes and dreams of membership of a community in the future. We can also participate through alignment in a community which is too large and broadly dispersed for direct engagement (e.g. the Free Market Foundation or the Endangered Wild Life Trust), through aligning ourselves with its ideals and goals. Norton (2001; also Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko & Norton, 2006) makes use of Wenger's (1998) concepts of participation (and non-participation) in communities, both actual and imagined, to enhance understanding of 'how learners' affiliation with imagined communities … affect[s] their

learning trajectories' (Kanno & Norton, 2003: 242). In the men's stories, I look for instances of engagement in communities beyond the farm through imagination and alignment, and how this relates to their lives and their language learning trajectories.

The issue of power, closely linked with identity, is something which is inadequately developed in the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). The CoP model of learning can be seen, particularly in Lave and Wenger (1991: 64), as a development of the notion of apprenticeship, which they acknowledge has been tarnished by its association with situations where exploitation of apprentices was rife, noting that 'relations of power exist in every concrete case', some more exploitative and some more egalitarian. While Wenger (1998: 77) acknowledges that relationships in a community may include 'pleasure and pain, amassment and deprivation, ease and struggle …' and that CoPs can be 'the locus of resistance to oppression and the locus of the reproduction of its conditions' (Wenger, 1998: 85), he makes little reference to the power relationships which are implicit in every CoP, failing to keep a promise made in Lave and Wenger (1991: 42) to include 'unequal relations of power … more systematically in [the] analysis'. Cox (2009: 529) calls this a 'critical failing', and Keating (2005: 43) observes that Wenger's model does not 'seek explicitly to understand and challenge the role of discourse in perpetuating broader relations in contemporary society … particularly relations of inequality'. Barton and Hamilton (2005: 14) make the vital point that 'framings provided by theories of language, literacy, discourse and power are central to understanding the dynamics of Communities of Practice, but they are not made explicit in Wenger's formulations'. My chosen theoretical orientation has provided this essential framing for the CoP model, an appropriate one for many aspects of this study. Roles and identities are strongly linked to issues of institutional power in the postcolonial and apartheid context in South Africa, and specifically in the farm CoP, which is in many ways feudal and conservative. This means that Wenger's useful theoretical model, inadequately developed in these essential ways, needs to be underpinned by post-structuralist conceptions of power, discourse and identity.

This chapter has described and justified the life history methodology and post-structuralist framework and associated concepts which underpin the study described in this book, also giving some detail about the theorists who have been used in analysing the life histories of the four men. In Part 2, I move on to analyse extracts from the life histories. Chapters 3 through 6 follow the men's histories and development chronologically, while Chapter 7 is organised around the theme of space.

Notes

(1) I began with individuals whom I had encountered personally, and asked them to refer me to other white people fluent in isiXhosa.
(2) The terms *identity* and *subjectivity* are used in different ways by different authors. Weedon (1997, 2004), for instance, uses 'subjectivity', associating 'identity' with the essentialised liberal humanist concept of a unified, coherent individual identity. Hall (1992a, 1992b, 1996) uses the terms somewhat interchangeably, and Canagarajah (2004: 267, 268) makes the following distinction: 'our historically defined *identities* (such as race, ethnicity, and nationality) … and ideological *subjectivity* (i.e. our positioning according to discourses … which embody values according to the dominant ideologies in the society)'. I use the terms interchangeably, but adhere to different authors' preferences when referring to their work. I try to be explicit when a particular form or aspect of identity is being referred to.
(3) I take the position that ideologies are implicit in discourse. They are normalised patterns of thought and behaviour, reinforced by and reinforcing power relations in society. (See Blommaert, 2005: 158ff.)
(4) Numerous languages, language varieties and registers.
(5) 1994 marked the beginning of the democratic dispensation in South Africa.
(6) Of the Bakhtin school.
(7) This may also be true of black South Africans, although they are not so much the focus of these studies, and do not come from a past where their 'territory' was protected. Rather, it was violated.
(8) See discussion of hybrid space in Chapter 6.

Part 2

The Life Histories

3 Childhood: Intimacy and Separation

*it was a working farm, so you know, everything was done in Xhosa. My father is fluent in Xhosa, he'd speak to everybody in Xhosa, (**Liz**: Mm) my mother was fluent in Xhosa (**Liz**: Mm), um, so everything around me was happening in Xhosa (**Liz**: Mm) …that's actually where I really remember becoming Xhosa, in a way.*

After going to school:

*…when I used to go back to the farm like on holidays and things, - I felt as though - I'd shifted, something had shifted (**Liz**: Mm), like I, I wasn't as [pause] as embracing somehow.*

Brendon, transcript 1.18,26,12

In this chapter, I look at the childhood narratives of my four participants, examining them in the light of recent trends in second language acquisition (SLA) theory and research representing a 'social turn' (Block, 2003). I look at the potentials for language learning and identity construction portrayed in the participants' narratives of life in the farm community of practice (CoP), initially in their very early relationships with childminders, and then in their participation with isiXhosa-speaking peers and adults in the practices of the farm community and neighbouring communities. From there, I look at the move to school, the levels of disruption portrayed in the life of each boy, consequent shifts in identity and language competence and ways in which each boy worked, in his story, with the ambivalence created by this major change in his life circumstances.

Most of the extracts used in this chapter come from the first interview which I held with each man. I had met with them beforehand to explain the purpose and nature of my research, and had prepared them for the kind of information that I was going to ask for: 'I will ask you to tell me the story of your life, with a particular focus on experiences which relate to your familiarity with and fluency in isiXhosa' (information sheet on three meetings). I had positioned myself as a researcher interested in bilingualism and identity, and had positioned them as special in the sense that they were white and fluent in isiXhosa. I assume that this made them

see me as sympathetic; they seemed quite excited at the opportunity to speak about their language skills and how they had developed. When we met and once we had greeted and I had settled them comfortably in my husband's study (or in the case of Brendon, at a bed and breakfast in the town where he worked), I switched on my recorder and asked them my opening question again. In the case of Brendon, who is the first of the men that I quote, I assumed that he understood what I wanted, and neglected to explain fully about the language dimension.

(1) **Liz**: You know basically - I'm asking you to tell me your life story, and … go for it!
(2) **Brendon**: You mean like kind of how I've been [inaudible]
(3) **Liz**: Yes, in relation to, in relation to your, you know, knowledge of Xhosa, of course, you know with a more of a focus on that, although kind of an overview of your life, but with a focus on how Xhosa fits into it. (B1.3–5[1])

We were both somewhat nervous to start with, but once I had clarified what I wanted, he spoke with little pause and with only minimal responses from me, until he had to leave in a hurry for another engagement. My research seemed to open a door for him to speak about that which he seems most passionate about (the role of isiXhosa in his life), and to share his thoughts about the impact of his early socialisation on his identity, something he has obviously thought deeply about over time. He clearly positioned me as sympathetic, almost placing me in a therapist role. He commented at the end of our meetings that they had felt something like therapy sessions. With other men, especially George and Ernie, I needed to give more prompts at certain stages in the interview. I will comment on these as it becomes relevant to do so.

In Chapter 2, I explained my choice of language acquisition theories from the 'social turn' (Block, 2003) in terms of the fact that they emphasise issues of power and social identity, key to an understanding of the South African postcolonial and apartheid context, where roles and identities are often determined by institutional power. Eastern Cape farm communities, such as those in which the four boys grew up, are in many ways feudal and conservative, and roles and identities are racialised, with the white farmer being the owner and employer and the black labourers the employees. Power is concentrated in the hands of the farmer (almost always a man) by virtue of his ownership of the land, to which he has the right by virtue of his whiteness. Any institutional power that farmworkers may have within the farm is power that is delegated to

them by the farmer, although clearly they can and do exercise power through multiple acts of resistance and agency. Until recently, there was no path to the power position of farm ownership for a farmworker. Even now, this is very difficult, as we saw in Chapter 2. Empowerment opportunities for farmworkers and their children were also in the farmer's hands: some farmers established farm schools on their farms, and allowed and sponsored farmworkers' children to study beyond primary level; others did not. Where farmers struggled financially, workers shared their misery. Their dependency was (and still is, to a large extent) absolute, and unionisation still difficult, even 18 years into democracy. Brendon gives his view of this dependency relationship:

(1) **Brendon**: I remember the old man[2] even saying to, to his son, who was my friend, saying, Look, really, you know, the only thing you need to know in life is, is to follow the instructions that the white person gives you… (B1.87)

(2) **Brendon**: I think they had very restrained lives, um, - you know they they were basically completely restrained in terms of, my parents were their world, and there there was no - no ways that they could ever part. (**Liz**: Sho!) That was the way it was. (B1.89)

(3) **Brendon:** But you know, all those people still live in that area, those that are - still well. … Most of them don't have jobs, you know, (**Liz**: Mmmm) they're still stuck on farms … (B1.80)

Links, then, are very strong between the white family and the black people living on the farm. The fact that a farm is home as well as workplace means that everybody, old and young, male and female, is woven into the web of mutuality. Conflict and ambiguity is created by the dual nature of this mutuality: while purely farming interests and segregationist traditions dictate that it should be a 'functional' relationship, strong emotional ties also develop. The relative isolation of the farm, the consequent weaker links between the white family and their counterparts in white South Africa, and the interdependence of the white and black families for many essential things, means that white and black members of the farm community often relate in ways which could be seen as very intimate – an anomaly in terms of apartheid's grand plan, that black and white South Africans should live separate lives, in separate areas. The power structures of the broader society – sociocultural, economic and political – constrain this intimacy in a number of ways, putting up barriers and demarcating boundaries, particularly when it comes to the freedom of the Xhosa people to move into white space, such as the homestead.

In the following extract from my first interview with Riaan, he expresses his views on the role of isiXhosa in the 'constellation of practice' (Wenger, 1998: 127) to which each Eastern Cape farm CoP belongs:

(4) **Riaan**: I know of very few white commercial farmers [in the border areas of the Eastern Cape] (**Liz**: Mm) that even today cannot speak Xhosa. (**Liz**: Right... ja) It is - it is- I think it's partly culture, (**Liz**: Yes) and I think the other part, it is - probably - necessity (**Liz**: Right) to communicate more efficiently, and so on. (Ri1.7)

What Riaan says suggests that on most Eastern Cape farms, legitimate participants speak isiXhosa, although the white farmers and their family members do use English or Afrikaans when speaking to most other white people. In support of this, he also describes how most white friends coming over to visit from other farms were able to join in with the play going on among the black and white children, as they understood and spoke isiXhosa. He suggests that speaking isiXhosa is part of an 'Eastern Cape farmer culture', of their 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1991).

I now examine data relating to the boys' childhoods, focusing on three aspects of the participants' childhood years and their language development: isiXhosa-speaking caregivers; interaction with peers and other adults on the farm; and the move to school.

isiXhosa-Speaking Caregivers

Each boy was strongly influenced by isiXhosa-speaking caregivers or 'parents' in his early years. Riaan's mother died in childbirth, and he was taken on by an aunt and uncle whose children were already in their teenage years. In explaining his present attitudes towards Xhosa people and isiXhosa, Riaan says that his aunt and uncle

(5) … were to a large extent dependent with my upbringing, on those black people. (**Liz**: OK, ja, so you were brought up by them...) I was brought up by them, so - it's not only - the youngest little child, to keep him busy; they were largely dependent on those people. I mean, I can remember all their names, without exception. Without exception. (Ri1.112)

Riaan seems to imply here that the only way his aunt and uncle could take him on as their son was if they could hand him over into the care

of the black families on the farm, with whom he came to be *extremely* familiar. ('I can remember all their names, without exception,' par. 5.) They were not just 'keeping him busy'; they were vital to the process of his upbringing. An interchange between Riaan and me about his 'nanny' follows. He had not elaborated on his relationship with her before this request of mine:

(6) **Liz**: And the woman who looked after you? Tell me a bit more about her.

(7) **Riaan**: Old Nosisa. (**Liz** *laughs*) Yo, ja. No, she was like a mother to me; (**Liz**: Aha) she was like a mother to me, I spent a lot of time on her back[3] they say, I can't remember that. (**Liz**: Mm) And that's all she did, she looked after me. (**Liz**: OK, full time) Full time she looked after me. She went, wherever we went, she went with us. (**Liz**: Is it?) And I - weekends away to other people, she went with us, (**Liz**: Ah) and so on and even to Cape Town. (Ri1.114)

Riaan indicates that this black 'mother' was in the background of his life from the moment that he was handed over into the care of his aunt and uncle. He acknowledges that he does not remember the early years when he was carried on her back, but her constant physical presence is an indication of the influence she wielded, and of the closeness of the early relationship.

George too was taken care of by the mother of his friend Gigs during his early years spent on his grandfather's farm. He had been talking about how isiXhosa 'just grows to you' when your family all speak it, as his did, when I asked him about this 'nanny':

(8) **Liz**: (…) And how did that relate to the the woman who looked after you….the nanny?

(9) **George**: (…) she was always singing (**Liz**: Mm) and talking, talking continuously, (**Liz**: Ja) She used to talk continuously, even when she was - put me on her back (**Liz**: Ja) to put me to sleep, (**Liz**: Ja) she used to sing all the time (**Liz**: Mm), so - ja. I think if you get spoken to all the time, (**Liz**: Ja) you learn {the language} very quickly. (**Liz**: Mm) (G2.12)

Ernie also had a nanny, maybe not as 'full time' as in the situations of George and Riaan, but he also described her as 'a second mother'. He told me about her in the second interview, where I was asking additional questions to expand my understanding of what he had already told me.

(10) **Liz**: Umm, did you have a nanny when you were small?
(11) **Ernie:** Yes, (**Liz**: You did) Yes, (**Liz**: Oh, ok) Jane was her name.
(12) **Liz:** Ok, - ja, tell me a bit more about her, your relationship with her.
(13) **Ernie:** She was very good, in fact, and - it's possibly that's where I started learning Xhosa is by having her and so on and - whenever my parents went to church and so on she used to - look after me, and - she was like a - second mother to me. (E2.16)

It is significant that none of these three men spoke much about their 'nannies' until I asked a specific question about them. This emphasises how 'taken for granted' these women were in the families: a presence in the background, playing a vital but largely unacknowledged role. Of course, another reason is that the boys were preverbal when the 'nannies' were most prominent in their lives.

Brendon does not speak of having had a 'nanny', but speaks of his friend Sonwabo's parents as his own second parents, and describes how he was included in many events and rituals of the Xhosa people in the area. The intensity of the connection he felt with them is reflected in the fact that he has a sense that they, together with his own parents, are 'ancestors'[4] who are 'looking after him' (par. 15) even now in his adulthood.

(14) **Brendon**: And {Sonwabo and I} used to hunt birds together, I mean I used to partake in rituals, (**Liz**: Ja) with him, (**Liz**: Mm) and with the family (B1.16)
(15) Those two sets of parents, if you like, were to me like my, my, the people that initiated me into who I am, (**Liz**: Yes) you know, my biological parents and then Sonwabo's parents, (**Liz**: Yes) whom I respected very much until the day they died, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) um, unschooled, illiterate, (**Liz**: Yes) I would show her a picture, she would hold it upside down and say very nice, and she had absolutely no idea about words, or, anything like that, so it was a very different type of connectedness (**Liz**: Yes) that we had, um, and I actually think that was very special. I think if I do have ancestors those are the kinds of people that are out there looking after me, you know… (B1.85)

In describing his 'Xhosa parents', he says:

(16) [The old man] had a fantastic sense of humour, he used to make us laugh, as children, you know, he was a funny person, (**Liz**: Ja)

and, I used to like that release from my, sort of, biological parents, you know, (**Liz**: Ja) I didn't have to be as, together, (**Liz**: Ja) you know, with my Xhosa parents, (**Liz**: Yes) although she was very strict, Nomntu, (**Liz**: Mm) she would, if I did something wrong she would shout at us, (**Liz**: Mm) or, she would reprimand us or (**Liz**: Ja) she had quite a short temper (**Liz**: Mm) actually, (**Liz**: Mm) so we were scared of her (…) (B1.88)

(17) Anyway, then, he - when he'd slaughter the sheep {the old man would} always make (…) quite a profound kind of joke, you know, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) (…) I remember him always going [*spits, gestures*] looking to the heavens, (**Liz**: Ah) and I think it's just his way of saying I suppose that (…) life is transitory, but it also is is is precious, you know, precious at the same time. Things like that were quite meaningful to me, (**Liz**: Mm) I mean, taught me things, (**Liz**: Mm) like, it's not just about killing this sheep. (B1.91)

These descriptions are reminiscent of the caregiver–child relationships of the mainstream first language acquisition paradigm, and of the language socialisation and sociocultural models. Clearly, each child was exposed to a great deal of interactive 'input' in a positive affective environment, and there were opportunities here for sociocultural mediation within the zone of proximal development (ZPD; e.g. par. 17, where Brendon is learning, through this old man, values associated with life and death, implicit in the slaughtering of a sheep).

All the extracts give insight into a process of language socialisation, where a child is being initiated into a language and culture. I heard of George and Riaan sharing warm and continuous contact with women who carried them on their backs, talking and singing as they went about their daily business. Brendon told of 'the people that initiated me into who I am' (par. 15); of how he shared with them in rituals; enjoyed their humour; was reprimanded by Nomntu, his friend's mother; shared in daily farm activities like the slaughtering of sheep; and absorbed the significance with which his friend's father imbued such undertakings. We have no *direct* access to the types of interaction which these caregivers engaged in, and it is possible that they were not quite the same as those that they would have engaged in with their own children. In other words, in most instances (except perhaps, in Brendon's, to some extent) they were not socialising the boys into the isiXhosa-speaking community as such, but they were definitely playing a vital role in socialising the child into the farm community and its practices, including the use of isiXhosa and Xhosa customary practices and values.

While these caregivers were key influences in the men's preconscious years, it is the children they played with who loom largest in the men's memories of life on the farm.

isiXhosa-Speaking Peers and Other Adults

In describing their childhood on the farm, the participants paint a picture of an almost enchanted time-space, seething with life and activity, almost all of it in the company of black children (and adults, at times) and almost all of it taking place in isiXhosa. Bakhtin (1965: 7) writes, 'During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom'. The boys' tales describe what could be seen as 'carnival time'; a time when apartheid constraints on having black 'friends' and speaking black languages were, for the moment, waived. 'I didn't see colour', says Riaan (Ri2.57), even though the discourses and ideologies of the broader society made his lifestyle as the privileged adopted son of the landowner, with his personal black caregiver, possible. Ironically, what seemed to him to be freedom from the laws that separated black and white was an integral part of the 'white–black' owner–labourer arrangements on the farm, in the long run serving the white farmer's interests, as it taught him the language of his employees.

The descriptions which follow paint pictures of a lifestyle replete with isiXhosa 'input', particularly 'peer talk', which language socialisation researchers Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004: 291) note is 'a major site for both the development of discourse skills and the creation of childhood culture'. In speaking of apprenticeships, Lave and Wenger (1990: 93) note that 'apprentices learn mostly in relationship with other apprentices …' and that 'where the circulation of knowledge among peers and near-peers is possible, it spreads exceedingly rapidly and effectively'.

In the stories, playmates live on the periphery of the farm CoP, learning its practices as they engage in play, combined in some instances with work, and having legitimacy of access to the practices by virtue of their birth. Each boy also describes significant interactions with adult members of the farm community, and some relate also to members of the isiXhosa-speaking community who live in areas adjacent to the farm. Playmates and adults on the farm, as well as neighbouring isiXhosa speakers all have a role to play in the language socialisation and general socialisation of the boys, into the farm CoP and into the broader isiXhosa-speaking community. I will look at extracts from the childhood stories of each boy in turn, focusing on similarities and differences in their process of language learning/socialisation and the contexts in which this took place.

Riaan: 'Yo,[5] that was a nice part of my life!' (Ri1.92)

Riaan's childhood experience with black companions is presented as the most extended and undisturbed by intrusions from the white world, with Ernie's coming a close second. Both boys stayed at home throughout their schooling careers, and continued their relationships with playmates and their involvement in farm life after school and during weekends and holidays. Riaan's situation (a young, adopted child given over to the care of the isiXhosa-speaking workers) led to what appears to have been an almost total immersion in the lifestyle of the farm children and their parents. The description that follows was given in response to a request I made to each man once he had completed an outline of his life story, to describe some of the things he and his Xhosa companions did together in childhood. I thoroughly enjoyed Riaan's description, so rich with life and energetic activity, and became totally absorbed in the excitement of all the activities that he described. This can be seen in some of my following comments, e.g. 'OK! Wonderful! Mm' (par. 25), which were clearly encouraging to him, reinforcing his position as a person with an extraordinary story to tell, and mine as a sympathetic and responsive listener.

(18) **Liz**: OK (…) And tell me a little bit more about those early days on the farm and the friends that you had there, and your nanny and so on, and what you did with them, and the kind of environment and the…Ja.

(19) **Riaan**: Yo! There's nothing that we didn't do! *(both laugh)* Yooo! Yo Yo Yo, that was a nice part of my life! (**Liz**: Ja) We played! We played 120%! (**Liz** *laughs*) There's nothing that we didn't play. From crayons, oh we didn't have all these (**Liz**: Ja) TV games and stuff like that (**Liz**: No) … No we played … with sticks and catties[6] and wire cars[7], (**Liz**: Ja) … and dolosse,[8] you know those little oxen that you made (**Liz**: Yes) of the bone of - the knee bone - (**Liz**: Oh ja) We played with those. We hunted mice and we hunted birds, (**Liz**: ah) and set traps for birds...

(20) and worked, you could call it semi-play work. (**Liz**: Mm) Helped with the silage, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) and to compact the silage

(21) and sang songs while we did that (**Liz**: Mm) and laughed and joked with each other.

(22) And fought - (**Liz**: Mm) - ja, it wasn't just all hunky dory, we fought with each other and hit each other with a *kierie*,[9] (**Liz** *laughs*)

(23) and rode horses (**Liz**: Mm) and donkeys and worked with cattle and sheep (**Liz**: Mm) - it was our job to collect the sheep, (**Liz**: Mm) and the milking cows in the evenings, and (**Liz**: Mm) - ja, it was good days, ja and it was Xhosa! …

(24) Ja, we played soccer and we played rugby and...(**Liz**: Ja) traditional games – *umarabaraba*[10] … yooo! lots of things. We hunted with the dogs. (**Liz**: Ja)

(25) … In the evenings - we played until - it was absolutely dark, and then - There was an elderly man on the farm, (**Liz**: Mm) [he thinks back and remembers his name and surname] and here, just before it now gets very dark he used to call us and tell us … a story (**Liz**: OK! Wonderful! Mm). The Xhosa word for that is *intsomi*, (**Liz**: Right) and he used to tell us a story, sometimes if the story was too long, (**Liz**: Ah-ha) he had to stop and, say, carry on the next evening (**Liz**: Mm-hm Serial story) Serial story, ja. Yo, that was also interesting, always, to listen to those stories,

(26) and then we knew, after that, now we go our separate ways and we go and sleep and (**Liz**: Mm, mm, mm) ...do whatever we had to do...(**Liz**: Mm, mm) -

(27) Ja - we played. That was full-out Xhosa. (**Liz** *laughs*) There was never any other word spoken. (Ri1.92–94)

As they grew older, he tells how play was exchanged more and more for work. He and his friends sometimes worked with the span of oxen his father kept to plough in places inaccessible to more modern equipment.

(28) **Riaan**: As we got older, it was less of a play and more of a work, we were forced to work, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) all of us. If you didn't work, you got a hiding! (**Liz**: Mm, mm, *both laugh*. Same treatment for everybody.) Same treatment for everybody…

(29) But there we had to make turns for instance to lead the oxen. (**Liz**: Mm) Now if you want a good hiding, that's where you get a good hiding. (**Liz**: Is it?) Ja... if you're not concentrating on what's happening at the back, (**Liz**: Ah) and you're turning too soon because remember they're not like a car that turns like that (**Liz**: Ja, *laughs*) - they turn like that - (**Liz**: Ah) and it's a lo:ng turn. If you turn too soon (**Liz**: Ja, then the) then the guy at the back can't plough or can't finish what he's busy with; (**Liz**: Ja) if you turn too late, then the oxen goes back into the land, (**Liz**: Ja)

if you try to stop too soon, the oxen hit you with their horns in the back; (**Liz**: Ah) if you, if they hungry and tired the oxen - and you want to un - er er er - to untie them, they will go at you. You've got to - Well, you shouldn't waste time, so you got to {hang} in together, and we made turns, (**Liz**: Mm) and its tiring, because you've got to concentrate the whole time, and you small, you young, (**Liz**: Mm) if you … walk in mud or in loose soil for more than 3 or 4 hours, you finished! (**Liz**: Mm) Then we make, make turns.

(30) And obviously sat there ... and wait, and played while you (**Liz**: Mm) waiting, and so on. (Ri1.102, 104, 105)

It is clear that Riaan was fully engaged in the play and socialisation activities of the amaXhosa children, as described in the background section (*dolosse*, *umarabaraba*, hunting, *iintsomi* in the evening, hidings). Together, he and his friends were also involved in farm work, horse-riding, ploughing with the ox span, as well as more Western pastimes (crayons, rugby, picture books – mentioned elsewhere – that they read and looked at together, with Nosisa, when he was sick).

In spite of its Western aspects, for Riaan the farm CoP was fundamentally a Xhosa milieu, and there is evidence, in his comments on traditional tales and elsewhere on special names and nicknames, that he was exposed to rich, idiomatic isiXhosa. In his story, he indicates that isiXhosa was spoken at all times, except on the rare occasion that 'townspeople' came to visit. He presents isiXhosa as his strongest language, spoken even when white friends from farms came to play. He indicates that he spoke isiXhosa even with his adoptive parents, though he knew some Afrikaans and a little English. He told later how older white people who knew him as a child would still address him in isiXhosa when they met him in the street as an adult.

The 'dense relationships of mutual engagement' (Wenger, 1998: 73) characteristic of CoPs are apparent in Riaan's descriptions of the children's play and work, e.g. in his description of working with the oxen (par. 28–30). The intense interactions and negotiations which take place include 'disagreement, challenges, and competition' as 'forms of participation' (Wenger, 1998: 77). '[I]t wasn't just all hunky dory', says Riaan. '[W]e fought … and hit each other …' (par. 22).

Their activities are leavened by 'enabling engagement' (Wenger, 1998: 74), or what Cook (2000) and Rampton (1999) (as cited in Block, 2003: 70–71) call 'ludic talk' or 'language play'. Riaan often refers to laughing, joking and singing (par. 21), all an integral part of language socialisation.

In the midst of their enthusiastic play, they also had what Wenger (1998: 47) calls 'well-defined roles', just as rural Xhosa children did. '[I]t was our job to collect the sheep … and the milking cows in the evenings' (par. 23). There were clearly defined 'ways of doing things', e.g. ways of working with the oxen, bringing in the cattle in the evenings, getting ready for bedtime. There were also consequences when prescribed routines were not followed: 'If you didn't work, you got a hiding!' (par. 29). Other repertoires of CoPs (Wenger, 1989: 83) or cultural artefacts (in sociocultural terms) which are apparent in his description are: tools, e.g. sticks, catties, wire cars, *dolosse* (par. 19); stories (par. 25); and, of course, language ('it was Xhosa!', par. 23; 'That was full-out Xhosa', par. 27). These powerful statements indicate that isiXhosa was synonymous with Riaan's whole way of life at that time. This is evidence for Keating's (2005: 109) contention that language is accorded too peripheral a role in Wenger's model of learning. Here, language socialisation was not happening as something separate, but was an integral part of socialisation as a whole. Riaan was fully invested in the language (Norton, 1997: 411).

Riaan also describes what happened on the rare occasion that a white child who couldn't speak isiXhosa came to play:

(31) **Riaan**: Occasionally some townspeople came to visit on a Sunday afternoon, but (**Liz**: Mm) that rarely happened - then we had to adjust - even then, I had to basically - say for instance I had an English-speaking friend, or an Afrikaans-speaking - couldn't understand Xhosa, I had to play the middle man, which was sometimes a difficult situation, I had to repeat everything, I didn't have <u>time</u> to repeat everything. (**Liz**: Mm, mm)

(32) And one of the two groups eventually felt left out of the game and left. (*laugh*) (Ri1.97)

Wenger (1998: 103ff.) explains how CoPs intersect and overlap with other CoPs, and have relationships with the wider world. With children who do not know isiXhosa, Riaan has to play what Wenger (1998) calls a 'brokering' role (see pars. 27, 28).

> Brokers are able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable co-ordination, and – if they are good brokers – open new possibilities for meaning… The job of brokering … involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives… Brokering often entails ambivalent relations of multimembership… Uprootedness is an occupational hazard of brokering… Brokers must

> often avoid two opposite tendencies: being pulled in to become full members and being rejected as intruders. Indeed, their contributions lie precisely in being neither in nor out. (Wenger, 1998: 110)

This quote speaks of the function of language to include and exclude. Because South African communities were (and are) so divided along race, and therefore language lines, the inability to speak one of the languages associated with a particular group inevitably leads to exclusion from the 'space' of that community. Riaan was not excluded from black or white space by language, so he could choose how much language brokering he wanted to do, knowing that if he failed to do it, one group would be left out. This was a position of some responsibility and ambiguity, leaving him, in some ways, 'neither in nor out' (Wenger, 1989: 110). Riaan says that this was 'a difficult situation' (par. 31) for him. What he says suggests that he had little patience with these children who didn't understand isiXhosa: 'I didn't have time to repeat everything' (par. 31). It seems that, at this stage, he often succumbed to one of the 'opposite tendencies' referred to above, because he says that 'one of the two groups … felt left out and left' (par. 32). His laugh at the end of this statement may signify unease with having abandoned the one party (one suspects, possibly the white children), or glee at the predicament of the 'left out' ones; isiXhosa was the language of power in this situation, and those who did not know it were at a distinct disadvantage. Maybe it was a rueful laugh, reflecting on how unworkable it was to mediate between these different parties of active boys.

We have seen, then, that this farm conforms, in many respects, to the description of a CoP, and that Riaan and his playmates had legitimate status and full access to peripheral participation. This meant that they were able to learn the repertoires of the farm, which included the language of communication, through mutual engagement within the community. Riaan's process of learning fits in well with the CoP model; he moved more and more fully into the life of the farm as he grew up, and played his part in the reproduction of its practices.

Ernie: 'They were like my brothers' (E1.26)

Ernie's parents were both direct descendants of the German settlers who immigrated to the Eastern Cape in 1858. Ernie was an only child, born 15 to 20 years before any of the other three participants. The first extract that follows was part of his response to my initial invitation to tell his life story.

(33) **Ernie**: Most of my friends were black boys (**Liz**: Yes) Our farm adjoined the Q location[11], (**Liz**: Ok) and that's where they came from and we used to play together (**Liz**: Umm, umm) and that is where I picked up my Xhosa (E1.6)

Once he had finished talking about the events of his life, I asked more about his relationship with the boys.

(34) **Liz**: Umm, and when you went to school what changes took place then in terms of, you know, playing with these kids? (E1.43)

(35) **Ernie**: They still used to come to me in the afternoons and so on, when we finished homework they - we'd play together again, go help get the cattle and the sheep (**Liz**: Umm, umm) and feed the poultry together (**Liz**: Umm, umm, umm,). Ja, we sort of did everything together. (E1.43, 44) (…)

(36) **Liz**: So you said you did stick fighting. (**Ernie**: Yes.) What were the other things that you did? (E1.45)

(37) **Ernie**: We used to make clay oxen (**Liz**: Oh, ja) play and - what else - oh, we used to get up to all sorts, we made spans of oxen and these little model wagons and clay and - (**Liz**: Umm, umm) and we even used to use *mielie*[12] cobs and these thorns from thorn trees and Mimosa trees and the - for horns on these cattle, and - - Yes, ja, we even used to *inspan*[13] these little *toktokkies*[14] as - (**Liz**: Oh, yes [*both laugh*]) Ja - and my dad used to have a lot of beehives and I (**Liz**: Umm) always used to help him (**Liz**: Umm) with taking the honey out and extracting the honey and (**Liz**: Umm) [pause] (E1.46)

Ernie's story portrays him involved with Xhosa boys in play activities similar to those we have heard about from Riaan, using 'artefacts' and 'repertoires' such as mielie cobs, thorns, clay oxen and *toktokkies* (par. 37). Elsewhere he mentions stick-fighting and hunting. He and his friends are also mutually engaged (Wenger, 1998: 83) in the 'practices' of the farm CoP. He mentions how they worked together, fetching the cattle and sheep and feeding the poultry (par. 35). Later, he speaks of helping on the land and milking the cattle. In all of these undertakings the language used is isiXhosa.

A difference between his and Riaan's case is that these boys are neighbourhood boys from the nearby location. The relationship between the family and the local people seems to have been close; elsewhere, Ernie spends time relating the story of a black boy who could not hear or speak,

who had cast himself upon the mercy of the family and adopted Ernie's parents as his own. In spite of his inability to speak, communication was clearly good between the two boys, and he and Ernie grew up side by side.

In the third interview, I asked a question which I had hoped would elicit a story about his inclusion in Xhosa culture, rather than about the boys' involvement in the farm activities. His response took me by surprise, but resonated with the early history of the German settlers:

(38) **Liz:** (…) Can you think of any experience which (…) made you feel particularly included in the Xhosa culture and community? Or particularly close in a way to the Xhosa way of life and so on?

(39) **Ernie**: I think mainly being on a farm we didn't have the facilities that the people had in the towns so we sort of lived almost the same, there was no electricity, there was no water laid on and that sort of thing (**Liz**: Umm) and I think that's one of the main things that made you feel included, you know, experiencing the same disadvantages, I should say. (E3.28)

Another difference between his situation and Riaan's is that Ernie and his friends were often involved in activities together with his father, whom he later named as the strongest influence in his life. His father's beehives are mentioned in par. 37, and elsewhere he speaks of going trout fishing together with his dad and his Xhosa friends. He and his parents conversed in isiXhosa, together with some German, which was clearly not very dominant, as it later gave way to English as the language of the home.

While Riaan, in his childhood narrative, positions himself as a boy enjoying himself with his friends, Ernie's story shows him exhibiting adult maturity and independence from a very young age. His 'farmer' identity is a very enduring part of him, and we see him continuing with farming throughout his adult life, holding down other jobs at the same time. His story portrays him becoming involved very early in the 'practices' of the farm CoP. As I pointed out above, he was involved with his friends in many farm activities. Most striking of all, in the extract which follows, we see him positioning himself as a farmer even at the early age of 10 or 11, when he farmed turkeys and started building up a flock of sheep. As part of our conversation about black adults in his life, I asked him a story-eliciting question:

(40) **Liz**: … can you think of any kind of stories or experiences involving er, those people, those black er adult people in your life? (E2.17)

(41) **Ernie**: Yes, there was - in fact that's how I started off - er, farming with sheep. (**Liz**: Is it?) Is through - I had about 50, 60 turkeys, and I always used to walk in the lands and the one day, I went there, and there were a whole lot limping and some lying dead and the rest of it, and I found some of these little *tsotsis*[15] had come across from the location, not these that I knew (**Liz**: Umm) and they killed some of these turkeys and some they took home and the rest of it … and the one father - came and brought his son to us and his son was one of the guilty parties - and he doesn't want any ill feeling, he'll - give me a couple of young sheep (**Liz**: Ok //to replace) // **Ernie**: to replace, he says, which he did, I didn't want to take them at first, and he says no, no, it's no more than right - and then another one came along with a couple of sheep, parent of one of the other little chaps (**Liz**: Ja) and I so I started up //**Liz**: a little flock // farming with sheep, yes. [*both laugh*]… {I was} about 10, 11 years of age at the time. (E2.18–20)

In the above extract, Ernie positions himself with the men from the location on equal terms. While he was a child, always subordinate to an adult in Xhosa society, he was also a white child, and black people needed to be careful to remember the 'superiority' of whites. His interaction with the adult Xhosa men is evidence of the power of being white. In spite of his youth, adult black men are deferring to him, apologising to him for the behaviour of their sons, compensating him for his stock losses. Stock of any kind was a very valuable asset in Xhosa society, but it is apparent that these men felt that they could not afford to antagonise their white neighbours. Their insistence on 'making right', enabled him as a boy to build up quite a valuable flock, improving the assets of his white land-owning family.[16] The laugh which we shared in par. 41 expressed his pride, I think, and my incredulity. I was astonished at his early entry into farming, but at that time still accepted the Xhosa men's gesture as something 'normal', showing my own identification with the discourses of inequality.

If we think of the farm as a CoP, it is clear that Ernie became a full participant at a very young age, moving into full fluency in isiXhosa through engagement in the practices of his world, where isiXhosa was the dominant language. He interacted freely with children and adults in the surrounding community, drawing neighbourhood boys into the practices of the farm and moving in and out of their world (and their community) as the boys played, fought and hunted together.

While he interacts with the broader isiXhosa-speaking community, with which his family had much in common, as is shown in par. 39, he retains the farm community and his parents as his anchor, not becoming socialised into the Xhosa community itself to any significant extent, though he says, near the beginning of our final meeting, that he has absorbed some of its values:

(42) **Liz**: So, maybe I know there are things you wanted to add (**Ernie**: Yes, yes.) to what you said last time, maybe we can start with that… (…) (E3.22)

He told of opportunities that had opened up for him because of his isiXhosa fluency, and then:

(43) **Ernie**: (…) and the third item was, I learnt through my little black friends when we were small how sharing they were (**Liz**: Yes) they would share the last mouthful of food with each other (**Liz**: Yes) and I learnt a lot from that (**Liz**: Ja, ja) how they used to share (…)
(44) **Liz**: (…) and would you say that you've kind of adopted that way?
(45) **Ernie**: Yes, yes, I think that it takes a person's selfishness away by getting that experience. (E3.24, 26)

Ernie is part of an age-old process whereby practices are passed down from father to son, and although he grew up in times when whites had many more advantages than blacks, his story has echoes of earlier times for the German settlers, when boys took on adult responsibilities at an early age, and when settlers struggled through times of hardship side-by-side with Xhosa and Mfengu people (see Brodrick, 2009).

George: 'I used to spend most of my time with ol' Gigs' (G1.11)

For George, like Ernie, his father is the greatest influence in his life, and he portrays himself as part of an ongoing family tradition of speaking isiXhosa, handed from grandfather to father to son.

(46) **George**: My Dad, he's excellent with Xhosa; he speaks it, reads it, writes it, he went to a black school. (…) He was taught what in those days was called Bantu Education!
(47) **Liz**: Is that a fact, hey?

(48) **George**: My grandfather said, there's no school, there's no money to send you to a fancy school; here's a school on the farm, you'll go to that school. And it was a black school. (**Liz**: Ja ja) And the Department of Education have still got a project of my Dad (**Liz**: Mm) that he did on the Xhosa language. (G1.101–104)

George is very proud that all the members of his family speak isiXhosa, and that his sons are continuing the practice, one of his sons speaking it better than he or his wife does, according to him. He characterises the register of isiXhosa that he speaks as 'kitchen Xhosa'.

(49) My kids all three speak it fluently (**Liz**: Mm mm); that's also not from learning it, they - or learning it at school, put it that way (**Liz**: No, no), because they're not taking Xhosa yet at school (**Liz**: Ja), also just from having friends (…) my middle one, (…) (**Liz**: Mm), he's about the best in Xhosa (**Liz**: Is he?) because he gets all the qi's and the xi's[17] and all that right (**Liz** *laughs*) which I also sometimes battle with (…) (G1.22, 24)

(50) um the Xhosa we speak, I think we call it what they call it - Kitchen Xhosa (**Liz**: Mm) - it's not the genuine, genuine - um - but we can understand it and speak it (...) I can read it, I can't write it, 'cause I don't know the alphabet. (G1.25)

This family tradition is also one of farm life, or, in the absence of a farm, of rural life and outdoor pursuits, often shared with isiXhosa-speaking people. As part of his response to my question about the greatest influences in his life in Interview 3, George speaks of his parents' divorce, and his attachment to the kinds of outdoor activities he engaged in with his dad:

(51) **George**: (…) but in the end I managed to get through to my Mom that my Dad could give me more in life than what she could, not meaning it in a bad way, (**Liz**: Mm) and ja - then I - my Dad got custody of me, (**Liz**: Mm) which I'm very grateful for (**Liz**: Mm) (...) I'm trying to do the same with my boys, (**Liz**: Mm) give them everything that I can - (**Liz**: Mm) teach them fishing, hunting, - (**Liz**: Mm) outdoors, which I probably would never have done, if I'd lived by my Mom. (**Liz**: Mm – mm - mm) (G3.82, 83)

The period that George spent on a farm as such was shorter than that of any of the other boys. The farm belonged to his grandfather and he only

stayed there for periods, and then visited at other times. Of his stay on the farm, he says:

(52) That is where I started speaking Xhosa (**Liz**: M-hm) because (…) all my friends were little *kwedinis*[18] (**Liz**: Mmm Mmm) and there was one particular guy, his name was Gigs (**Liz**: M-hm), and him and me were great pals (**Liz**: Mmm mm) and I used to spend most of my time with ol' Gigs. (**Liz**: Mm) (G1.10, 11)

As part of my request that he tell me more of the kind of things that the boys did together, he said:

(53) Gigs used to sleep in our house, when I was on the farm. He used to come and sleep in the house with me um… (G1.70)

The fact that George repeats the information about Gigs sleeping in the house probably indicates his recognition that the situation of a black boy sleeping in a white people's house might be surprising to me. The rest of his response to my request tells of activities similar to those described by Riaan and Ernie, such as riding horses and donkeys, hunting birds and mice, which he and Gigs cooked and ate, working with his doves and making and playing with wire cars. An extract about these cars reflects the way that the power relations of South Africa beyond the farm are mirrored in the children's world.

(54) (…) I had quite a lot of wire cars, Gigs taught me how to make them (**Liz**: Mm), and um, ja, I was the traffic cop, as a kid, 'cause I had the traffic cop car (**Liz:** Ah-ha), and we had to tie it to a red car tube. We would cut it and wrap it round our wheels; that was our tyres, and if you never had a tyre on you got a two cent fine. (**Liz**: OK. *Laughs.*) That's how we used to make money from the other little {kids}. *Laughs.* (**Liz**: OK. *Laughs.*) (G1.67, 68)

In this children's game, George takes on the more powerful position of the traffic cop (par. 54), while his friend, in spite of having taught him how to make the cars, is in a more dependent role, and the other children are exploited. Here, we see the power relations of the broader adult world echoed in the children's play; they are rehearsing future roles in the broader apartheid society, where the white person is in control and can impose fines on the black people. Gigs can only gain a share of that power by aligning himself with George, the white person.

In spite of the time limitations of George's period on the farm, he nevertheless seems to have learned the language within a community similar to that of the two boys already discussed, although his engagement did not go much further than the stage of play. His involvement in farm life was brought to an abrupt end by his parents' divorce, which took place when he was still in the early years of school. This initially placed him in the custody of his mother, who lived in town. A continued involvement with Xhosa people and their language went along with the identification he felt with his father and grandfather, who were (or had been) full participants and 'old-timers' on farm CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 57). One could perhaps say that George continued to belong, in his imagination (Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998: 175), to the farm CoP, and tried to extend the life of friendship and play which he experienced on the farm, into his adult life and the life of his family. He has a firm belief that the way to learn language is through friendship:

(55) And a couple of friends of mine, they reckon that it's such a difficult language to learn (**Liz:** Er) and all I said to them was, well, speak it - try and speak it (**Liz** *laughs*) you know, blacks do, get a black friend and ask them to teach you, it's the easiest… (G1.28)

Brendon: 'I … remember <u>becoming</u> Xhosa, in a way' (B1.12)

Brendon, like George, had one special friend in his early childhood. Being the younger of two brothers, with the elder away at school, Brendon was on his own with the Xhosa children on the farm most of the time. The extracts which follow all come from the first interview, when Brendon spoke continuously, with minimum responses from me, most of the time. Speaking of life on the remote farm that they moved to when he was five, he says:

(56) **Brendon**: (…) that's actually where I really remember <u>becoming</u> Xhosa, in a way. (**Liz**: Mm) I remember, I used to listen to the Xhosa radio station. (**Liz**: Mm) I wasn't allowed to listen inside, I'd have to go outside on the veranda, *[chuckle]* (**Liz** *laughs*), And then I'd listen to Xhosa radio with my friend,

(57) and that friend, um, his name was Sonwabo, (**Liz**: Mm) and he was my best friend at the age of around 4 or 5 and they came with us from {our previous farm}, (**Liz**: Mmm!).

(58) (…) whenever I would leave our farmhouse, I would go to their house, to their hut, (**Liz**: Yes) and we would share meals

(**Liz**: Uh-ha) and we used to hunt birds together and we used - we had a really intimate, close friendship (**Liz**: Ja) as young boys, um, and then his sister, Nomgqibelo, and –

(59) I remember, you know, there were lots of children that died in that - (**Liz**: Mm) on that farm (**Liz**: Mmm!) that would have been his siblings, they, I would imagine died of things like diarrhoea, (**Liz**: Sho) and I don't know what diseases were prevalent, because it was in the middle of nowhere (**Liz**: Ja) so the clinic only came once a month. (**Liz**: Mm) (B1.12–15)

(60) I only remember connections with Xhosa children. (**Liz**: Yes, yes) Um specially with Sonwabo, there were a couple of um kids, um, Vivi was the other guy and then Nongugquko, [Sonwabo's sister], was older, (…) she was in control of us, //**Liz**: *laughs* // **Brendon**: don't do that, do this, don't dare// - you know, kind of, and when we played games as well, like we also played lots of traditional games, and she'd always control everything, cause she was older, so (**Liz**: Mm) - and then often we'd just the guys would play, (**Liz**: Mm) certain things, (**Liz**: Mm) like, like if we were playing pretend circumcision, or whatever, (**Liz**: Mm) you know, then the girls wouldn't be involved in that sort of thing, so (**Liz**: Mm) (B1.70)

(61) {The} radio became like for me, I suppose when I look back on it, sort of like a symbol, (…) And we'd take this radio to the dairy, (**Liz**: Mm) where it was away from everybody and we'd listen and we'd dance around the milk separator (**Liz**: Mm) and do whatever it was we were doing, (**Liz**: Mm)

(62) And then of course, um, there was another boy come to play (…) from - we were sort of the last farm on the Transkei border, (**Liz**: Mm) so we used to go across the border to to this old man's place and we used to give him a packet of tobacco, Boxer tobacco, then he would produce his donkeys for the day, you know Sonwabo and myself and Vivi and a couple of other kids (**Liz**: Mm) and we'd ride around with these donkeys and then take them back at the end of the day. (B1.77, 78)

(63) and there was always this kind of feeling though that, my Xhosaness was something that wouldn't be accepted by my, especially by my late mother. (**Liz**: Ja) (…) (**Liz**: Ja) I mean you know, little things like why would I have to wear shoes, for example. Things that I couldn't understand, (**Liz** *laughs*) because none of my friends wore shoes. And why would I have to wear short pants when my friends <u>never</u> wore short pants like on Christmas

Day, it was long pants (**Liz**: Mm), that was just the way it was (**Liz**: Mm), it was uncouth to wear short pants, (**Liz** *laughs*) even though it was in the heat of summer. (**Liz**: Ja, ja) So I remember a whole lot of conflicting things that were going on at that time (…) (B1.17)

(64) Like, we would make a traditional fire, and my mother once came in there and we were boiling milk and she absolutely flipped, I remember she, she stamped on the fire and said we were going to burn the place down, [*both laugh*] you know, I felt really sort of confused, (**Liz**: Ja) like, why would she be screaming like this, (**Liz**: Yes, yes) or if we'd go out and we'd catch field mice, you know, (**Liz**: Mm) that was a great pastime, (**Liz**: Mm) and then we'd *braai*[19] them, you know like, (**Liz**: Mm) and and I remember once she came across us and we were we were *braaiing* these field mice sort of by the dairy, and she was - and we tried to tell her that we'd caught some birds, but of course she could see that these things had four legs, and //they were definitely not birds// [*laugh*]//. Oh, she was absolutely aghast, you know, (**Liz**: Ja) and we used to do this every day, like it was normal, you know (**Liz**: Ja) you catch field mice, *braai* them and eat them, you know (B1.67, 68)

Brendon's childhood story includes descriptions of many of the same kinds of activities as those detailed by Riaan and George, e.g. long hours of activities such as hunting birds (pars. 58, 64) and mice (par. 64), riding donkeys (par. 62), traditional games (par. 60), dancing to the radio (pars. 56, 61), together with isiXhosa-speaking children, all in isiXhosa.

He also describes the older sister socialising the younger ones into the norms of the community (par. 60), teaching them what ought and ought not to be done. In these extracts, one can identify evidence that Brendon was being socialised into the community of isiXhosa speakers, and not just the farm CoP. He is sharing meals (par. 58), playing traditional games and 'pretend circumcision' (par. 60), and preferring the norms of his friends, such as no shoes and long pants on Christmas Day (par. 63), to those prescribed by his mother.

Brendon constructs himself as shocked by the split he experiences between the black and white communities. Positioning himself on the side of his friend, he is torn by conflicts set up by his mother's expectation that her son would adopt the white colonial norms, e.g. of shoes and short pants (par. 63), and that Xhosa radio should not be played in the house, but 'away

from everybody' (pars. 56, 61). He recounts three episodes in his childhood when his mother becomes very upset by something he is involved in with his Xhosa friends, using very vivid terms to describe her extreme reactions: 'she absolutely flipped' (par. 64); 'she was absolutely aghast' (par 64); 'she was absolutely furious' (B1.79); 'violently, she flew into a violent rage' (B1.79).

It is clear from the deep impression that these episodes made on him, that he was very shocked by his mother's reactions on these occasions. They were completely unexpected, partly because he saw his mother as by nature 'a very timid person' (B1.79),[20] but also because it didn't fit in with his view of 'normality'. For him, what he was doing with Sonwabo was 'normal (…) you catch field mice, braai them and eat them' (par. 56); it was 'a great pastime' (par. 56). It seems, then, that his mother's reaction – her discourse – didn't make sense to him; it was, for him, abnormal, even 'wrong'. Block's (2007a) description of ambivalence applies here: his mother's reaction did not fit with his existing sense of how the world worked, and he was bewildered as to how to describe or classify what was happening. His mother, on the other hand, seems to have been struggling, on this isolated farm where they had little contact with other white people, to maintain colonial norms of what she saw as 'civilised' behaviour in her home, and gave way to reactions of panic and desperation when she felt she was losing the battle. 'I felt really sort of confused' (par. 64) says Brendon. In our second meeting, when we discussed these incidents again, he said, 'I still can't make sense of a lot of those things' (B2.94). The shock of these critical experiences (Block, 2007a: 22) left a lasting impression, and he still identifies with the 'normality' of his playtime with Sonwabo, rather than his mother's 'normality'.

Brendon's story is more nuanced and reflective, and has a more sombre tone than the other men's stories. This can be seen in his awareness of the children's deaths and how seldom the mobile clinic visited (par. 59), as well as in other extracts, such as those that follow, which describe experiences with adult members of the neighbouring black community.

(65) I even remember some tensions, you know (**Liz**: Ja) between my parents, and some of the Xhosa people (**Liz**: Mmm!) I remember like we had a vicious dog, for example, (**Liz**: Mmm!) a Boxer dog, which used to attack some of the Xhosa people (**Liz**: Mm), you know, and bit this one man's ear off, (**Liz**: Mmmmm!) and I remember something about him wrapping something around his head and then he got blood poisoning and nearly died (…) (B1.10)

(66) … a woman - who had throat cancer, - (**Liz**: Mm), I mean she had a gaping hole (**Liz**: Mmmm!), and they obviously couldn't cure – (…) - anyway, she died of the cancer (**Liz**: Mm), but, I remember all the all the stuff coming out of her, you know, and she was lying in a hut dying, and then she gave me this chicken, you know, a red chicken (**Liz**: Mm), and then Sonwabo's father made me a little *hok*,[21] you know, now and that little chicken to me was such a – (…) you know the fact that she gave me the chicken (**Liz**: Yes) and didn't give it to anyone else, you know, for me was, now, that I look back, (**Liz**: Yes) was profound (**Liz**: Mmmm), you know, she was dying (**Liz**: Mm) (…) (B1.71, 73)

In these two extracts (pars. 65, 66), we see him brought face-to-face with the deprivation, pain, poverty and death which were (and still are) so common in this remote black community.

The vividness of the pictures that he paints reflects the intensity of his emotional involvement in this community of isiXhosa speakers: the joy of dancing to the radio, away from other people who might draw him back into a white world; the horror of the dog biting off the man's ear and of the woman dying of cancer; and how moved and privileged he felt by the gift of a chicken from one who had so little, and was on the verge of death.

In these early years, then, Brendon seems to have been socialised into two communities simultaneously, and, from his mother's point of view at least, they were to be kept separate. While his birth parents (especially his mother) socialised him into white 'English-speaking' colonial norms, his 'Xhosa parents' and playmates socialised him into black 'isiXhosa-speaking' norms.

This is not quite the same as the picture painted by the other men, who appear to have been socialised more harmoniously into the reproduction and conservation of the farm CoP, where isiXhosa was the language of practice. There is also not so much evidence of participation in the work of the farm, in Brendon's story. These differences could be related to the ambivalence he experienced as he was pushed and pulled by the black and white worlds, even in his early years. It could also be related to the fact that his intense involvement in the Xhosa world was to come to an end more abruptly and comprehensively, and at an earlier stage, than was the case with Riaan and Ernie.

We shift our attention now to the situation of the boys when they went to school, which changed things for all of them, but to different degrees.

The Move to School

Particular social practices and discourses were the norm on Eastern Cape farm CoPs, and these practices constructed for the people who lived in those spaces an identity as 'Eastern Cape farmers'. The men have described some of the practices of shared play and work which were normal in childhood. Also normal was the practice of sending the white children to white schools when they came to schoolgoing age, at which time they left their black playmates behind on the farms. While the schools were different and separate CoPs, the practice of sending the white children to those schools was an integral part of the farm CoPs practice.

Martin-Jones and Heller (1996), using concepts from Bourdieu, emphasise the role of education in the production and reproduction of cultural identity and social inequality. They claim that it is particularly revealing to study this process in multilingual settings, since the 'language practices of educational institutions are bound up in the legitimization of relations of power among ethnolinguistic groups' (Martin-Jones & Heller: 128). The four white boys were now to be 'pulled straight'; they needed to be made aware of the 'legitimacy' of the apartheid way of life and the 'otherness' of black people. The school would move them into white discourses, through the official languages of English and Afrikaans.

The break with the world of shared play was functional in terms of farms in white South Africa, in that it tended to change the nature of the relationship between the white boy and his black companions, socialising him into the norms of white superiority of the broader South African society, and often into the norms of a particular brand of colonial or 'frontier' masculinity. This would enable him to become part of the power structures of white South Africa and perhaps return to the farm with the identity of 'boss'. In line with this, two of the participants characterise the register of isiXhosa used on farms as 'authoritative', a language for giving orders:

(1) **Riaan**: There's a huge difference between farm Xhosa, which is an authoritive [sic] (…) – 'Now you go and milk that cow' (…) and the normal conversation type of Xhosa (Ri1.46)
(2) **Brendon**: … I think I've always seen [my father] as someone who gives instructions in Xhosa,
(3) **Liz**: Yes, yes. // **Brendon**: you know what I mean// **Liz**: It's a different kind of Xhosa (B1.83)

This is borne out by Kaschula (1988: 102), who says that Eastern Cape farmers are 'encouraged by the social setting to speak a rather limited, instructional type of Xhosa – no doubt to create respect for the office of employer and delineate expected role relationships'.

For each of the men I spoke to, going to school represented a major rupture in his lifestyle. They were torn away from a world of constant play that they shared with black companions, and thrust into a new CoP with completely different companions and practices. The fact that their companions from the farm could not go too was a significant loss, at least in Brendon's case. So how did each of the four men remember the move to school?

George: 'Nothing changed' (G1.119)

When George started school, he spoke mostly isiXhosa, and couldn't really speak English very well, so other children teased him. He was lucky to have older brothers and sisters to help him with his English, which, according to him, largely resolved his difficulties. I asked whether going to school changed his relationship with Gigs:

(4) **Liz**: (…) I was also interested in what happened when you went to school; was there any kind of change in your relationship with him, or in the way that you...er...that kind of thing..

(5) **George**: No - nothing changed. I couldn't wait to get out of school, because (…) I used to go to the farm almost on a daily basis; my grandfather only farmed, I think it was 3 or 4 k's[22]… {out of town}, and I used to ride my horse from our house in town out to the farm on a daily basis. No, nothing ever changed between ol' Gigs and I... (G1.117, 118)

The more serious interruption to George's lifestyle was his parents' divorce, which eventually sent him into an Afrikaans environment and an Afrikaans school, away from Xhosa people, for a number of years. During those years, he became fluent in Afrikaans.

Riaan: 'That was the system and we didn't know about another system' (Ri2.47)

When Riaan started school, he was put into a boarding establishment; however, he says, 'that didn't work' (Ri1.17). He attributes this to two factors: that he was 'spoilt' and that he was 'not comfortable staying with

Afrikaans-speaking people all the time' (Ri1.18). The subtext here seems to be that he was used to spending a lot of his time with isiXhosa speakers. His family took him out of the hostel and from then on he commuted daily to school, an English-medium school until Standard 5,[23] and after that, an Afrikaans-medium high school. This gave him fluency in both official languages. This is how he speaks of school:

(6) **Liz**: And what about when you went to school; was there any … was that erm, you know … a big erm disruption in your sort of playing…
(7) **Riaan**: Yes, a huge disruption; (**Liz**: Ah) I still don't like school even today. No, that was a huge disruption in our lives; I hated it.
(8) **Liz**: That you had to go to different..
(9) **Riaan**: Shoes! Those shoes that we had to wear, and things like that, and the homework! Oooooh! That homework was a nightmare! (**Liz**: Ah) My poor old stepmother; I think she did all of it. (**Liz** *laughs*) Because really, that wasn't something that was considered at all; it wasn't part of this game - (*big laugh*) (Ri1.99)

Riaan speaks right over my suggestion that it might have been the separation from his friends that was a disruption, suggesting that it wasn't so much the separation that he felt painful, but the immersion into a completely different CoP, where people were trying to impose very different practices (e.g. 'shoes' and 'homework') on him. This was a very different 'game', with different rules, from the one on the farm that he revelled in. I questioned him in the second interview about experiences of being separated from his friends, in general:

(10) **Liz:** (…) And there was a moment where you said, you know, after the stories in the evening, you went off your separate ways, and I suppose that - must have happened quite a lot, you know that there was a point where things, where your togetherness came to an end (**Riaan**: Ja), and you had to go off in separate ways. How did that - Did you just take that for granted - // How did that feel to you..?
(11) **Riaan**: No, no it wasn't // ja, it wasn't nice, especially at the end of weekends, or the end of school holidays. (**Liz**: Mm.) Remember we didn't go to the same schools, (**Liz**: Sure) so it was a - You played now the whole holiday, or long weekend, or whatever, and now you had to split up again. But it didn't affect us because we knew we would get together again. (**Liz**: Mm) So it wasn't - it

> didn't affect - me that much. (**Liz**: Mm) It didn't really - it wasn't - it wasn't a big matter. (**Liz**: Mm) It was usual, life was normal; … That's the way it was, ja. That was the system and we didn't know about another system. (Ri2.47)

He explains that one thing which helped them accept the separation was the knowledge that 'we would get together again' (par. 11). Riaan, like Ernie, attended school as a day scholar throughout his school career, returning home in the afternoons, and spending weekends and almost all holidays on the farm. He told how when he arrived back home from school in the afternoons, he would often mount his horse and ride to the farm school where his friends were learning, sometimes joining in with their lessons, thus acquiring the basics of reading and writing in isiXhosa. This was a privilege that his friends had no freedom to reciprocate.

While Riaan was lucky that the school CoP and the farm CoP could continue in parallel, the mere fact that he and his friends were sent to different schools was an imposition of the dominant sociopolitical discourse, and meant an acceptance of the 'system' that separated them as 'normal'. Once he had made the adjustment to segregated schools, he had at his disposal two sets of routines and repertoires – two 'identities' – and became expert in switching from one to another when appropriate. This was the way things were; it was part of 'normal' practice on the farm, and in South Africa.

Ernie: 'You can't speak Xhosa there at school' (E1.57)

Ernie's experience was similar to that of Riaan in that he was also able to continue with his life of playing and farming after school, in the afternoons and during the holidays. He also learned the rudiments of written isiXhosa by '{getting} hold of my little friends' school books' (E2.40). For him, there has been no significant break with this farming lifestyle throughout his whole life. Of going to school, he had this to say:

(12) **Ernie**: - of course when I went to school I could only speak Xhosa. (**Liz**: Is it?) and German (**Liz** *chuckles*) and - of course the German fell away and the Xhosa still remained and then I learnt English and Afrikaans at school, and um, my first teacher was a Mrs. A, very strict. (**Liz**: Ja) and the principal was a Mr B, very nice old man (**Liz**: Uhah) (E1.4, 5)
(and later in the interview)

(13) **Liz**: Ja, so, - you know going to school was that a big - kind of - shock to your system, you know going into this place where there was a lot of –

(14) **Ernie**: No, it was a big change and then of course the biggest change of the lot was when I came from the small school - to {high school} which is - entirely different, you know (**Liz**: Yes) but it took me about 6 months to get used to it and it all fell into place again.(…)

(15) **Liz**: Umm, umm, but that whole process of changing languages hey?

(16) **Ernie**: Yes, that was a - change.

(17) **Liz**: How did you cope with that? Were there other people in similar situations to you?

(18) **Ernie**: Yes, yes there were quite a few like that, you know, found it hard at the start, my very first day I didn't like school I ran away, ran home [*both laugh*] I had quite a far distance to go

(19) **Liz**: You ran all the way home!

(20) **Ernie**: Yes! I packed up, and took my little suitcase and I was out the gate, the teachers [*both laugh*] - they had to persuade me to go back the next day. I still remember that clearly; - [*laugh*] my little navy suitcase I had. No, I didn't like it at all - and - what I said is, "You can't speak Xhosa there at school - *laugh*".

(21) **Liz**: Ja, so would you say Xhosa was your strongest language //at that time?

(22) **Ernie**: Yes, it was //at that stage, yes before I went to school, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) definitely - and then of course I still spoke German right until I left {my home village} and - then of course when I came to {high school} the German fell away altogether. (E1.55, 57, 58)

In my question at par. 13, I was expecting an answer relating to being in an all-white environment, but he surprised me by turning to focus on his high school experience. When I persevered in trying to get a response relating to language, he recounted his initial shock at not being able to speak isiXhosa. In spite of this, however, the village school he attended was small and the teachers clearly committed to their charges. He speaks positively about them, and given his strong identification with his parents, it was probably not difficult to adjust to and, in time, identify with these adults who, in terms of the norms of the time, were 'old-timers' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 57) in his parents' community of white South Africans.

When I enquired further about why the move to high school was 'the biggest change of the lot', his responses mostly related to the much bigger size of the school, the different subjects and the emphasis on sport. It seems, though, that where changes were inevitable, Ernie was adaptable, and he says that after a while it 'all fell into place again' (par. 14). He fitted in as a 'legitimate peripheral participant' of the new CoP of 'schooled adults', and accommodated this alongside his participation in the farm.

While both schools were English medium, Ernie seems to have had no trouble in learning Afrikaans, and says 'in Matric I had a better result in Afrikaans than I did in English' (E1.60). Already possessing the facility to shift from one language repertoire to another, it seems he was able more easily to adapt to a third and a fourth. His fluency in Afrikaans was to be developed further through his working life.

Brendon: 'A bit of a schizophrenic experience' (B1.19)

Brendon was not as fortunate as Riaan and Ernie. At the age of 6, he was sent to an Afrikaans-medium boarding school, a 45-minute drive from home. He constructs this as 'a bit of a schizophrenic experience' (B1.19): the children were white and Afrikaans-speaking, but most came from farms and spoke isiXhosa as well.

(23) **Brendon**: And I'd never spoken a word of Afrikaans or heard any Afrikaans, (**Liz**: Sho) (…) So we kind of communicating in some kind of Xhosa language thing, (**Liz** *laughs*) until obviously I had to capitulate to Afrikaans, (**Liz**: Ja) because it was the stronger grouping … (B1.19)

He remembers being left feeling 'very forlorn' by this move to a completely different space, and describes his earnest efforts to fix things; to create new practices in the farm community by building a school in the shared space where he and his friends had been so happy together.

(24) **Brendon**: It wasn't easy, (**Liz**: Mm) and I didn't really <u>want</u> to be at the school (**Liz**: Mm). I actually even built - I remember on weekends I started building this school, as little as I was, (**Liz**: Mm) because I wanted everybody to come to my school (**Liz**: OK!) - all my Xhosa friends - it never got a roof on it, but I do remember poles being stuck in the ground, and we were trying to like (**Liz**: Ja) use wattle and daub, (**Liz**: Ja) and of course, it all collapsed in a heap at some point. (B1.20)

This idea of creating a shared school remained, for him, an 'imagined community' throughout his growing-up years, and in the post-1994 democratic dispensation his work has enabled it to become in some way a reality for him, as I will show in Chapter 5. In childhood though, there was a sense that the children's efforts were doomed; the power structures that they were up against were too strong ('the stronger grouping', par. 23; 'of course, it all collapsed', par. 24). From his early years it seems that Brendon experienced the white world, represented initially by his mother and then by his schools, as trying to press him into a mould that he did not like, and he resisted this vigorously, within himself, though he had to 'capitulate' (par. 23) as a small, powerless boy. These are the flows of force and resistance described by Foucault (1976: 101).

Thus, Brendon presents his identity as becoming 'fragmented and contested' (Block, 2007b: 864) when he was sent to school. He is engaged in what Papastergiadis (2000: 170) called a 'negotiation of difference' in the 'presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions'. He could be seen, in his new school, as a migrant trying to work out a way of belonging, through 'a constant dialogue between past and present, near and far, foreign and familiar' (Papastergiadis, 2000: 170). He once again experiences ambivalence in this choiceless situation, and makes an attempt to resolve it by enjoying his weekends at home, and adjusting to the discourses and routines of the school community. He finally invested in Afrikaans for the sake of survival and achievement in the new community, and by the age of 11 or 12 was 'mother-tongue fluent' (B1.23) in the language.

He had now moved from childhood to adolescence, a transition described by Eckert (1996: 2) as 'a transition from a normatively asexual social order to a normatively heterosexual one, transforming relations among and between boys and girls'. Having completed primary classes, he was sent further away to a high school in the English public-school style. Epstein (2012: 56) describes the type of masculinity promoted in this type of school, clearly associated with the imperial whiteness described earlier: 'heirarchies based on sport … age, and academic success … violence inherent in its organisation, structures and quotidian practices and relationships … [a] telling combination of homo-social, homo-erotic and homophobic practices'. So, for Brendon, this was a change to a new language medium and to a new ethos. He describes a 'shift' which had started to take place in him during primary schooling, and which now continued:

(25) **Brendon**: I don't know, like, and then my Xhosaness has always been part of me in a way, um, and that when I used to go back

to the farm like on holidays and things, - I felt as though - I'd shifted, something had shifted (**Liz**: Mm), like I, I wasn't as [pause] as embracing somehow (**Liz**: Mm) - I don't know maybe I was more distant (**Liz**: Mm), maybe they were more distant (**Liz**: Mm) maybe - and I've seen it with my nephews as well (**Liz**: Mm) [pause], so, then I think that kind of learned behaviour when you become more conscious maybe, when you become conscious of other – 'the other' (**Liz**: Mmm), and that's what your family is saying and thinking and

(26) **Liz**: and the broader society as well…

(27) **Brendon**: broader society in the middle of apartheid you know (**Liz**: Ja) and [inaudible] and you know I've never been able to go full circle again. (B1.26)

The institutional function of the school, the 'construction of social identities and of unequal relations of power' (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996: 127) had taken its toll; a shift in his sense of himself had taken place. The way he expresses himself shows the multiple and conflicted nature of his identity: while his 'Xhosaness has always been part of' (par. 25) him, he had 'shifted' (par. 25) somehow from shared space into white space, not only physically, but also subjectively. He attributes a great sense of sadness and loss which he had at this time to this shift, and maintains that he has never quite overcome it ('never been able to go full circle again', par. 27).

Looking at the stories through a sociocultural lens, one sees the boys going through some of the stages of 'self-translation' (loss and recovery) identified by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000: 162ff.) in the autobiographies of bilingual writers,[24] describing the experience of crossing from one language and culture to another. On entry into the white schools, they experienced some 'loss of linguistic identity'; their identities as members of the isiXhosa-speaking play culture of the farm were irrelevant in the new environment. Together with that went a 'loss of subjectivities'; we see Brendon experiencing a 'schizophrenic situation' (B1.19) and 'a shift' (B1.26) in his subjectivity.

'First language attrition' is another of the aspects of loss mentioned by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000: 163). The break from the world of shared play interrupted the ongoing development of isiXhosa in the young men, to one degree or another. While on the farm, the boys were not only part of a basically isiXhosa-speaking community, but they were also in an ideal relationship with people who could provide a ZPD for them. Once they were at school, isiXhosa was not used as a 'mediational means' to

develop higher cognitive functions. In fact, for three of them it was not used at all at school, although Riaan and Ernie (and George for a couple of years) continued to use it out of school. Brendon was an exception to this. He used isiXhosa with his Afrikaans-speaking playmates for a time, and later chose to take isiXhosa as a school subject in order to partially make up for his sense of loss. This choice could be seen as his way of exercising agency in trying to reconstruct some aspects of the community he had left behind; to create an 'imagined community' (Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998: 176) where isiXhosa was still spoken. The approach to isiXhosa in his lessons was a grammatical one, however, giving him a metalanguage with which to talk about the language rather than an extension of his communicative and cognitive functioning in it.

(28) **Brendon**: …he was an Ndebele-speaking white Zimbabwean (**Liz**: Mm) who taught me Xhosa, all the grammatical constructions and things (**Liz**: Ja, ja), he taught them very well (**Liz**: Ja, ja, ja), I must admit, but I didn't feel like I was actually learning more about speaking the language. (B1.24)

While the 'recovery and (re)construction phase' of Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) clearly began while the boys were at school, it is only in their adult narratives that it is seen in its fullness, when it becomes apparent that the discourses and styles of the farm and school CoPs are 'exportable', and can be used, reinterpreted and adapted in other communities and practices (Wenger, 1998: 129).

I have looked at the implications of the move to school, in terms of ambivalence, conflicted identity and the development of a multifaceted identity. In terms of language learning, it is clear that the negotiation of meaning and identity through participation in a community was something that had become second nature to these boys. Canagarajah (2007: 929) concludes that 'communication in multilingual communities involves a different mindset,' and that this 'competence does not constitute a form of knowledge, but rather, encompasses interaction strategies'. This seems to be borne out by the fact that all four men emerged from their years at school competent in English and Afrikaans as well as isiXhosa, with Ernie also having a working knowledge of basic German that he acquired as a child at home and church. However, their mastery of a third or fourth language can also be explained by the fact that all of the boys were required to enter schools with unfamiliar media of instruction and mastered these in order to become full participants in the school community, and to succeed socially and academically.

Conclusion

George, Ernie, Riaan and Brendon learned language through their participation in communities: they acquired the rudiments of Afrikaans, English or German in the home, and invested in a farm-boy identity and the isiXhosa language repertoire, which enabled their immersion in the world of play and relationships with playmates on the farm and the neighbouring community of isiXhosa speakers. Later, they had to invest in a schoolboy identity, and English and Afrikaans, which enabled their successful participation at school. They had full legitimacy in home, farm and school CoPs, and were fully engaged in negotiating meaning and identity through play and through work. Participation in the school CoP was a vital part of the boys' preparation for adult life as white men and 'schooled adults', part of the authority structure of society in colonial and apartheid South Africa. Their early years of participation in the shared world of work and play with the Xhosa boys gave them a language repertoire which, in terms of apartheid South Africa, was a transgression of boundaries, but which could serve the purposes of the farm once they had been initiated into the power discourses of the dominant white world.

According to Wenger (1998: 85), CoPs can be 'the locus of resistance to oppression and the locus of the reproduction of its conditions'. White schooling for the farmer's children was part of the practices of farm CoPs. Ernie, Riaan and George adjusted with little resistance to the new world of school, perhaps because they did not feel that they had been forcibly separated from the childhood ethos. Brendon, the only one who had to attend an English public-school type of school as a boarder, experienced much more ambivalence, however. He exercised as much agency as he could muster in an attempt to resist the oppression of school and transform his situation into something more similar to the farm community that he had had to leave behind – now an 'imagined community' for him. He nevertheless did 'shift' subjectively, to resolve the ambivalence, into a space which made his school life more bearable, but which left him with sadness and loss in relation to his farm friends. While the other three men find themselves relatively comfortable with continuing the traditions of their forefathers, Brendon is conscious of discomfort and has an ongoing urge to move away from or transform some of these traditions.

Chapter 4 shows how the language repertoires and identities of the four men develop and change as they go through the 'rites of passage' which are preliminary to entering fully into the adult world.

Notes

(1) The reference gives the initial of the interviewee and the numbers of the paragraphs of the transcripts from which the extract is taken.
(2) The farmworker who was father to his particular friend.
(3) It is the common practice in African society in South Africa for caregivers to tie babies onto their backs with a blanket when putting them to sleep, a practice which enables the caregiver to carry on moving around and doing chores while taking care of the baby.
(4) The African belief system includes a belief that one's ancestors are still actively involved in one's life, guiding actions, warning and chastising as well as offering protection and care.
(5) *Yo!* An expression of wonderment used by speakers of isiXhosa, similar, perhaps, to Wow!
(6) *Catties* (South African slang): catapults; slings.
(7) A common pastime, particularly among African children in South Africa, was to make cars, bicycles and other vehicles out of wire.
(8) *Dolosse* (Afrikaans): play cattle made out of the ankle or knee bones of sheep or goats.
(9) *Kierie* (Afrikaans): a stick with a knobbed head.
(10) *Umarabaraba* (isiXhosa): a 'board' game played with stones on a board drawn in the sand with a stick.
(11) A 'location', in South African parlance, is an area that was demarcated for black people to live in, usually something like a village, and often (though not always) near or attached to a white town or village.
(12) *Mielie* (Afrikaans): mealie; maize.
(13) *Inspan* (South African, from Afrikaans): harness animals to a vehicle.
(14) *Toktokkies* (Afrikaans): dung beetles.
(15) *Tsotsi* (township slang): gangster; youngster involved in criminal activities.
(16) Most of his black neighbours, in contrast, would be living and grazing their cattle on commonage under the jurisdiction of the local chief.
(17) In isiXhosa, x, q and c are click sounds.
(18) *Kwedini* (isiXhosa), plural *amakwedini*: young uninitiated Xhosa boy(s).
(19) *Braai*: barbecue (Afrikaans).
(20) I felt here that my own mother, also of Scottish extraction and upbringing, and also somewhat shy, would have had much in common with her.
(21) *Hok* (South African, from Afrikaans) cage; henhouse.
(22) K (colloquial South African): kilometres.
(23) Year 7, the end of primary school.
(24) These stages are in some ways foreshadowed by the stages described by Brown, who builds on Schumann's acculturation model: stages of euphoria, culture shock, culture stress, assimilation … and acceptance of the 'new' person that has developed (see Ricento, 2005: 898).

4 Rites of Passage: Paths Diverge

*… how it worked in those days on the farm, the young b-oys, when they were initiated young men traditionally went off to go and seek employment on the mines for a period …. It was called joining. - And and that happened. So I went off to university and they went off to join, - Because it was right at that stage when we split up (**Liz**: Mm)*

Speaking of military service:

*Honestly I think if everyone did national service, even if it was a year, this place would be a better place. (**Liz**: Mm - hm) Because you accept authority much easier (**Liz**: Mm) - and discipline and a system, you accept it much easier (**Liz**: Mm)*
Riaan, transcript 2.51, 36

In this chapter, I continue my exploration of ways in which issues of power and identity interact with language use in the lives of the research participants, examining those parts of the participants' narratives which deal with 'rites of passage' into manhood (initiation ceremonies, periods spent at university and national service in the South African Defence Force) and the impact that participation, or non-participation, in communities represented by these experiences has on the men's sense of identity and use of isiXhosa and other language repertoires.

In the following chapters, I continue to make use of the language acquisition and post-structuralist identity theories outlined in Chapter 2, expanding the repertoire of 'white discourses' described by Steyn (2001, 2004) and others. In this chapter, I identify a discourse which emphasises the values of respect and discipline. Some might say that these are values which went along with the Afrikaner nationalist ideology; the respect side of this type of discourse is also in line with the values of many black communities. I call this 'discipline discourse'.

I also identify one feature of narrative time in the adult stories of two of the men. Portelli (1991: 64) explains that narrative time differs from chronological time in that the person is telling his or her story from the point of view of the present, with a particular purpose, usually to 'project an image'. In the narratives of these men, as they describe their progress into adulthood, still held and shaped by the influences and experiences of their childhood, as well as by the present, and the purposes of my interviews,

some (notably Riaan and Brendon) give perceptible shapes, linear and cyclical (Brockmeier, 2000: 53) to their life paths, as they describe them in the narratives.

The Circumcision Ritual

Riaan

For Riaan, although the relationships of work and play with his companions on the farm were somewhat disrupted by school, the real 'disruption' (Ri1.101) took place when his friends left the Eastern Cape after initiation, 'for greener pastures' (Ri1.101), and he went to university. He had mentioned this when speaking of the move to school, and I pursued the theme in the second interview:

(1) **Liz**: And then you also mentioned that er one of the moments when when your lives started to sort of - er - go in different directions was when they went to initiation school. Um, how did that affect you; how did you feel about that whole set up?

(2) **Riaan**: Well, it made me realise that we are - that we are growing up, that we are growing up. Remember, remember how it worked in those days on the farm, the young b-oys, when they were initiated young men traditionally went off to go and seek employment on the mines for a period (**Liz**: Mm, OK, after initiation). After initiation. It was called joining. (...) And and that happened. So I went off to university and they went off to join (...) Because it was right at that stage when we split up. (**Liz**: Mm) (Ri2.50, 51)

In answering my question, he reminds me, constructing me as having known about the processes as he experienced them, that this separation was something inevitable, a 'normal' part of life ('how it worked in those days'). The addition of 'in those days' indicates a recognition that in the current South African context things have changed somewhat. He uses the word 'traditionally' when speaking of 'joining', the practice of seeking work on the mines, referring by the word 'tradition' to regular, accepted norms, rather than to Xhosa tradition, expressed, for instance, in the circumcision ritual. The practice of working for whites, and on the mines, was anything but traditional in that sense; it was forced on the amaXhosa by the loss of their land. The separation of Riaan from his friends was a harsh part

of the apartheid 'tradition', or 'normality': the young white man has the opportunity to go to university, while the 'wider world' and 'greener pastures' for his one-time playmates is migrant labour on the mines.

Speaking of his feelings about the separation, he says that 'it made me realize that we are - that we are growing up' (Ri2.51). For him, the separation was part of the shift from childhood to adulthood, childhood in this Eastern Cape farming context being something shared, and adulthood being something where black and white operated much more separately. One can see in the hesitation on the word 'b-oys' (par. 2) a carefulness about not falling into the white South African discourse which he grew up with, in which all black males were called 'boys', signalling inferiority and disrespect. For circumcised Xhosa men, their status as mature men is of crucial importance and demands appropriate deference, so the use of the word 'boy' was a particularly stinging aspect of apartheid discourse. Riaan, who has at his disposal different languages of the South African 'heteroglossia' (Bakhtin, 1981), hears himself using the word and almost censors it, but judges that at this stage it *was* accurate to call them 'boys'; it was after initiation that they would become men. This carefulness about choice of words and of register is common in Riaan's narrative, as we shall see later. He seems to recognise and censor certain aspects of his behaviour which belong to the 'old' South Africa. So, while Riaan constructs the separation from his companions as something 'normal', he also signifies that a shift has taken place, since that time of separation from his friends, in his discourse and ideology.

The conversation continued, with Riaan describing his part in their initiation:

(3) They went off to initiation and - although I visited them while they were in initiation! (**Liz**: You did!) Ja ja, some days, ja.
(4) **Liz**: Ja. So you had some sort of er look in on what was going on.
(5) **Riaan**: Ye::s, no we went - and we chased them with *knopkieries* and everything, (**Liz** *laughs*) ja no I was part of that. (**Liz**: Ah)

He positions himself as a visitor in relation to the initiates. He visited them 'some days' (par. 3), and participated playfully, 'chasing them with *knopkieries* and everything'. It is not clear who the 'we' in this sentence is, or whether this kind of chasing is a regular part of what happens. His elongated 'Ye::s' suggests that he was only able to participate in a minor way, the ritual itself being closed to those not undergoing it. The fact that Riaan volunteered this information does suggest, though, that he is proud of having been there, even if only on 'some days'.

Ernie

When I asked if Ernie could tell of an experience related to his friends' initiation, his response also conveyed some pride. He had been invited by the parents of the initiates to 'fire a shot' at initiation ceremonies, he said, and was able to discuss at some length what he saw as a deterioration in the standards of what is done at the ceremony.

(6) **Liz**: Can you tell me any experience you had relating to the time when your friends went to initiation school?

(7) **Ernie**: Yes, yes, the parents invited me, always on a Saturday morning that it took place and circumcision took place next to the *boma*[1] as they call it. Then they sort of all were all made of grass, and er not like today all made of // plastic, **Liz**: Plastic bags // and things. **Ernie**: They were very fussy those days, yes and er - they even asked me - to come fire a shot or two there which they maintained was to make men of their of their sons. (**Liz**: Oh, ja) Yes, I was quite often invited to come and do that. (**Liz**: Ja) which I did.

(8) **Liz**: Ja, ja, - so you saw quite a lot of what was what was happening // O: yes // **Liz**: Took part in some of the um // **Ernie**: And those *makhwethas*[2] often used to come to our place to ask for a fowl or two and er (**Liz**: Ja) and then er - they were very strict in those days, - no girls, they weren't allowed to see any girls, if they saw any girls from a distance they had to cover their faces (**Liz**: Ja) Oh today it's all different, I don't think they worry about that anymore. (**Liz**: Ja, ja) and er - as I say they had to live, to stay there full six weeks (**Liz**: Ja) in the in the veld. (E2.30, 31)

He describes the events as happening outside of and apart from him (what 'they' did – then and now). Implied in the description is respect for a different and in some ways strange culture, some aspects of which did not have validity in his world view. This can be seen, for instance, in the italicised phrase (my emphasis) '…which *they maintained* was to make men of their sons', which distances him from this belief.

His story conveys pride in knowing about how things were done in those days ('they were very fussy', par. 7; 'they were very strict', par. 8), and an implied criticism of the new ways: they probably don't 'worry about that any more' (par. 8). The account of his positive response to their invitation to 'fire a shot or two' (par. 7) seems to construct him as a person who is accommodating, neighbourly and helpful in response to the requests

of people with whom he lives in a close, reciprocal, respectful and even affectionate relationship. My suggestion that he might have taken part (par. 8) is over-ridden; he positions himself as a spectator, not a participant. Once again, the fact that the parents invite him to 'fire a shot' (par. 7) indicates the status he has as a white person in spite of being quite a young boy himself, and his acceptance of this as 'normal'.

George

George left the farm too early to have had any part in his friend Gig's initiation. He does, however, relate a conversation he had with one of the men he works with about 'going to the bush'[3] (par. 11). This story was told as part of his response to a question I asked, hoping to find out the extent to which George had entered into the Xhosa milieu:

(9) **Liz**: Um and so… most of the situations you have spoken of so far are like in your home or you know, your grandfather's farm or a workplace or whatever. Have you had much experience going into their environment, in the rural areas, into the… (G2.80)

After speaking of a fishing trip which he had undertaken together with a black man, he paused, then musingly observed:

(10) Ja, their culture is a lot different to ours.
(11) I actually said to this one guy just before we closed, his son is going to the bush now, and I said to him, but why. No, to make a man out of him. So I said, you know just like we must accept change, I think you guys must also accept change.
(12) I said there's no culture any more. Because their culture says, when they become a *makhwetha* and they go to the bush, that *makhwetha* isn't allowed to even see a woman from a distance. (**Liz**: Mm) At all. I said, and what is happening now? The *makhwetha* huts are in town, I said, and their girlfriends are visiting them. I said that is not culture. (G2.82)

George's opening statement positions him firmly outside the Xhosa cultural milieu, in an 'us' and 'them' relationship. Like Ernie, he expresses criticism here of the modern version of initiation, but is much more outspoken in his criticism, even relating how he challenged one of 'the guys' at work and gave him advice. In the sentence, 'Just like <u>we</u> must accept change… <u>you guys</u> must also…' (par. 11, my emphasis), he again

makes a clear distinction between black and white, implying that, for him as a white, it has not been comfortable to 'accept change' (par. 11). He would like to set the balance right and requires some changes from the other side ('you guys', par. 11) as well. He indicates that this seems right and fair to him, making quite authoritative statements about 'culture' and positioning himself as one who has superior knowledge about what is, or is not, 'culture'. His suggestion here seems to be that since the old traditions of initiation are being so disrespected and defiled nowadays, the practice might as well be abandoned altogether. His views have a ring of 'white rightness'; George seems to feel quite free to make judgements about 'Xhosa culture', which he has made clear is not his own, particularly in its present form. The story does create a picture of lively and spirited communication between George and these 'guys' (par. 11), though he does not tell about their responses, and we certainly have no access to the thoughts and feelings of his work colleagues.

Brendon

Neither George nor Ernie nor Riaan seems to have entertained the possibility that they could have undergone the initiation ceremony. Brendon, on the other hand, says that he would have liked to have gone through the ritual, part, perhaps, of his nostalgia for those days of closeness to his Xhosa friends, and his longing for reintegration and acceptance into the Xhosa culture and identity. When I asked him for clarification of how closely involved he actually was in his friend's initiation, he elaborated quite extensively on how significant it is, in terms of identity, when a white boy undergoes the ceremony. In the following, I have extracted what I felt was the kernel of his discussion.

(13) Liz: So the - the circumcision - you were kind of almost totally part of it (R: Ja) but you didn't go through it as a …

(14) (…) when my friends went through it I was very much part of it (...) {but} I wasn't an initiate, no. (…) I would have wanted to be, (**Liz**: Mm) you know, and I see with my nephew as well, that he went through the same thing, of wanting to be initiated, but now - it seems to me - he's now 21 and it's (**Liz**: Mm) - he's not even speaking about it anymore so I assume that there is some kind of thing that happens and I have a feeling that it's possibly either one, or both, parents who - have a sort of a block against - you know - allowing the child to actually undergo the circumcision (…). (B2.33)

(15) So I think there is still - it shows you different levels of - identity coming through - um, different generations maybe? (**Liz**: Mm) and also - at a certain point - perhaps one capitulates to parts of of the European identity, um, which I think is what happened to him, and you also start working and role relationships with Xhosa people change, (**Liz**: Mm) and you become a boss, like he is and, um –

(16) (…) so I think it is quite a special thing when white guys undergo the ceremony because (…) it says something about – (…) sharing of spaces and changing of identity, (**Liz**: Yes) but it's easier said than done. I think with the white guy it can only happen if there's familial support - and often that isn't there because (**Liz**: Mm) it's just - not possible. (B2.38, 39)

He holds on to the hope that it might become easier in the future for white boys to undergo the ceremony, and in that case that it might 'tilt identity' (B2.39) for those white Eastern Cape men who are initiated. He acknowledges the power of the English language and its accompanying Western traditions in the suggestion that the stronger possibility is that everyone 'gets homogenized into English' (B2.39).

The quoted passage shows his sense of the power of white parents, strongly needing to hold their children within the white ethos, which carries privilege and authority, even now, and fearing the 'loss' of their children to a culture which is simultaneously close to them and the 'other' ('it's just – not possible', par. 16). The attentiveness of these parents to their children's racial identifications is reminiscent of Foucault's (1976: 98) description of the 'surveillance' of 'parents, nurses, servants, educators' with regard to sexual development in children. His description implies that few parents would see initiation into manhood among the amaXhosa as an expanding and empowering opportunity, but rather would see it as a threat, and almost no child could or would stand against his parents on an issue of this nature.

Brendon sees initiation as a way for white males to win acceptance among Xhosa males ('I think white males who undergo circumcision would be much better accepted into erm - Eastern Cape culture, in a way' B2.35), the implication being that it could be a way for white South Africans to become 'insiders' in the community of the amaXhosa, the majority culture in the Eastern Cape. While participation in this community is something Brendon aspires to imaginatively (Wenger, 1998: 176), he acknowledges that 'Xhosa people' might not share his views on its desirability. Speaking of another kind of initiation, that into the profession of Xhosa traditional healers (*amagqirha*[4]), he says:

(17) I'm not sure how Xhosa people feel about that. I think there's a sense of - there's a sort of nationalistic sense that I get amongst Xhosa people - not all Xhosa people (**Liz**: Mm) - because there's a sense that, you know, 'I own the tradition of the *amagqirha* or - you know, you as a white person, - I mean I don't really trust your motives as to why you are an *igqirha* (**Liz**: Sure) and I don't feel comfortable with it, you know'. (B2.41)

This comment shows that he is aware of quite a strong distinction between his own attitude towards this, and that of isiXhosa speakers. He calls this a 'nationalistic sense', pointing to a power dimension. With whites having enjoyed privilege and supremacy in so many areas of life, it would be surprising if isiXhosa speakers didn't feel resistance to their entering spaces which have generally been sacrosanct. The desire of white men for membership in that community might threaten the power of amaXhosa men, who have in so many areas in the past found themselves surrendering power to whites.

Brendon positions himself as someone who seeks greater intimacy with, and acceptance within, the Xhosa culture, and someone who has explored these issues in depth, intellectually. While the other participants' identities could be seen to be defined in terms of membership of the farm (or rural Eastern Cape) community of practice (CoP), where the norm is still a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them' in spite of childhood intimacies, Brendon seeks to define his identity in relation to the Xhosa community itself, and therefore looks seriously at issues around initiation into it. If the other men had any wish to be part of the initiation rite, they are not exposing that aspect of themselves in this conversation with a white academic woman. Their 'inhabited' and 'ascribed' (Blommaert, 2005: 205) social identity is white, in spite of their early experiences.

For all of the men, though, this circumcision ceremony is a 'parting of the ways' in quite a defining sense. Though they have a shared childhood with the Xhosa-speaking children, they cannot take the same path to manhood. Their prescribed path to manhood, as white young men, is through school, university education (for some), military service and the world of work. I now look at how these experiences shaped their identities and affected their language development trajectory.

University

Two of the four men, Riaan and Brendon, proceeded straight from school to university, Riaan to study agriculture and Brendon to study isiXhosa

(among other things). For both men, aspects of their academic experience were to be important influences.

Riaan

In his story, Riaan emphasises the dominance of Afrikaans at the university he attended, but he is also at pains to show that there were opportunities for him to use and improve his English (friends and books). This was, however, a period when he did not use much isiXhosa, except on holidays at home. He does speak, however, of affectionate relationships with the black cleaning staff at the university and describes a recent reunion with one of them:

(18) an old mama, and I immediately recognised her. (**Liz**: Mm) She was a cleaner in our residence, and we cried (**Liz** *laughs*) when we spoke, and we hugged each other. (Ri1.129)

As part of his biographical account, he tells how he moved on from his first degree to postgraduate studies, this having the additional advantage of postponing military service[5] and potentially changing its nature, as recruits with degrees were often given specialised work to do.

His master's research involved working with black people in the Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga), and gave him a chance to extend his range of isiXhosa (or SiSwati, which is of the same Nguni language family as isiXhosa) to what he called 'academic Xhosa' or 'interviewing Xhosa'. He describes the difference between registers as follows:

(19) farm Xhosa, which is an authoritive [sic] (…) – 'Now you go and milk that cow' (…) and the normal conversation type of Xhosa and in fact in that academic type of Xhosa, in which {you} (…) conduct an interview, you 've got to have - you're dependent on the information, so you... you actually ... you've got to play fair, whether you like it or not, so that's how it works (*laughs*)... so.... (Ri1.46)

What is implied here is a development: a significant shift in 'headspace' from a register of isiXhosa which carried within it the assumption of authority of white over black, to a register conveying deference to and equality with the other, and an accompanying shift in identity from farmer to academic (or researcher).[6] With the identity of researcher 'ascribed' to him, he explains that he was required ('you've got to … whether you like

it or not') to invest in this new register, and he experienced a resulting shift in relationship. '[S]o that's how it works' (par. 19) he says, and laughs, indicating, perhaps, that this is just another aspect of 'normality', this time within the academic world. As the researcher is obliged to conform to this norm, it does not imply any virtue on his part. Conformity is in fact motivated by self-interest. His adoption of the new register is not presented, then, as a particularly remarkable shift, and he comments that the 'mutual respect, which was bred into me' (Ri1.49) helped him reconcile the new with the old. Currently, he regards a person's use of 'authoritive (sic) Xhosa' as 'the worst thing that can happen' (Ri2.72) in terms of relations between races in the Eastern Cape. One could conclude that this was a very important turning point in his insight into language register and its significance in signalling power and attitudes in relationships. While he does not give himself credit for having invested in this register ('you've got to … whether you like it or not', par. 19), his narrative goes on to reflect the significance of this choice.

Brendon

Brendon presents his move to university as a logical next step from his public school type boys' high school. His enthusiasm about isiXhosa at school (though he could not study it right through until his matriculation year) led him to enrol for isiXhosa courses at university. 'I loved the Xhosa … I loved studying the Xhosa' (B1.30), he said. His investment in the language, as noted in Chapter 3, was directly linked to his longing to participate, in imagination if not through direct engagement, in the community of his childhood. Although isiXhosa was not initially the main focus of his degree, he registered for an honours degree, a master's degree and eventually a PhD in isiXhosa once he had completed his undergraduate studies.

As part of a long answer to my enquiry as to how things changed for him post-94 in terms of relationships with Xhosa speakers, he says:

> (20) I remember the '80s being very barren. Even although I was studying isiXhosa, (**Liz**: Mm) I don't really remember interacting with Xhosa people at all (**Liz**: Mm) - and the friends I had, when I was a child, I mean, there was no real identity-sharing with them anymore, I don't know, something had shifted, (**Liz**: Mm) probably due to my education and so on (…) (B2.57)

His use of and exposure to isiXhosa was academic, not personal; there is a deep sadness in the acknowledgement that it was 'barren' and there

was no 'identity-sharing' any more. Nevertheless, in response to my request at the beginning of Interview 2 for 'incidents or experiences in your life involving the use or understanding of isiXhosa, which have been key in affecting your changing sense of yourself, and your feelings about life and the world around you', he described a high point within the academic study of the language: the visit of an oral poet who met and spoke to the students, inspiring Brendon to study oral poetry and delve deeper into isiXhosa metaphor:

(21) But I think that was a very significant meeting for me, and it - got me into the sort of - metaphor of isiXhosa (**Liz**: Mm, mm, mm) - got me to analysing it. (B2.5)

Much later in the same interview, he tells of a *braai*[7] which he organized at the residence, for the kitchen and cleaning staff, bringing a sheep from home. The following comment indicates his own enjoyment of the 'coming together' of this event and suggests that he was as 'genuinely affected' as they were.

(22) {I}t was a fantastic (…) - I think people were really genuinely sort of affected by that gesture (**Liz**: Ja) um and – (B2.85)

He also paints pictures of the bleakness and horror of the lives of these workers during those tense apartheid times (the State of Emergency 1985–1989, see Appendix 5):

(23) I remember they had to leave early because there was a curfew. (**Liz**: Mm) If you were - and there was also boycotts. (…) I remember discussing with this one person who worked in that kitchen, it was a man - He told me this horrible story about how he contributed to necklacing[8] his own brother because you know, they thought he was an *impimpi*.[9] (B2.85, 86)

Clearly, Brendon's 'Xhosa identity' was still alive and well during the 'barren' time, inspired by the oral poet, and able to communicate and listen with insight and compassion to the domestic staff.

For both Riaan and Brendon, university represented alienation, for the time being at least, from the old farm relationships, and an introduction to and investment in new registers of isiXhosa: 'research' isiXhosa for Riaan and poetic isiXhosa for Brendon, both representing a shift to relationships of more equality and respect between participants in the interactions. Both

were also able, because of their early experiences, to establish what they experienced as warm relationships with domestic staff in the hostels where they stayed, but had few contacts with black lecturers or academics, with whom they might have related on more equal terms.

Military Service

The four men grew up in a time when all young white men were required to undergo a period of service in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF)[10] after finishing school or university studies. Like the conscription during the Wars of Resistance (1779–1878), this was something which was bound to harden attitudes, polarising black and white and inducing whites to construct blacks as 'other' and 'the enemy', and themselves as the defenders of the country against 'black revolutionaries' and 'the communist threat'.

Ernie

Ernie, almost 20 years older than Riaan and Brendon, was one of the first youths to be subjected to compulsory national service (1964/1965). He told me about this in response to my direct question about it.

(24) **Liz**: Umm, were you involved in in military service?
(25) **Ernie**: Yes.
(26) **Liz**: Army, mm.
(27) **Ernie**: Yes, it was still when it was three months I went to {W town}. (**Liz**: Oh, ja) and that's where I did my basic training was at {W town}.
(28) **Liz**: Ja, ja, so you just did the basics?
(29) **Ernie**: Yes, those days you had to go for three months and that was it (…)
(30) **Liz**: Ja, how did you feel about that, how did it go?
(31) **Ernie**: Oh, very lost (**Liz**: Umm) Got on the train here (…) and all these officers there, - very stern, not a smile and – (…) everything was very strange, it took about a week or two and - settled in and went all right (**Liz**: Umm, umm) you had to adapt to the food, entirely different to your home food.
(32) **Liz**: Umm, ja, and - did you fee:l, um, - did you associate it in any way with what was happening on the border,[11] or was it just like a routine thing that had to happen to you in your life?
(33) **Ernie**: Ja, it was more like a routine (**Liz**: Umm, um) (…) (E2.26–29)

It would appear that for Ernie, a young man who had never really left home, and does not leave home now for significant periods of time, the most difficult part of 'the army' was adapting to an unfamiliar and uncongenial environment: an institution, or community, with a very different repertoire (Wenger, 1998: 82): 'very stern, not a smile'; 'entirely different to your home food' (par. 31). He was glad when it was over and he could return to what was 'normal' for him. A man who is not a great talker at the best of times, he did not elaborate much about this experience, and the way I shaped my final question gave him an easy 'out'.

Riaan

Both Riaan and Brendon had their military service deferred because of their studies, but had very different attitudes towards military service.

Riaan spent 18 months in 'the army' after completing his master's degree, in about 1986/1987, but claims that by that time 'there was not much of a war left, in Angola' (Ri1.52). He went through his basic training, trained as a junior officer and was then seconded to the Department of Agriculture to do agricultural research. He says, 'We were actually in everyone's way, because we weren't well trained', and paints a picture of himself as 'a poor soldier' (Ri1.52) and 'the worst shot on earth' (Ri2.32). He says he wasn't 'exposed to real fighting blacks and shooting, and stuff like that, in fact. (…) I was fortunate not to be exposed to real warfare' (Ri2.32).

His self-deprecating view of himself as a soldier may indicate some kind of embarrassment about having had a part in the military at all; it is as if he distances himself from a 'soldier identity', and says, 'I wasn't <u>really</u> involved'. In the current climate, and in the context of the work he is involved in, it is clearly advisable to play down one's role in the Defence Force, and one's 'soldierly' qualities. He portrays the fact that he didn't see action or have 'someone (…) shot next to [me]' (Ri2.33) as 'fortunate' (a word he uses repeatedly) – part of the great good fortune of his whole life. As peace was only declared in 1988 in Angola, and there were troops in the townships from 1983 and a state of emergency until 1989, he was indeed fortunate not to have been involved in some kind of action.

However, his view of military training is not all negative. His time in 'the army' was, for him, an important initiation into a new CoP, which formed – or maybe reinforced – certain key attitudes in him. He spoke of this in part response to my question about how he had developed such a strong antipathy towards 'boere Xhosa', the authoritative farm Xhosa of *baasskap*[12] (elaborated in Chapter 5), and why he differed from his siblings in this respect.

(34) Um // Yes - I hate laziness. That I can't handle. (**Liz**: Mm) I can't handle a a a person that's not doing their part. (**Liz**: Mm) I can't handle that. And then I'm authoritive, big time. (**Liz**: *laughs*) You can ask any of the people that deal with me, if I catch someone that's not, (**Liz**: Ja) that's hiding, Oooh, I become a different person. (**Liz**: Mm) I'm very strict on that. I believe everyone has got abilities and they've got to use it. The defence force taught me that. (**Liz**: Is it?)

(35) I was very lazy physically; I was 25 years old when I went to the army. (**Liz**: Ja) And I was obviously fat and old - the other guys were 18 years old, I was 25. (**Liz**: OK) And they had to carry me and so on and - they taught me that everyone has got a potential, we must just use that full potential. (…) They taught us we were only using - when we thought we were tired, we had only used 75% of your energy. You still have 25% left. (**Liz**: Mm) And I believe in that. (**Liz**: Mm, // mm, mm) It's true. // That thing, we must operate on that, // *laughs*. (**Liz**: Ja, ja, ja) // (Ri2.25)

His transformation from someone 'fat and old' to someone fit, with much more physical potential than he had realised, was obviously a key 'initiation' for him into a more active, productive and disciplined adulthood. His laugh may indicate that he wasn't sure how I had received this view; I certainly did find what he was saying unexpected. My emphatic 'Ja, ja, ja' was designed to reassure him that I understood – although I still didn't see how it answered my question, and pursued that further. Later, after telling of his experience of military service, he expresses his strong belief in the value of 'defence force' training for everyone:

(36) {W}e'll have less trouble in this country, (**Liz**: Ja?) because the youth now haven't got discipline, (**Liz**: Mm) (…) and there, everyone was taught discipline. (**Liz**: Mm, mm, mm) (…) I - Honestly I think if everyone did national service, even if it was a year, this place would be a better place. (**Liz**: Mm - hm) Because you accept authority much easier (**Liz**: Mm) - and discipline and a system, you accept it much easier (**Liz**: Mm) - because you know where it comes from. (**Liz**: Mm) (Ri2.36)

Riaan presents himself here as very critical of the ill-discipline which causes 'trouble in this country'. He uses discipline discourse, but it carries overtones here of an 'essentialist white racist discourse' which is common in South Africa, when whites get together to bemoan the fate of the country,

now that it is in black hands. There is a possibility, though, backed up by other parts of his narrative (see later), that he is not speaking here as a white, complaining about black youth, but as a 'parent', speaking of the younger generation, black and white.

Wenger (1998: 129) writes that 'aspects of the repertoire of a practice … are exportable'. Clearly, discipline is an important value for Riaan, and he indicates that this was a key value of the CoP of the army, which he has exported and adopted into his ongoing repertoire of values. It is clear, though, that the values that he learned in the army were not out of tune with the values (i.e. respect, obedience and consequences for non-compliance) that were espoused by his uncle, an important role model in his life, and also by the farming community (including the isiXhosa speakers) within which he grew up. The acceptance of authority, implicit in his growing-up context, as it was within the ideology of apartheid, is another value emphasised in this extract, and he also describes himself as 'authoritive' (par. 34). One sees some ambivalence here, for he speaks out strongly against 'authoritive (sic) isiXhosa' elsewhere. He uses the word 'authority' positively in the above extract, but elaborates and modifies it by saying, 'and discipline and a system – because you know where it comes from' (par. 36), trying, perhaps, to make the principle sound broader, more rational and less oppressive.

Riaan's attitudes to the Defence Force are very mixed, then. He strongly supports the kind of training in discipline which was given, and experienced it as personally transforming. Evidence that this is a widely supported popular discourse is found in a 2011 *TIME* magazine article (Klein, 2011: 30–35) about veterans of the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars, some of whom are proving themselves exceptional leaders back home in the USA. The article maintains that they have learned a unique combination of discipline and flexibility, and do not flinch from painful experiences. While Riaan is somewhat uncomfortable about having been involved in the nationalist 'war machine', deprecates his skills as a soldier and grateful that he didn't see action, he values his army experience highly. He only resents having had to do military service at that stage, as it caused him to miss out on an opportunity, never to be repeated, to continue his studies abroad to PhD level.

(37) I got the opportunity to go and do my PhD (**Liz**: Mm!) in the United States. I had a bursary, everything {inaudible}. But then the Defence Force er er er didn't approve of me going, they forced me to go to the army first. (**Liz**: Mm, mm) (…) That made me cross. (Ri2.35)

Riaan's time in the army certainly was, for him, a period when he didn't use isiXhosa very much. In spite of the fact that he was doing agricultural research and all the farmers spoke isiXhosa, he says, 'I didn't speak it - I wasn't exposed to lots of Xhosa then' (Ri1.53). As part of the Defence Force, he circulated only in the white English and Afrikaans-speaking world; speakers of African languages were positioned as 'other' and 'on the outside'.

Brendon

For Brendon, national service was also transforming, but only because of his vigorous and successful efforts to avoid it completely! As explained in Appendix 5, conscientious objection was only tolerated for members of pacifist religions, and resistance to the draft carried heavy penalties in terms of imprisonment. It was therefore a common and 'safe' strategy for those who did not wish to serve, and who qualified for further studies, to take the study route. As can be seen from Riaan's case, one could not postpone the 'evil day' forever, but at the end of the 1980s it seemed reasonable to hope that conscription would end soon. In fact, it only ended in 1994 (see Appendix 5).

The next extract comes from Brendon's initial 'life story', told in response to my biographical question:

(38) (…) there was this always being called up into the National - you know into the army (**Liz**: Mm, mm), and, even though I had never come full circle, I just couldn't bring myself to doing my national service and going out into the townships (**Liz**: Mm) and, policing people and doing terrible things to people (**Liz**: Mm, mm, mm), so I just carried on studying, and so I think, in a bizarre sort of way I owe my PhD in Xhosa and everything else to the South African Defence Force [*both laugh*], telling me that I was exempt for the next year (**Liz**: OK) because I was studying. (**Liz**: OK) (B1.30)

The story indicates that the thought of having to do national service creates unbearable ambivalence within Brendon. His image of 'the army' is that part of it most hated by many who went through it – township duty.[13] In other words, for Brendon, it appears that serving in the army was very directly connected to 'doing terrible things' (par. 38) to his own countrymen and women; possibly even those people he knew and loved. He 'couldn't bring himself to doing' (par. 38) something which carried within

it this possibility, even though he felt 'he had never come full circle'. This cyclical image (Brockmeier, 2000: 53) is first used when Brendon speaks about his 'shift' away from his farm friends when he was at boarding school, saying with deep sadness, 'I've never been able to go full circle again' (B1.26). Its repetition shows that Brendon still experiences a sense of alienation and distance from his 'Xhosa' past; even now and in spite of various efforts, he feels he has never been able to get back to the intimacy of those early years. It is perhaps the very strength of that sadness and regret which drives his actions in avoiding the draft.

Brendon tells how, in 1989, when his PhD was almost complete, the 'border war' was over and call-up papers were still coming, his desperation to avoid national service drove him to seek refuge across the border of the then 'independent homeland' of the Transkei:

> (39) I just got in my car (**Liz**: Mm) and I drove to Mthatha and I, I made an appointment to see Bantu Holomisa[14] (…) and I thought that was quite brave of me to get up there (**Liz**: Mm), in fact I was going to do Transkeian citizenship and I had already organised with one of the chiefs to sponsor me and everything (…) (B1.32)

This extract clearly portrays Brendon's determination to avoid the draft, and it also shows his pride in the courage and ingenuity of this adventurous avoidance strategy ('that was quite brave of me'; 'I had already organized with one of the chiefs to sponsor me', par. 39). It represented for him, it seems, a significant move out of barrenness and towards coming full circle (par. 38). The fact that he devised this way out of his dilemma shows his identification with the Transkei and its peoples; he seems to have reasoned that his identity was far more Transkeian than white South African at this time when white soldiers were pitted against the black citizens of the country. Holomisa welcomed Brendon and arranged a research position for him at the local university, which enabled him to spend an exciting period in Mthatha leading up to the transformation of South Africa in 1994.

George

George was the first man I interviewed, and he did not mention military service in any of our three meetings. When it appeared to me, from other interviews, that military service was going to be an important theme, I arranged an extra meeting with George to talk about his 'army' experiences. He explained to me that because of his employment by the

South African Railways, a government department rendering what were seen to be essential services, he had been exempted from military service.

(40) **Liz**: I wanted to ask you about the army and your experience there and how you felt about it

(41) **George**: I didn't go to - army; when I left school, I worked for the railway (**Liz**: Ja), and if the war broke out, the trains still have to run (**Liz**: Ja), but - er, what I had to do, I joined up with the Kaffrarian rifles, and once a year, I was sent away for two weeks on an army camp (**Liz**: OK), that's what they call the Dad's army (**Liz**: Oh yes, the reserves). So I enjoyed it - thoroughly. (G4.2)

He says that he imagines he would have enjoyed military training itself, as well:

(42) cause I enjoy, firearms,[15] hunting - my kids are - I trained them from when (…) they were in Sub A, Grade 1, used to take them to the shooting range; even now in K-town, they go hunting. (G4.2)

We see here that George imagined military service as an extension of the outdoor lifestyle that he enjoyed and shared with his boys, involving the technical and sporting equipment that he enjoyed using. This is a reminder of how easily these skills of the frontier farmer could be turned to the service of war, as they were in the 18th and 19th centuries when settler farmers were conscripted. He does not dwell much on the fighting and killing aspect of military service, though he acknowledges that, according to his brothers, the war on the border, which they were involved in, was 'not a nice experience' (G4.3). He employs 'discipline discourse', expressing a view very similar to Riaan's about the need for army training for young people in the current situation:

(43) the youth of today haven't got respect; there's no more discipline, and - I think - the experience of going to army (**Liz**: Ja) did have a major effect on the discipline of our youth (**Liz**: mmm), so I - if they could bring it back and make it compulsory, I think it'd be a good thing. (**Liz**: Ja) They don't have to send them to war, or whatever, (**Liz**: Ja), but, er, they can help (…) (G4.4)

He goes on to describe the kinds of problems that young people in his small town get themselves into, such as drugs and drink, and describes how

he disciplines his boys by making sure that they have to earn their own pocket money, which they do by fishing. He is proud of his boys' fishing and sporting achievements, but says that they are naughty and need to be kept occupied.

The view of military service for the purposes of discipline rather than the purposes of war ('We hate the war but love the Army', Klein, 2011: 32) is paradoxical: how could one have military training without the possibility, or the reality, of war? Botha (personal communication, 15 July 2011), whose son spent 18 months in the Angolan war zone during his military service period, says that 'Anyone who thinks military training inculcates respect has never been to war', and it is perhaps significant that neither Riaan nor George was involved in active service. For someone like George, who has legitimate concerns about self-destructive habits among young people today, military training has some of the same benefits as sport, or an outward-bound course, offering extreme challenges which have the potential for developing strength and leadership qualities, as described in Klein (2011). Botha (personal communication, 15 July 2011), on the other hand, describes the process undergone in South African army training as one which severely damaged both self-respect and respect for the 'other', because its aim was to break down and reshape conscripts into Foucault's (1975: 135ff.) 'docile bodies', who did not regard 'the enemy' as human beings, and who would follow orders to kill without qualms of conscience.

One sees diverse themes, then, in the four men's experiences of military call-up. Though none of the men expresses enthusiasm about the fighting aspect of 'the army', both Riaan and George believe that the training of young people in military discipline is something very desirable, lacking in present-day South Africa. They identify with the disciplinary ethos represented by the institution of the army, while distancing themselves from 'killing people'. The code of army discipline seems to accord with the lifestyle governed by respect taught them as children by parental figures. Ernie, who underwent training when it was still brief and actual military engagement was remote, experienced it only as something strict and foreign, while Brendon saw township duty as something he would do almost anything to avoid. The solution he crafted to the extreme ambivalence of his dilemma speaks of his identification with isiXhosa speakers and his longing for acceptance within their community. Above all things, he did not want to 'shift' even further away from them than he had already done while at school.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the four men's accounts of rites of passage into manhood, focusing on ways in which their language repertoires are used, maintained and developed, and influence their 'ascribed' and 'inhabited' identities (Blommaert, 2005: 205).

It has looked at the different communities in which they participated, or from which they were excluded. The Xhosa circumcision ritual separates the boys from their childhood companions, a decisive exclusion from the community of Xhosa men. Brendon's comments suggest that, while force relations (Foucault, 1976) ebb and flow fairly freely between black and white boys in their childhood, as they grow older the power of white parents and other 'elders' guards and guides the racial identity of their sons, a surveillance similar to that described by Foucault (1976: 98ff.) in relation to sex. In addition to this, Brendon suggests that there may be another power block, the AmaXhosa, protective of their rituals and resistant to invasion of their sacrosanct spaces, even though there are instances of white people undergoing the rituals.

For George, the South African Defence Force was an imagined community (Wenger, 1998: 176) which he wished he could have participated in, and he and Riaan both construct army discipline as something desirable for today's youth. Brendon, at the other end of the spectrum, struggled to escape participation in this institution, as engagement in its practices was incompatible with his imagined community, an adult reconstruction of a childhood world of shared identities with Xhosa companions.

Brendon and Riaan had the privilege of a university education, both emerging from the experience equipped with different discourses: additional registers of isiXhosa and reflective discourses, tools enabling them to make more conscious choices in terms of the positions that they assumed.

Having followed the men through their 'rites of passage', I look at stories relating to their adult working lives in Chapter 5.

Notes

(1) *Boma*: a hut built in the wild, where the initiates stay for the duration of the ritual.
(2) *Umkhwetha* (plural *abakhwetha*): an initiate. Ernie's usage is not quite correct; it is anglicized.
(3) A phrase often used to describe the initiation ritual.
(4) *Amagqirha* are traditional healers (*igqirha*, singular). At this point, Brendon was speaking of white people becoming initiated into the traditional healing profession, but it was part of the general discussion about whites engaging in Xhosa rituals. A number of whites have recently become amagqirha, just as there has

recently been publicity about white boys being initiated into manhood along with black boys.

(5) See Appendix 5.

(6) Interestingly, the researcher is by no means powerless; the attitude that he or she adopts towards his or her participants ironically gives more power, through respect. This is a mechanism which one needs to be aware of in the broader consideration of the relationships described in this book.

(7) *Braai* (Afrikaans; SA English): barbecue.

(8) 'Necklacing' involved placing a motor-car tyre around a person's neck and setting it alight. The person would burn to death, an agonizing process.

(9) *Impimpi* (isiXhosa): an informer. In apartheid times, this word referred to someone who gave information to the police in exchange for money or other favours. The townships were full of suspicions, accusations and counter-accusations that certain people were informers.

(10) Appendix 5 gives a more detailed account of military service in South Africa during the apartheid years.

(11) My question here was inappropriate, as the 'border war' had not yet begun.

(12) *Baasskap* (Afrikaans): dominance, mastership.

(13) This was when the National Defence Force turned from fighting an 'enemy' across the border, to exerting force against its own people, attempting to quell the frequent uprisings in the townships during the 1980s.

(14) Bantu Holomisa was the then leader of the military government of the 'independent homeland' of the Transkei, having led a coup to oust President Matanzima in 1987. The homeland had some measure of independence from the South African government, and was at that time allowing the African National Congress (ANC) to use the territory as a springboard for their activities in South Africa (see Chapter 1).

(15) Appendix 6 gives some background about firearms in South Africa.

5 Adult Life and Work: Language and Power

> *He liked to think that in his work he could enter places other Europeans would never know and perhaps did not realise they needed to know. He did not want or need to rely on an interpreter, who would insert an additional level of mediation between himself and the great unfinishable work of trying to engage Africa on its own terms – daunting enough when attempted directly.*
> *The Native Commissioner* – Johnson (2006: 94)

As the men moved from school, military service or university into the working world, they joined different communities, with different practices. This chapter describes how they adapted to these and carried into them the repertoires learned in earlier stages of their lives. The chapter continues to examine ways in which language use interacts with identity in these different contexts.

Steyn (2001), in analysing the language of her participants, identifies five 'narratives', which further subdivide the three basic discourse types: 'essentialist racist discourse', 'colour-blind discourse' (including 'culturalist racist discourse') and 'race-cognisant discourse'. One, which she calls 'under African Skies', is defined as a type of discourse which is characterised by 'an honesty in talking about the past' (Steyn, 2001: 133), an awareness of her participants' own whiteness and how it operates and an attempt to enter into a 'new relationship – dialogic, appreciative, committed – with the continent that whiteness came to conquer' (Steyn, 2001: 145). In analysing my participants' narratives, I find evidence of this kind of discourse, particularly in the speech of Brendon when he looks over his past life from the vantage point of post-1994 democracy. I have called this kind of discourse 'deconstructing discourse'.

I have identified a number of other forms of white discourse in this chapter. The first is 'discipline discourse', already discussed and exemplified in Chapter 4. The second is the discourse of the 'enlightened', or liberal, academically trained white person, who promotes education and rational attitudes to problems, and is committed to making a positive contribution to the country. I see this as a discourse which arises very clearly from the liberal Western world view, and which sees this world view as having something

positive to offer. I have called this 'enlightened discourse'. While both these forms of discourse can be seen as white in that they arise out of the lifestyle and value systems of white Western groups, they do not necessarily contain derogatory or negative implications or innuendos about 'the other'.

I have identified two additional types of discourse in my data which I have called 'discourses of the margins'. These are forms of talk which seem to be typical of people who are positioned as whites but have some insight into and experience of the black lifeworld by virtue of their early socialisation and their language repertoires. I have divided these discourses into two types. The first is 'broker discourse', in which a white person offers insight into the black lifeworld to those who do not speak a black language, or interprets between the two worlds. The second is 'ambivalent discourse', evidencing conflicting identities and divided loyalties. Wenger (1998), in his description of brokering, asserts that

> The job of brokering … involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives…Brokering often entails ambivalent relations of multi-membership. (Wenger, 1998: 109)

It is clear that my participants often find themselves in a 'brokering' position. At times, this enables them to adopt the position of 'knower', being able to explain or interpret the lifeworld of members of one community to members of another. At other times, this involves them in positions of almost unbearable ambivalence. I have tried to capture these two positions in the terms *broker discourse* and *ambivalent discourse*.

Riaan: 'Consequent[1] but respectful' (Ri1.68)

In Riaan's story, he constructs his life's course as a relatively smooth linear progression (Brockmeier, 2000: 53), issuing out of his farming childhood. I see this as being in line with his aim to present an image of a consistent ('consequent') life (Ri1.68), although development as well as consistency can be seen in the forward movement of his career, as well as a certain ambiguity, which he works hard to fight against.

After completing his national service, Riaan returned home and began work in agricultural development, staying initially with his parents on the farm, and later doing his own part-time farming. This was 'back to square one' (Ri1.54) he says, in terms of being in an environment where he spoke a lot of isiXhosa and interacted often with black people – the farm community of practice (CoP) with its familiar repertoires. Marriage and part-time farming were absorbed into the forward movement, as was

the change in political dispensation, which moved him from working with white farmers to working with black farmers and rural people. He describes this in the initial autobiographical account of his life:

(1) the then Transkei and Ciskei as separate entities were all merged into one entity,[2] and so on, (**Liz**: Mm) and that was obviously now a very comfortable situation for me. Because I was fluent, and I knew the people's attitudes and cultures, (**Liz**: Mm) and whatever I had to know; it posed no fear… Then, from there it carried on until where it is now. (Ri1.55)

It seems important for Riaan to convey to me here that this change, which many white South Africans feared would move them *out of* their comfort zone, was moving him *into* his ('very comfortable for me', par. 1). He says that his life has 'carried on until where it is now' (par. 1), indicating minimal disturbance of the linear forward flow (Brockmeier, 2000: 53). Assuming perhaps that I would see the change from working with white farmers to working with black people as a frightening one for a white South African man, Riaan says that he was not afraid, because he 'was fluent, and I knew the people's attitudes and cultures, and whatever I had to know'. According to Wenger (1989: 164), 'we know who we *are* by what is familiar and by what we can negotiate and make use of, and we know who we are *not* by what is unfamiliar, unwieldy, and out of our purview'. Riaan's aforementioned claim, which could be seen as presumptuous, is designed to convey his feeling of familiarity in this 'new' situation, but still suggests a binary 'us' and 'them'; 'the people's attitudes and cultures' are portrayed as different from 'ours'. There is, then, some ambivalence: while the new situation took him into familiar territory, he is still positioned as a white person in the narrative.

In a later interview, I probed further into his experience of the change in 1994:

(2) **Liz**: And um, - you know, I'm sure things must have changed for you quite er - a lot, you know, after '94. Can you tell me any experiences about how things changed; how things were before and how things were after - or was there no change really for you? (Ri2.15)

Now revealing another side to his experience, Riaan admits that there were 'huge changes' (Ri2.16), from serving white farmers to serving developing black farmers, and that it took a while to 'understand the dynamics' (Ri2.17), but that he was able to make the adjustment. He

elaborates on this, saying that the dynamics are different because of different 'cultures' (Ri2.17), but describes these 'cultural' differences not so much in terms of customs, beliefs and practices, as in terms of the situation that rural people find themselves in as a result of South Africa's history:

(3) That's something that we can't argue away that there are differences. (**Liz**: Mm) In approaches to, like if you - I often take, if you're in a community, a black community out in the rural areas, what do you really have to live for? [pause]
(4) And there someone comes with a bright idea and with a feasible story to say, 'Listen, if you do this, this is what your outcomes will be', that's what you can live for.
(5) But you're stripped of your dignity; I mean, remember you were nothing. (**Liz**: Mmmm) For many years. (**Liz**: Mm) Our age people. You were nothing. (**Liz**: Mm) Now all you had that kept you alive was your your physical labour. Nothing else. You weren't allowed to have anything else.
(6) So one must look at it from that point of view, and - often people are critical, this community got this and they're not using it, or whatever or whatever, whatever, whatever, but one must look at it in the bigger picture. (Ri2.17, 18)

Riaan's initial comment about differences led me to expect 'us' and 'them' positioning, similar to that of George when he spoke of circumcision. Riaan's choice of direction after the pause was unexpected, but no doubt chosen as appropriate for his audience. His repeated use of the pronoun 'you' and 'your' (pars. 3, 5) invited me to position myself as a rural person of 'our' age. The empathy suggested here seems to reflect major insights gained through his work with rural people, and the adoption here of an identity as someone 'with a bright idea' (par. 4) who can offer people with little hope something 'to live for' (par. 4). He also distances himself in this extract from the incessant critical talk ('whatever, whatever, whatever', par. 6) which is rife in the country when development projects are discussed. This kind of talk points to how little the black people have done for themselves and how ungrateful they seem for the aid that they have been given and it suggests that they are unable to take advice or benefit from aid. This 'essentialist racist discourse' implies that whites would have done much better under similar circumstances. The situation of the rural people does speak to Riaan, and in this 'broker discourse' he positions himself where communities intersect, a man who has an understanding which is superior to that of the critics.

Riaan's only move away from the Eastern Cape, to take up a one-year lecturing post at a university in another province, took him right out of his comfort zone and made him 'very, very uncomfortable'. As Wenger (1989: 164) puts it, the situation was 'unfamiliar, unwieldy, and out of our purview' (and represented, in Riaan's view, 'a mess, it shouldn't have never happened' (Ri1.56)).

(7) I felt very lost in {Y town}. (**Liz**: Mm) To communicate with Sothos. I can't understand a word of Sotho.[3] (**Liz**: Is it? Not even now.) Not yes or no. (**Liz**: Mm) I can't understand yes or no. And there, I felt very very uncomfortable, very uncomfortable. (**Liz**: Mm) I can tell you now, I ... that's probably one of the main reasons why I came back to ... I couldn't even communicate in Xhosa with our gardener. (**Liz**: Yes) It's not my culture. I can't do that. (**Liz**: Ja) And that was probably one of the main re... so I came back. (Ri1.58)

He says he felt quite disempowered and lost (without identity or 'culture') in a situation where he couldn't even speak to the gardener in his mother tongue. In this new situation, he was unable to use isiXhosa to mediate the uncomfortably extensive social distance between a South African employer and his or her employee, something which is the norm for him in the Eastern Cape. This left him feeling very ill at ease, a stranger to himself; it was a 'critical experience' (Block, 2007a: 20) of ambivalence for him. Interestingly, he made no attempt to learn Sesotho or adjust to the place. He simply 'came back' (par. 7). This suggests how inextricably Riaan is identified with the Eastern Cape and isiXhosa.

Riaan's present CoP, agricultural development work, closely connected to government, has much in common with the farm CoP, with a significant difference being that the power is now increasingly out of the hands of the white man. Riaan has been an insider to the farm CoP, and can transfer repertoires (Wenger, 1998: 82) from there to this new context. He paints a picture of the language repertoires he now uses (Ri1.60–62): Afrikaans is the language of home and church; he uses isiXhosa with 90% of his clients, and in most meetings. English is the written language in the office, and his present secretary is isiXhosa speaking. He is constantly extending his knowledge of isiXhosa. New registers have been gained, some of which are necessary in his current CoP (e.g. the language of finance) and some incidental (e.g. religious terms he learned through listening to the preacher outside his office window). He uses a dictionary or asks his secretary when he needs new words to read and write, for instance.

Over the years of working in the agricultural development CoP, it seems he has learned other repertoires, guiding principles and values which facilitate his acceptance as a member, and enable him to act as broker, advising other white people ready to listen. This special knowledge gives him power, and it means that he can feel 'comfortable' in the post-1994 environment, though he can never presume to be a full 'insider', or part of the isiXhosa-speaking community. Riaan's story portrays him as poised between participation, peripherality and marginality (Wenger, 1998: 166–167). While he is in some senses a full participant in this community of people involved in agricultural development work, and has his own very specific and substantial role to play, his whiteness also positions him on the margins, restricting his participation rather than opening the door to his fuller participation. Examples of this can be seen in some of the extracts which follow, such as those where he discusses 'boere Xhosa' and 'racist remarks'.

Riaan claims that a guiding principle, facilitating his acceptance, is that 'mutual respect' is 'not negotiable' (Ri2.20). According to him, the childhood teaching in his family was that 'you respect and treat everyone … with all respect due to them, until proven wrong' (Ri1.49). This, he says, has stood him in good stead in his work community.

(8) For instance, in {the multi-storey building where I worked}, every morning, I greeted, from the cleaner in the foyer, right to my office, everyone I greeted, up to there. Resulted... that simple thing... my office is always shining. (**Liz**: Ja) And I didn't greet her Morning Sophie, because she's older than me, (…) I'd greet her as Aunt, (**Liz**: Yes) *uSisi*[4] or *uMama*[5] (Ri1.124)

Here he points out that the principle of respect 'pays', in a sense. These women reward him with good service, which in turn makes him feel accepted. In the next interview, after his explanation of 'differences' above (par. 3–6), I made the following comment:

(9) So that puts you in a - perspective as to what - how one should approach (**Liz**: Ja) people. (**Liz**: Ja) (Ri2.19)

This prompted him to elaborate on the principle of respect, and give another example:

(10) (…) There's a lady in {our building}, the lady is not, I would not say she's, she's just funny, she operates strange, I wouldn't say

> she's mentally retarded, (**Liz**: Ja) but she's just less developed, I'd say. And people make, people make mockery of her. And I just, every morning I ask her how she is, (**Liz**: Mm) and so on, and (…) I just respect her for what she does. (Ri2.21)

There is a mixture here of deep empathy for the woman and self-righteous anger and moral superiority towards 'people' who make a 'mockery of her' (par. 10). Riaan holds himself somewhat apart; I saw him at this point as a lonely figure standing against treatment which angers him, his relatively isolated positioning strengthening his compassion for the woman and his urge to make her feel accepted.

Later in the same interview, I made another comment regarding his concept of respect, and Riaan spoke of how insistent he is on the practice of respect within his personal sphere:

(11) **Liz**: Um, you described, in your story, you you, the way you described the whole culture of respect, it seemed to me that you see quite a continuity between the Afrikaans er view of respect and the Xhosa (**Liz**: Yes) view of respect.

(12) **Riaan**: Yes, Ja, for sure, definitely.

(13) **Liz**: And you've also said that –

(14) **Riaan**: And less so with English speakers. (**Liz**: //Ja) **Riaan**: Less so.// if I'm going to be honest

(15) **Liz**: Ja, ja, English speaking people don't // have that view of respect.

(16) English people don't have that, Liz - I for instance I still can't - I've got friends[6] now in {X town}, (**Liz**: Mm) same age, with kids and so on, and their kids don't - I'm used to uncle and aunt (**Liz**: //Ja) or Mrs// or Sir or whatever. (**Liz**: Ja) They call me {Riaan} and this guy is little like this![7] (**Liz**: Ja) I can't - It it it it hurts me - Every time it hurts me (**Liz**: Ja - it just feels// very wrong) - When they // visit - when they sleep over with us, I say to them, 'In this house it's *Oom* and *Tannie,*[8] until your parents get back'. (**Liz** *laughs*) (Ri2.60, 61)

There is quite a lot of overlapping talk here; I was trying to show understanding and gain clarity, but the vigour with which he spoke overrode what I said most of the time. After he had narrated another incident involving a British exchange student, I linked his concept of 'respect' with the problems due to lack of discipline he had spoken of earlier, asking him to elaborate with an illustrative incident. He then spoke further about how disrespect hurts him, this time in a situation involving Xhosa people:

(17) **Liz**: But you've also said that the loss of that [respect] is responsible for a lot of our problems. (**Liz**: Yes. Yes.) Would you like to tell about an experience or an incident or something which bears that out.

(18) **Riann**: I think [pause] the whole exercise of the new local government system. I've experienced that in {the} Municipality in {Z town}, where a young guy is a political counsellor, politically elected counsellor,[9] and where there is an older (**Liz**: Mm) traditional leader. (**Liz**: Mm) And where the two tackle each other in front of - other people, and say, you're wrong and you're wrong and - (**Liz**: Mm) That hurt me quite - seriously. I didn't - even if an older person is wrong, you still respect[10] that person. (**Liz**: Mm) (Ri2.63, 64)

These two extracts suggest that Riaan has brought together the Afrikaans tradition and the Xhosa tradition of respect for elders. In the intersection of the two communities, he has identified this value which they have in common, and invested so deeply in it that he experiences personal 'hurt' when it is violated.

Another of his important principles, referred to earlier, and explained as part of his initial biographical narrative, is that one should avoid at all costs a register of isiXhosa which is authoritative (*boere Xhosa*[11]).

(19) I'm also sensitive when you speak Xhosa in a professional capacity one must be very careful not to not to speak the boere Xhosa, (**Liz**: Ja) the old farm Xhosa, the authoritive [sic] (**Liz**: Yes) voice, and I see it many a time that people make that mistake; (…) Rather speak English, or Afrikaans for that matter (**Liz**: Yes), than speak authoritive [sic] Xhosa, I think that's the worst thing that can happen (…) if you respect people you don't do that. (**Liz**: Yes, yes) (Ri1.66)

When I followed up on this in the second interview, asking why it is the 'worst thing that can happen', this conversation ensued:

(20) Because you you you you still treating people as if you their authority, you've got the right to – you're superior to them (**Liz**: Mm). If you use the boere Xhosa. (**Liz**: Mm) // Because there's still that {inaudible}

(21) **Liz**: Can you describe - what // happens when you - what have you seen happen when a person does that?

(22) **Riaan**: I've seen people disbelieving what that person is saying. (**Liz**: Mm) In the woolsheep programme - we've got a woolsheep programme near {P-town}. (**Liz**: Mm) And there's an old man with good intentions - white oldish person, (**Liz**: Mm) and with very good intentions, but he uses that strong authoritive (sic) Xhosa. (**Liz**: Mm) 'This sheep must be held like this'. Instead of 'Hold the sheep like this'. (**Liz**: Mm) You understand (**Liz**: Yes I do understand.) and and and - I've seen it, I've seen it - and then and then people look at me, and they and they - they listen, but they don't listen with the same type of attention. This becomes now the white man's matter. (**Liz**: Ah-hu) It's not intended, and it's not his intention too, but he uses the wrong - he plays the wrong instrument. He uses the wrong - ja, he loses them, quickly quickly (**Liz**: They don't want to) Ja, no (**Liz**: go along with it.) Mm-hm! (Ri2.72–74)

He gives credit to this 'old man' for 'good intentions' (par. 22). This is one of 'his' people; a member of the farming community to which he belongs, and in line with his guiding principle of respect, he gives him recognition, even though he is critical of his choice of language register, which threatens Riaan's own legitimacy in the community of black farmers within which he works. According to his description, it is not the white farmer's attitude which is wrong, but the choice of register: 'he uses strong authoritive [sic] Xhosa'; 'he plays the wrong instrument' (par. 22).

He repeats the phrase 'I've seen it' (par. 22), indicating that for an attentive observer like himself the impact of the boere Xhosa register is easily observable. '[A]nd then the people look at me' (par. 22). While he does not go into detail about why the black farmers look at him or what he feels at that point, the sentence paints a vivid picture of a look which casts doubt on Riaan's own position. From his description, I interpret the look as saying, 'This is "your" person; do you approve of his manner of approach? How will you react to this?'. The black farmers' interest in what the old white man has to offer is withdrawn, and Riaan, by virtue of his whiteness, shares in his isolation (this now becomes a 'white man's matter' par. 22). Riaan's divided identity is palpable: while his whiteness and his background position him with the white demonstrator, his sensitivities are towards the Xhosa speakers around him. His distress and disapproval arise out of his own sense of losing the ground he has so carefully gained through his 'correct' choice of register. Riaan knows the crucial importance of positioning himself as a person who has not come to 'shove us around' (Ri2.76); who does *not* regard himself as superior to the Xhosa speakers. It is vital to inclusion in his work

community and success in his work. The right register is cultural capital for him (Bourdieu, 1991) and it is also important to him emotionally, because of his background and socialisation.

Riaan knows, then, that there is no space in the Eastern Cape agricultural development community, and in public spaces in South Africa more generally, for a continuation of the racist discourse of white superiority which was so pervasive in the past. A corollary of this, for him, is that one should not address a person in isiXhosa initially if one has never met him or her before, as one might be perceived as looking down on the person (having a boere Xhosa attitude). He told me in his initial narrative that this advice had been given him by an isiXhosa-speaking friend (Ri1.64), a person with the credentials of a full participant (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 29) in the predominantly black communities in which Riaan works.

(23) **Riaan**: But because of our past, to start off in Xhosa immediately - um, I believe - I might be wrong - I can I will be able to argue that - to start off in Xhosa is a sign of the old authoritive [sic] boere approach to Xhosa and I think it in many cases, it puts people off often (**Liz**: Mm, mm) in the sense that you are perceived as 'Do you think that I can't understand English? (**Liz**: Yes) Do you think that I'm stupid? (**Liz**: Yes) Why are you speaking Xhosa to me? Are you underestimating my abilities?' (**Liz**: Yes) And certainly that is not my intention at all by speaking Xhosa, and that's why I'm sensitive about it. (Ri1.65)

Riaan has exercised agency and 'invested' in a register of isiXhosa which conveys respect. In this extract he explains how he carefully distances himself completely from any suggestion of the boere Xhosa register, which could exclude him from participation in the agricultural development community within which he works, and the broader (mostly isiXhosa-speaking) world of the Eastern Cape post-1994.

A third principle of his, facilitating his survival as a white man who understands isiXhosa in this post-1994 CoP, is not to take too seriously comments made by black people which indicate negative or prejudiced attitudes towards whites. He explains, as part of his response to my question about changes post-1994, that because he understands everything that is being said in isiXhosa, he is exposed to a lot of what he calls 'racist remarks' from black people. But he says:

(24) I don't think - one must take e::verything too - too serious what people are saying, (**Liz**: Mm) especially with racism. (**Liz**: Ja)

Aaah, it's not that serious. If one will take it seriously it'll become serious. (**Liz**: Right) If you don't give it all its due, (**Liz**: // It, jaa) then it's not an issue //.

(25) **Liz**: *laughs,* Ja, OK. So, in a way, it's how you take it that makes it - gives it its power in a way.

(26) **Riaan**: Yes, it's how you perceive it. (**Liz**: Mm) I mean, if, if, if - yoo, if I had to get cross or or disillusioned every time someone says, 'Jo, he's a white man, he's doing this', (**Liz**: Mm) then I must - leave. (**Liz**: Yes) This is not the place for me to be. *Laughs*. (**Liz**: Yes) Ja, because I am white, I can't change that. (**Liz**: no, *laughs*) I can't change that. (**Liz**: Ja) (Ri2.22)

I see pain under the surface of what Riaan says here, indications perhaps that the temptation is always there to become 'cross or disillusioned', or even think of leaving, when black people 'play the race card'.[12] If he allowed 'racist comments' to 'get to him', he might exclude himself from the community. Race as a category is a constant reality in the world he lives and works in; his whiteness (skin colour; ethnicity), he says and repeats, is something he cannot change; it has the power to move him to the margins of the community within which he works, and out, if he is not careful. He explains how he exercises agency in choosing not to take 'racist' comments seriously. This assists his survival in his chosen and familiar context. My own responses to what he says here (I often say 'Yes' in quite a definite way) show that at this stage I am moving beyond empathy to agreement as I listen to him. My workplace has some similarities to his, and although I do not understand all that is being said in my workplace, as he does, I recognise his approach as being a useful one for survival within it.

Indications that Riaan is an accepted member of his work community (and the community of isiXhosa speakers) are cherished as high points in his life. The comment which follows was part of a response to my question about experiences which had made him feel closest to Xhosa culture. After speaking about his childhood again, he said:

(27) fairly high high people in society have commended me on on being Xhosa-speaking in front of other people, and that has made me proud and (**Liz**: Mm) part of that culture. {Our boss} has often said in front of people, they 'It doesn't matter what you talk, this man can speak, talk with us, (**Liz**: Yes) and he knows how we think', (**Liz**: Yes) so - that has made me, - quite often it's made me comfortable, very comfortable. (**Liz**: Yes, yes yes. Made you feel) part of the (**Liz**: part of things) Yes, (**Liz**:

> accepted.) yes, yes, definitely, no that's definitely like that, yes. (**Liz**: Ja) (Ri2.59)

Riaan strikes me as someone who does not indulge in sentimental talk; it seems that 'very comfortable' is about as far as he would go in describing positive emotions. It is clearly precious to him, however, that an isiXhosa speaker gives him credit as someone who 'knows how we think' (par. 27). He says that it makes him feel 'part of that culture', a sense, even if it is fleeting, of being a full participant (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 29). Again, my 'Yes, yes, yes' indicates a strong sense that I would also feel very positive about this kind of acceptance within the Xhosa community.

So although Riaan constructs his life as moving consistently forward in a linear fashion with little change, he has made important choices in terms of the principles that guide his life, and the register of isiXhosa that he uses, which have assisted his successful survival and inclusion in the strongly government-influenced CoPs in which he has worked, starting pre-1994 with one short break, up until the present. He has also moved from a position of uncontested inclusion in the white agricultural establishment, during the old dispensation, into a much more precarious situation, where there are possibilities of isolation and marginalisation which he has to work hard to keep at bay, as well as moments of feeling 'very comfortable' when acceptance is explicitly expressed to him.

George: 'Fishing, hunting, (…) outdoors' (G3.83)

George and Riaan's lives developed very differently, mainly because of their different educational backgrounds. George's choice of a technical option at secondary school equipped him for the kind of work that he has done throughout his life. He sees himself as being a 'technically minded person' and traces the continuity of this tendency in the life of his middle son, who is 'always building things and stripping things' (G3.83, 84). He started work in the late 1980s, working for the South African Railways, a government department, which sent him on a short training course, but required no tertiary qualification.

When the branch that he was working in closed down in the early 1990s, because of technical changes, he moved to a job in a factory, and then later, after an injury, to a municipal job. He worked on his own for a while after leaving that position and was working for a timber company at the time of our meetings.

Speaking of the maintenance and development of his fluency in isiXhosa, as part of a response to my request for 'key incidents that stand out in your memory which relate to your knowing Xhosa', he says:

(28) But Xhosa does grow on a person; (**Liz**: Mm) it definitely does grow onto you…but like I say, you have to speak it every day. (**Liz**: Mm) And fortunate for me, in my line of business, you know, you know, we - (**Liz**: Mm) I'm the only white bloke out there (**Liz**: Mm) and I've got 26 black staff below me, (**Liz**: Mm) so ja – (G2.15)

I have already referred to George's need to continue the outdoor rural lifestyle he enjoyed with his father and to pass it on to his sons. Most of his white friends and colleagues seem to fit into this lifestyle, forming a kind of informal community where outdoor pursuits are the order of the day and isiXhosa is commonly spoken, even among themselves. IsiXhosa is also one of the languages spoken among the family in their home. When I asked him whether white people who were his friends and acquaintances all knew that he spoke isiXhosa, he said,

(29) Yes. (**Liz**: Mm) Ja. A lot of times um, we speak Xhosa at - the white guys - at work. (**Liz**: Ja) We speak Xhosa to each other. (**Liz**: Mm Is that so?) Even if there's no black person around, no Xhosa person around, (**Liz**: Ja) you know, sometimes we speak Xhosa to each other. (G3.56)

When I asked a question hoping to find out to what extent he had entered into the Xhosa milieu (G2.80), George replied:

(30) Yes, well, on this last fishing trip, we went right into the rural areas. (**Liz**: Mm) And – fortunately all of us – we actually, we took a black guy with us on the trip. And we taught him how to fish and all that, so… (G2.81)

George's response here shows the tendency of these friends to include black people in their activities. It is not completely clear why this 'black guy' (par. 30) was taken along, but George is at pains to show that he was included in their fishing activities and that they taught him something new. There is a suggestion of patronage here, a sense that whites are in control of the skills and routines of this informal community of leisure fishermen, which they share with those who are 'less advantaged'. The phrase

'fortunately all of us' seems to refer to the fact that they all speak isiXhosa and can communicate with their black companion. The ambivalence here is perhaps implicit in his life generally: the black man is a friend; he is also usually a subordinate, perhaps in some cases a servant.

The theme of 'black friends' is a consistent one in George's life story from childhood up until the present. As we saw in the introduction to George (Chapter 3), he sees friendliness as being one of his key characteristics, and is proud of this. Apart from Gigs, most of the 'black friends' he mentions are colleagues from work, but friendships do extend at times beyond the workplace. I see his friendships and associations with black people and with isiXhosa as an extension of the CoP of his childhood, and its routines and practices.

The CoPs that he joins in his various jobs vary in their capacity to tolerate the practices which he brings from his childhood. In these variations, one can detect changes which could be related to the shift in power relations represented by the political changes of 1994. One significant episode that he describes took place before he was married, when he was working for the railways, before the 1994 change to a democratic government in South Africa. This episode is explored further in Chapter 6.

(31) There was a guy there, his name was Nathi (…) He was a cleaner there, (**Liz**: Mm) and this guy used to come into my house, he used to come and have a beer with me at home. (**Liz**: Yes)

(32) And this other guy (…) he turned around and said to me, um, 'How can you let a black guy into your house? What's wrong with you?' (G2.33, 34)

In this episode, a white colleague challenges George on his friendship with a black man. George defends his behaviour, and does not give in to his colleague's pressure, but he is clearly seen as 'out of line'. While this kind of attitude probably still prevails among many white South Africans, it is significant that it is spoken of in a story coming out of the time when white superiority was still unchallenged.

In George's numerous stories about the kinds of interactions he has with the black workers in his current job, he does not speak of a particular 'black friend', but of a number of different conversations and interactions. Like Riaan, he distinguishes between different registers of isiXhosa, terming the isiXhosa register which he speaks *kitchen Xhosa*, as opposed to 'deep Xhosa'. The register that he speaks clearly disadvantages him in a number of ways, as is shown in a couple of incidents that he describes.

Responding to my query about how well he was able to follow when deep Xhosa was spoken, he said that he often didn't understand when his white colleague who speaks deep Xhosa was conversing with Xhosa speakers:

(33) **Liz**: Ja…and so it's more with them than with the black people themselves (**George**: Ja) that you have difficulty.

(34) **George**: Ja, that's right. When the black guy understands my Xhosa, then he - how can I say - he - he adjusts towards me,[13] ja. Whereas {my white friend} now, a lot of times at work, he'll speak proper Xhosa now. (**Liz**: Ja) And I don't understand a single word they are talking about. (*laughs*)

(35) **Liz**: Is that so? That's very interesting…

(36) They tease me. (**Liz**: Ja) They tease me.(**Liz**: Ja) Two black guys at my work the other day laughed at me, the way I was speaking Xhosa my way, and I said, don't laugh at me, why don't you help me right? (**Liz**: Ja) And after that (…) I spoke to them in Afrikaans and they couldn't understand a word. And then they asked me in Xhosa and I said 'No', I said 'I'm not going to speak that language to you now, because you don't - you mock me'. (**Liz** *laughs*) I said, 'Now you will learn Afrikaans. If I give you instructions and you not going to do it, I'll give you a written warning'. (*laugh*)

(37) **Liz**: So the fact that you've got a supervisory role over these guys gives you quite a lot of clout, hey?

(38) **George**: It does. It does. But also, I wouldn't really go and give them a written warning! (**Liz**: No) It's more like teasing each other. (G2.96–103)

George's story portrays to me that he is piqued by the humiliation of being teased. My interest in the way that the black workers adjust to his kitchen Xhosa is swept aside by his eagerness to tell me about their teasing. In this new post-1994 dispensation, it seems his 'playmates' are no longer obliged by George's colour and position in society to be helpful ('why don't you help me right?', par. 36); they have the freedom to laugh at him. This positions George outside of their circle, and he responds spontaneously and almost childishly, as if to say, 'I'm not going to play anymore!'.

I sense ambivalence in his feelings, as well as in his actions. Clearly, this teasing was quite painful to him; he tells the story with intensity and emotion, at quite a high volume. His response, first by putting them at a disadvantage by speaking to them in Afrikaans, in which he is more

proficient than they are, and then by threatening them with disciplinary action (using his other source of power, his managerial position), seems somewhat vindictive. Ultimately though, he constructs what has happened as 'more like teasing each other' (par. 38) – just a game, as it was in childhood – signalling to me that it was not his intention to damage the relationship.

The next extract followed quite closely on his explanation about the use of isiXhosa by his white colleagues at work (par. 29). He tells, quite unexpectedly, about his 'broker role'.

(39) **Liz**: Ja, Ok, so that sounds as though many of the people you know and you work with and so on also know Xhosa.

(40) **George**: Yes. (**Liz**: Mm) I also had to inter - now before this other black guy started, Senzo - I had to be the interpreter at all the hearings and (**Liz**: Mm) meetings and all that. (**Liz**: Mm) (…) But now that Senzo's there, it goes much quicker because he is Xhosa-speaking (**Liz**: Mm), and - Ok, and he went to an English school so he's

(41) **Liz**: He does the interpreting now.

(42) **George**: He does the interpreting now. (…) there's a lot of words that I'd like to say in Xhosa, especially words like a serious meeting, (**Liz**: Mm) but I don't know the words in Xhosa - it's difficult. (**Liz**: Mm-mm-mm) You know, you need a person with more capacity in Xhosa to do it. (**Liz**: Mm) You know, you need a person with more vocabulary in Xhosa to do it. (**Liz**: Mm...mm -mmm) (G3.62, 63)

He assesses the situation honestly: 'it goes much quicker because he is Xhosa-speaking'; 'he went to an English school so he's' [fluent in English and isiXhosa] (par. 40); 'you need a person with more vocabulary in Xhosa' (par. 42). He expresses regret, 'there's a lot of words that I'd like to say in Xhosa (…) it's difficult' (par. 42). One senses that he is quite downcast by his displacement by Senzo; it has deprived him of a significant role which he filled, and means a loss of influence for him.

In spite of certain inadequacies in the kitchen Xhosa which George speaks, he loves to speak isiXhosa, and feels odd when speaking English to a black person, something which is happening more and more often in his work environment, and even beyond it. In the world which he now inhabits, English is a repertoire used by blacks as well as whites, and this is an uncomfortable change for him. In response to a question of mine in which I was trying to probe shifts in roles and positions which George makes with different people, he tells me of this discomfort.

(43) **Liz**: You know, we still live our lives in different kind of compartments, don't we?

(44) **George**: Yes, no, we do. But, um, Mrs Botha, Senzo, this guy that I work with, (**Liz**: Mm) him and I - like when him and I are talking we talk differently - in a different manner than - when, how can I say, when I talk with a white colleague of mine. (**Liz**: Mm) Um, not disrespectful or anything, but, um - I'm sure it's to do with the different cultures. (**Liz**: Mm) I actually find it difficult to talk to him in English. (**Liz**: I'm sure, ja) because I know he's Xhosa. (**Liz**: Ja) And he talks, and sometimes I talk to him in Xhosa and he answers me in English. (**Liz**: Ja - ja) I'm sure it's something - it must be a person's subconscious, or something - (**Liz**: Ja) that you'll always look at him as a Xhosa, not as a (**Liz**: an English speaker) as a white person. (**Liz**: Ja) I find it difficult to speak English to say, that person. (G3.43)

George's world is racialised, and language for him is an important marker of race. In other places he mentions that he always speaks Afrikaans to Afrikaans-speaking people as well, and explains this racialisation (or ethnicisation) of languages as 'the right way' (G3.71); if you know a person's language, you should use it with them. There is, in this belief, a kind of assumption that each person has 'a language', i.e. is monolingual, or has a fundamental 'home' language, something which is not necessarily true about himself. One sees also in George's practices a contrast with those of Riaan, who would rather speak English or Afrikaans to a black person than a register which might be construed as boere Xhosa.

In the above extract, George describes the way he speaks to an isiXhosa speaker as 'a different manner' (par. 44). He feels a need to defend this statement, ('not disrespectful or anything', par. 44), perhaps perceiving that it might be construed as racist. He 'finds it difficult' (par. 44) to speak to a black person in English, and it doesn't 'feel right' when a black person speaks English to him. An explanation of this which later makes sense to him is that he almost becomes a different person when he speaks isiXhosa. His identity is multiple; he has different identities when he speaks different languages, and links different languages quite firmly to different racial and ethnic groups. He feels quite uncomfortable when a black person, by speaking English, tries to push him back into his white English identity, which for George, only matches interactions with white people.

There are suggestions in his story that George's identity position has shifted with the transfer of political power from white to black. Once

stigmatised for inviting a black colleague into his house, and feeling that his ability to speak isiXhosa was something enjoyable and 'special', he now feels disadvantaged at times by his particular brand of isiXhosa, in terms of being teased, and losing the identity and position of influence of an interpreter. He also finds that the familiar pattern of speaking isiXhosa to black people is more and more disrupted by blacks who insist on speaking English to him, throwing his familiar range of identities into flux.

Brendon: Closing the 'circle' (B1.30)

Brendon experienced a time of great vibrancy during his period in the Transkei (Mthatha), where he interacted socially in a community comprising black people as well as white. This is contrasted, in his story, with the 'barren' (B2.54) years of school and university, where 'there was never an opportunity to share spaces' (B2.44). As part of his response to my inquiry, in Interview 2, about incidents involving the use of isiXhosa which had changed his sense of self and the world, he told of the job he had been given in Mthatha, when he had to organise a major event, quite an overwhelming task:

(45) that was a - a very intense - thing that I had to do, cause we only had one telephone (**Liz**: Mm), the faxes never worked // (**Liz**: Mm, mm) - you know,// nothing was really working, so - they just said, here's R50 000, organise the {event}, you know (Liz: Shoe! // laughs) - which was// - quite hec - like saying, you know, here's a miniature Grahamstown festival[14], go ahead and organise it (…)

(46) with a committee, obviously - but I mean it was a veritable nightmare - I don't know why I'm telling you that - but //(**Liz** *laughs*) - for me it //was a very significant chaotic moment in my life (**Liz**: Yes, ja) when I suddenly realised, gosh, you know, living in Mthatha is is just not going to cut it for me, //(**Liz** *laughs*) in this //way that I'm used to - like at {my old university} everything worked and (**Liz**: Ja) (…) when I look back it was incredibly enriching (**Liz**: Yes) and - I almost felt like I could do <u>anything</u> after that. (**Liz** *laughs*) (B2.7, 8)

Here he describes a critical experience of ambivalence (Block, 2007a), where he found himself within a 'chaotic' situation where 'nothing was

really working' (par. 45). He felt totally out of his element '{it} is just not going to cut it for me' (par. 46). There is a sense of dismay here; he had made such a dramatic change in his life to be there, and now he didn't see how he could operate in that situation. My laughter here signals my recognition of this kind of consternation and frustration, which I am very familiar with, having worked in similar environments. Clearly, Brendon had no choice but to adjust and make it work, as he had done in a very different earlier situation when he was sent away to school. There was a great sense of triumph and empowerment in having pulled it off: 'I almost felt like I could do anything after that' (par. 46). It is apparent that for this white man, his ability to cope in a 'technically challenged' environment, common in black academic institutions relating to their under-resourcing during apartheid, adds new dimensions to the power he already has by virtue of his whiteness and his ability to speak isiXhosa.

However, there were other (non-technical) challenges to his power in this place, and at this time. In a continuation of the story in the previous extract, he describes the political climate at the Transkei university pre-1994, telling of a confrontation where a black student spat in his face, as well as an incident where a group of black students had him thrown out of a bar. He says:

(47) there were hu:ge political dynamics at that university (**Liz**: Mm) that were at play, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) - um, and they were always underly - not so much underlying even - they were quite blatant, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) um - and there was, um, you know, this this strong anti - almost 'anti-white' feeling, you know (**Liz**: Yes) (…) I grew to understand that - you know, the PAC[15] was a formidable force, (**Liz**: Mm) um, at that time, (**Liz**: Mm) on that campus, and um, and that not everybody was going to just welcome whites into the fold, you know, (**Liz**: Right) so - it was quite an interesting moment for me that, (**Liz**: Mm,// mm, mm) um// - (B2.11)

Brendon's hesitation here in speaking of 'anti-white' feeling (par. 47) is perhaps evidence that he doesn't want to sound in any way like a stereotypical white, with fearful and 'anti-black' feelings. He would like his discourse to be enlightened, and not racist in any way. It is also evidence of how difficult it was (and is) for Brendon to confront his whiteness, and the impact it has on those around him. His ability to speak isiXhosa could extend his power, but could not undo his whiteness. He says 'I grew to

understand', and calls it 'an interesting moment' (par. 47), establishing an academic distance from the tumult of painful and disappointed feelings it must have engendered.

While he may have been crestfallen, all was not yet lost in terms of his relationship to Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) members. He continues, telling of an encounter with one of the PAC leaders:

(48) (…) one of the leaders of the PAC and - ended up - we had long discussions around these issues and (**Liz**: Ja) - and him saying No::, come on, join the PAC, you know, come on, we want white people to join the PAC (**Liz**: Ja) and it - and I was qu - it was all this juxtaposition happening in my head (**Liz**: Yes) cause I actually - at that point, politically, almost, I'd, I - agreed with the PAC, (**Liz**: Yes) cause I was trying to see it from - from their point of view and I almost felt like - in fact what they - their way of thinking - their Africanist way of thinking was correct, (**Liz**: Mm) and if I was black I'd definitely be PAC - you know (**Liz**: Mm, mm, mm) - and, and it was interesting (…) (B2.12)

Brendon's discourse here is very ambivalent ('this juxtaposition happening in my head', par. 48), where he sees the Africanist point of view of the black man with whom he is conversing in isiXhosa,[16] who is inviting him to join a movement whose philosophy was usually seen to be 'anti-white'. He had recently experienced strong 'anti-white' sentiments directed against him by some of its members. In spite of the pain and shock of these experiences, and those in the broader South Africa at the time,[17] his strong wish for acceptance among black people, combined with his academic mindset, move him to attempt resolution of the ambivalence by once again taking up an analytical and academic (enlightened) stance: 'it was interesting' (par. 48). His whiteness is still a fact of life for him. He does not see himself as black ('if I was black I'd definitely be PAC', par. 48), and is not seen as black ('we want white people to join the PAC', par. 48), and this leaves him on the margin of this community, unable to join the PAC, although a shared linguistic repertoire makes intense dialogue, and even an invitation to participate, possible.

During Brendon's time working in the Transkei, he researched ways in which the historic and traditional art of isiXhosa oral literature was translating itself into the present. In speaking, during his autobiographical narrative, of one of the poets with whom he worked intensively, he says:

(49) it really made my Xhosa come to fruition in a way (**Liz**: Ja), everything I had learned, because *izibongo*[18] in a sense are the highest form of verbal art (**Liz**: Mm) in the language, so in order to understand them and get a grasp of what they're about (**Liz**: Mm) you really have to apply yourself (**Liz**: Mm), even if you are Xhosa mother-tongue speaking. (**Liz**: Sure, sure) (B1.37)

There is a strong sense of pride and achievement here in having extended his isiXhosa proficiency to the extent that he can understand the highly artistic form of *izibongo*. He also speaks of feeling greatly honoured to have known the poet, who 'grew up in abject poverty' and had not achieved high levels of schooling. He recounts the way that the poet used to telephone him even after he had left Transkei to tell Brendon about the dreams he was having about him; he believes that the poet had special spiritual gifts ('he was in a sense a *thwasa*[19]', B1.36). Brendon felt a great sense of acceptance by this poet, and inclusion in his mind and heart space, and describes as 'profound' (par. 50) what they managed to achieve together, recording his life story and turning his poetry into writing, and later into web-based video footage. Sadly, the poet has since died. Brendon explains that:

(50) he was buried with his books, you know, which I thought was quite profound (**Liz**: Ja, ja), coming from a really rural background (**Liz**: Ja), and then, his orality and how it became transported into literacy, and now I'm going {abroad} in about two weeks' time to actually show how we've transported that literacy into technology… (B1.39)

Brendon has combined his rare brand of power, as an academic who has mastered this register of isiXhosa, and a white man, with his privileged background and training, with the power of isiXhosa oral poetry, in order to extend this poet's reach into print and web-based documentary. This has also been for him a great affirmation of his own power and agency, and was clearly a high point in his life and career. He felt that he had played a significant role and achieved quite a remarkable degree of acceptance within a rich rural cultural tradition of poetic practice, characterised by a very specialised linguistic register, in which he has a strong investment. This relationship seems to have represented quite intensely for him a moving together of the points of the circle, and the death of the poet was clearly a significant loss for him.

His next job, lecturing in the African Languages Department of a South African university, also brought development in his command of the isiXhosa language, and of his sense of identity. Once again, as part of his response to my query about incidents relating to his knowledge of isiXhosa which affected his sense of self and the world, he says:

(51) And you have to teach in isiXhosa, (**Liz**: Mm) and, again I was confronted by my sort of being caught up between Xhosa and English (**Liz**: Mm) and what my identity was and - and at the beginning I was like - more sort of seen as a novelty in a way (**Liz**: Mmmm, mm) - white guy –

(52) I remember the two books I taught (…) I did a comparative analysis of these two novels for the first years in isiXhosa and um, I think that was a big learning curve for me,

(53) and, - um, it also made me realise that, - if you teach people in their mother tongue - in isiXhosa - they - I mean the class was incredibly vibrant compared to other classes that you taught in English (**Liz**: Yes, yes), you know, and there was a lot of conceptual - um - stuff happening and debate happening which didn't happen in in the classes such as the sociolinguistic classes, so - that was for me quite a - turning point as well (**Liz**: Ja), in terms of my own sort of formation of my own um feelings around issues like language of instruction (B2.13, 14).

This academic post confronted him with a new challenge: lecturing in isiXhosa. Comparing his isiXhosa-medium lecturing experience with his experience of lecturing in English, he saw what conceptual depth and vibrant debate was unlocked when learning and teaching was done in the home language. This insight represented a 'turning point' (par. 53) in his thinking. The ambivalence that he experienced lecturing in isiXhosa ('caught up between Xhosa and English', par. 51) was intensified by the fact that he was seen as 'a novelty' (par. 51), a white man teaching isiXhosa. Fluency in a black language is incongruous 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1991) for a white South African to possess, and my participants' whiteness affects their 'audibility' and 'voice' (Blommaert, 2005); people do not expect them to speak a black language.

The 10 years following his departure from the Transkei moved Brendon ultimately into what he describes as a much more white and sterile space (B3.50), at universities based firmly within white South Africa, and culminated in a year teaching isiXhosa at an overseas university. Speaking of that year, in his autobiographical narrative, he says:

(54) I was desperately lonely, and I had, I even started having things like panic attacks, you know (**Liz**: Mm) I'd feel like really out of control (**Liz**: Mm, mm) (…) I mean I felt very vacuous (**Liz**: Mm), like it's an odd thing to be teaching Xhosa {overseas} (…) and I thought what have I become? You know, what's happened to me? (**Liz**: Mm) (B1.45)

In a foreign university, he is completely out of his element, a member of no meaningful community ('it's an odd thing to be teaching Xhosa {overseas}', par. 54), and therefore feels as if he has no meaningful identity ('what have I become?', par. 54). He had also lost his power ('I'd feel like really out of control', par. 54), which he comes to sense is intimately connected to isiXhosa and the familiar space of South Africa. This is, for him, another 'critical experience' (Block, 2007a: 20) of ambivalence, similar to that which he experienced as a child who had been sent to school. The difference, this time, is that he had more power to do something about it.

Brendon tells that throughout his adult life, creative writing in English and isiXhosa has been one of the ways in which he fights alienation and understands and reconstructs, through imaginative engagement, the world he experienced in childhood. Wenger (1998: 176) speaks of participation through imagination as 'a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves'. In the midst of his alienation abroad, in order to reconnect with the source of his power and identity, he started writing a novel in isiXhosa. He indicates that, while he was there, his writing shifted into 'a more Xhosa-ised space' (B1.46). The sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation impelled him to engage more intensely, in his imagination, with the Xhosa side of himself, another part of his attempt to 'go full circle'. Removed from the geographical space where he feels at home, he creates an 'imagined community' where his life has meaning. Kanno and Norton (2003: 242), introducing a special issue of the *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* which deals with 'Imagined Communities and Educational Possibilities', suggest that 'imagined communities are no less real than the ones in which learners have daily engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment'. This is certainly true for Brendon in this situation.

When he returned to South Africa, Brendon's movement to close the circle was a more concrete one: he eagerly responded to an offer of a post at the Eastern Cape University he had attended as a student, even though it meant a drop in salary. The work which he is currently involved in there

is deeply fulfilling and exciting for him, giving him enormous scope for creativity to 'reposition the language' (B1.49) and '[resurrect] isiXhosa' (B1.51) in a space which is much more 'shared' and where he feels at home: 'I felt just such an overwhelming sense of homecoming and belonging' (B1.54), he said, of his return to the Eastern Cape.

He speculates quite extensively about the source of his energy and commitment, even hinting at the supernatural:

(55) I just think that some - thing has just given me that gift or drive or whatever (**Liz**: Yes) to actually do this and
(56) **Liz**: like inspired, it sounds as if you feel inspired
(57) **Brendon**: I feel, I'm absolutely driven, I'm inspired (**Liz**: Ja), I'm driven, I (**Liz**: Ja) (B1.52)

He considers the heritage of his 'European' work ethic as a source of this drive, but comes down fundamentally in favour of his childhood identity and desire to 'get back' and 'go full circle'.

(58) So I don't know where all that came from, but I still think, it's all intertwined with me and who I am and my identity and my childhood and, (**Liz**: Mm) and I have an incredible sense of wanting to get back not because I feel guilty, necessarily (**Liz**: Mm), I have had moments of feeling guilty, I must be honest, because I'm a white Xhosa speaker, um, but this was driven by just an overwhelming sense of being able to get back because the financials were in place (**Liz**: Mm), and and being overwhelmingly committed to isiXhosa, much more than English – (B1.61)

He has clearly given serious thought to the possibility that white guilt is one of his motivations, and in a later interview he clarifies this guilt. He says that it is

(59) just simply of being a white person living - through apartheid and getting all the benefits of apartheid - and only realizing that much later in life – (B3.35)

It is clear that Brendon, like most white South Africans growing up under apartheid, is a beneficiary of all that is involved in white privilege, even though it was 'forced upon him', in some sense, and he has always wanted to 'undo' what happened when he was sent to school and something in him

'shifted' (B1.26). This means that he feels guilty of something which, in a sense he was not responsible for, but which he became complicit in. And the fact that he is now an influential member of staff at a historically white and thus advantaged[20] university is also a consequence of white privilege, layered on top of the privilege of having shared his childhood with people who were then (and now) disadvantaged, and augmented once again by his own drive to 'get back' and (perhaps) his characteristic industriousness and will to succeed. He shows awareness of all of this, but does not dwell on the guilt; that would be painful and immobilising. Instead, he aligns himself with the current national agenda and energetically does what he can to implement it, in this way trying, perhaps, to counteract the impact of his involvement in the previous system. He says:

(60) But I I I do feel that I can achieve a lot in this country. (**Liz**: Mm) I do think it's partly because I do feel this sense of connectedness, (**Liz**: Mm) the sense of - the language gives me the ability to actually reach out more to people, (**Liz**: Mm) and to work with people. (**Liz**: enormously, hey) (B1.108)

(61) I mean, as a South African, I feel, like if you want to do something, do it, (**Liz**: Mm) you know the chances of getting it right are quite good. (**Liz**: Mm) (…) I feel an incredible sense of optimism, (**Liz**: Mm) so, um, you know, with her,[21] for example, if Nongugquko phones me and says, look, I want to buy a house, which I've told her like, you need to look for a house, you know, (**Liz**: Mm) of your own, (**Liz**: Yes) I mean, then we facilitate that process. (B1.99)

Brendon expresses great positivity about his work and about the opportunities that the democratic dispensation creates, which were never there before (e.g. for a rural black woman to buy a house). He energetically and enthusiastically aligns himself with the stated ideals of the new dispensation in a quest to build a South Africa where 'shared spaces' expand, and where indigenous languages and cultures are promoted and developed. This fits with Wenger's (1998: 179) identification of alignment as a mode of belonging to a CoP: 'Through alignment, we become part of something big because we do what it takes to play our part'.

The academic world of universities (most of them 'previously advantaged') constitutes the main CoP within which Brendon has operated throughout his studies and his working life. Within that world, he has worked within the discipline of African language studies, his study and career choices driven by his desire to 'get back', to reconnect, participate

in and find acceptance within the Xhosa world that he left behind when he was sent to school. The academic community of African language departments has kept him in contact with isiXhosa on an ongoing basis, and has been an important 'island' for him in the white world, carrying him through the 'barren' times (B2.57) when he was cut off from most black people. Now, in the post-1994 era, when connections of all kinds are possible, he is able to extend this 'shared' territory to other departments in the university and beyond the institution's walls, aligning himself with national language policy. Academia has also given him cognitive tools with which to reflect on his experiences, and attempt to make sense of them.

Ernie: 'A white Madiba' (E2.44)

Like George, Ernie started work on the railways almost immediately after he finished school. He was transferred to different branches in the region, doing clerical work. His first job brought him into extensive contact with the public, most of whom were isiXhosa speakers. In his autobiographical narrative, he speaks of what a great help his isiXhosa fluency was to him in that work, and says that his employers

(62) even sent me for a - erm, Xhosa exam, I had to go and (…) the court interpreter (…) tested me in East London and passed it - and then - I got a special allowance (…) seeing I passed the er Xhosa test. (E1.38)

Not only did his isiXhosa proficiency win him a 'special allowance', but it also enabled him to win a prize for fastest service delivery in ticket sales! Ernie told me this at the beginning of the second interview, when I asked if there was anything he had thought of that he wished he'd said the previous time.

(63) I feel that's the only thing that helped me, you know because (**Liz**: Ja) there was no delay, I mean I knew what they wanted each time (**Liz**: Ja) (…) I knew all the Xhosa names of the various towns (…) and er - it helped me a hang of a lot. (…) And I should imagine it helped towards my promotion as well. (E2.4)

In this job, he also developed his existing fluency in Afrikaans. '{M}ost of {his} superiors were Afrikaans' (E1.60), and he acted as secretary in their industrial safety meetings, where minutes had to be taken in Afrikaans every alternate month (E1.60).

Ernie's story paints a picture of someone who was fully integrated into the CoP of the railways. He expresses pride in his achievements in this job, and seemed to have gained great satisfaction from performing his role well and earning approval from his superiors. His multilingual repertoires assisted him greatly in this, and he indicated that while he was there, two other work opportunities came his way because of his fluency in isiXhosa: one on a radio programme and another at an agricultural college. He considered both carefully, but finally decided that it was not worthwhile making a change. He says:

(64) I was very happy while I was on the railways, it was I think one of the best government departments in those days you know they had a good pension fund, they had a good medical aid (**Liz**: Umm) and that all seems to be dwindling now. (E1.67)

It is clear how much Ernie benefited from the privileges which white people enjoyed at that time, and that the power that he had as a white man was augmented by the 'cultural capital' of being able to speak three South African languages. This enabled the machine of government services to be rolled out more effectively, and Ernie was rewarded proportionately.

At the same time, he was able to maintain a second job and source of income, and a second identity as a farmer. In the following extract, which focuses on the faithful companionship of the youngster who lived with them who could not hear or speak, he describes how he fitted in the farming during that period:

(65) {W}hen I was working on the railways I used to work a late shift and a early shift, late shift, early shift, and I did quite a lot of ploughing and that, and farming (…) and it could be what time of the night I'd be ploughing and he would never leave me alone, he would be there helping me clean the plough and the rest of it, I worked till, I would plough until eleven twelve at night and he would be there with me and er - he was very faithful. (E1.33)

The description implies that Ernie would normally have done this work on his own, and that his friend's companionship and assistance were voluntarily offered; the youngster's need for the nurturing that this family offered, and his attachment to and dependency on them were clearly extremely strong ('he was very faithful', par. 65).

Ernie relates how, in his first job and his current position, he has played and still plays a very strong brokering role, mediating between

workers and management in industrial relations hearings, and also mediating between employees and the public, and sometimes employees and other employees. In all of these situations, his isiXhosa knowledge (and sometimes his Afrikaans) comes into play.

In the following extract, he describes one of these hearings:

(66) **Liz**: Umm, you said that one of the important - well you mentioned, one of the important ways in which your knowledge of Xhosa is useful is that you act as interpreter at hearings. Could you perhaps tell me about - one of those hearings, - a specific one perhaps.

(67) **Ernie**: Yes, I had one recently at {my place of work} (**Liz**: Umm) (…) where this gentleman had stolen a item in the shop and so on and he insisted he wanted me to interpret. (…) and each time, most of them always ask for me to do the interpreting and er, I did this one as well for him on his request (**Liz**: Umm) - and then the owners of the store agreed (**Liz**: Umm) (…)

(68) **Liz**: And you have to interpret from English to Xhosa and then from Xhosa to English as well?

(69) **Ernie**: And this last one had Afrikaans involved as well. (**Liz**: As well hey) because the lawyer, ex lawyer that er (…) chaired the hearing was an Afrikaans-speaking gentleman, not everything, but here and there he was stranded, I had to help him, interpreting from Xhosa to Afrikaans as well (**Liz**: Umm) But it went all right (**Liz**: umm, umm). (E2.38)

It is noticeable that he calls both the person who was accused of theft[22] and the chairman of the hearing 'gentlemen', being careful to be respectful in his descriptions of all involved. In my experience, Ernie habitually adopts a tone, behaviour and bearing which are modest and respectful. He, like Riaan, has invested in a respectful register. In introducing Ernie, I noted that he sees himself as a 'peace loving person, - can get on with any age - old or young, irrespective of colour' (E3.16). His chosen register facilitates this. He also clarifies repeatedly that the accused had 'insisted' (par. 67) that he interpret, and that this is often the case that they ask him to do the interpreting. It is clearly important to Ernie that I see him as doing this work at the workers' request, and not as appointed by management. Perhaps he wants to show me that the workers trust him to interpret accurately, and to be impartial. It may also be that the accused feels that having a white person speaking for him in this situation, where management is white, could somehow lend more power to his story.

But Ernie is not only a broker on formal occasions such as this; he indicates that he mediates in many conflict situations which arise in the shop. When I had come to the end of my planned questions during Interview 2, I asked him for any other experience he could remember in which his understanding of Xhosa came into play. This was one of the incidents he related:

(70) There's a black doctor here in {V town}, (…) He came to me the one day, he says er - he says I'm just the wrong - colour he says he says, but he in his life knows me as the white Madiba.[23] (**Liz**: Oh, *laugh*) He says that I'm a white Madiba [*both laugh*]
(71) **Liz**: Oh. What experiences that he'd had with you - made him say that, do you think?
(72) **Ernie**: He'd heard me speaking there, you know, quite often they have - they normally call me in there if there's a conflict with the customers and the cashiers or something and you've got to go defuse this, and keep peace on both sides and so on - and used to hear me talking there as well (**Liz**: Umm) and he says I'm a white Madiba
(73) **Liz**: *Laugh*, Ok. - That was a wonderful compliment, hey?
(74) **Ernie**: No, he still, he still comes shops there, pops his head around the fridge there, 'Hello Madiba' [*both laugh*]
(75) **Liz**: Ja, so I suppose it's that peace making. (E2.44)

This compliment from a black man was obviously a source of great pride and pleasure for Ernie. It added to his pleasure that he could tell me that the manager of the store had also said at a recent function, 'Any problems with a customer … call [Ernie] in the peacemaker' (E2.45). When I asked for an example of the kind of situation where he had mediated, he offered the following description:

(76) **Ernie**: It went quite hot at the {shop} where the - price didn't correspond - with what was on the rack and (**Liz**: Ja) the cashier and the customer were - getting hot under the collar and (**Liz**: Umm) I had to go sort that one out and had to explain to - them and of course it was no more than right that if the price - the customer's got to pay the price that is - the advertised price and er got it sorted it out and the customer left happy and er // the cashier //
(77) **Liz**: Were they both // Xhosa-speaking people, the cashier and the customer?
(78) **Ernie**: Yes, yes, both spoke Xhosa. (E2.46)

Ernie uses the word 'hot' to describe the atmosphere in the shop and the feelings of those confronting one another. It is clear that, in spite of the fierceness of this clash, Ernie had the authority to speak for what 'is no more than right' (par. 76). In other words, he was able to make a ruling on what was correct practice, perhaps because of his authority as a section manager and (maybe) an older person and a white person (this business is managed by whites). These factors combined with his ability to speak isiXhosa, as well as his character and mediation skills, to facilitate a resolution of the issue between these two isiXhosa speakers, one a cashier and the other a customer.

It would seem that in communities that Ernie has worked in, he has taken pride in doing a good job, and in giving satisfaction to, and keeping peace between, management, workers and clients. While he speaks of no greater ambitions than to have a steady job with good conditions of service, he takes great pride in affirmations from his superiors and from others who observe that he exerts a positive influence. His whiteness gives him power and opportunity; his fluency in isiXhosa and Afrikaans gives him insight into a variety of viewpoints. This has meant that in the CoPs in which he participates, he is a person of considerable power, despite his modest bearing.

Conclusion

All the men have made extensive use of isiXhosa in their adult working lives, and have been challenged to develop new types of fluency and new registers of the language. Brendon's investment in poetic isiXhosa enables him to mediate between a rare form of verbal art and modern literary and technological mediums. It also gives him some of the intimate connection he craves with Xhosa people and Xhosa culture. Riaan's story shows his belief that acceptance in the agricultural and governmental circles in which he moves is conditional on his investment in the value of respect and a register of isiXhosa which goes with it, and an outright rejection of the register he calls boere Xhosa, associated with an attitude of white superiority.

All four men have felt, in one way or another, that their command of isiXhosa (often combined with their privilege as whites) enables them to play valuable roles. All have occupied 'broker' roles (Hall & Sham, 2007: 16; Wenger, 1998: 109), interpreting and negotiating between those who do not understand isiXhosa and those who do, between the rural and the academic, between management and workers, and also, in Ernie's case, in conflict situations involving speakers of isiXhosa only. Their fluency in isiXhosa has also made possible intense engagement, involving challenge

and disagreement at times, for example, between George and his workers, and Brendon and the PAC members.

Most stories give indications of the multiplicity of the men's identities, and of changes and shifts in their identities over time: George's relationship with his black colleagues seems to contradict his 'essentialist white discourse'; his identity positioning changes with political changes; doubt is cast on Riaan's relationship to the black farmers by his identification with the white demonstrator.

All are very conscious of their rootedness in the Eastern Cape, and to one degree or another, their loss of a sense of belonging and identity when outside of it. Both Riaan and Brendon describe 'critical experiences' of ambivalence (Block, 2007a: 20) when they were away from home territory, and had no 'voice' in isiXhosa.

In situations where much of the power is still in white hands, such as Ernie's place of work and Brendon's university, the men's fluency in isiXhosa strongly augments their power as whites, who grew up with white privilege and training and still carry it with them. In situations where the power structure is increasingly black, such as the student body of the university in the Transkei, and the government-dominated work which Riaan does, the men's positions as white people are more precarious. Here, they tend to find themselves on the margins, and choices of subject positions and language registers have to be carefully made to ensure survival. As people who can speak isiXhosa, however, the men have negotiated, and are negotiating on an ongoing basis, acceptance in most of their work CoPs. Overt expressions of inclusion by isiXhosa speakers are high points in their careers, but the possibility of marginalisation and isolation hangs over parts of their stories.

Chapter 6 takes up the theme of movement across apartheid and post-apartheid spaces and their borders, and looks in more detail at instances of this in the stories.

Notes

(1) *Konsekwent* (Afrikaans): congruent; consistent. Riaan uses the word consequent (with an English inflection) with this Afrikaans meaning.
(2) The post-apartheid democracy reconfigured the provinces of South Africa, incorporating the former homelands of Ciskei and Transkei into the bigger entity of the Eastern Cape (see Map 1).
(3) Sesotho: Together with Setswana, mentioned earlier, this commonly spoken South African language belongs to a different family of languages from isiXhosa.
(4) *uSisi* (isiXhosa): older sister, a term of respect for a woman, your older sister's age.
(5) *uMama* (isiXhosa): mother, a term of respect for an older woman, your mother's age.

(6) These were clearly, English-speaking friends.
(7) He gestured with his hand to indicate a young child of 7 or 8 years old.
(8) *Oom* (Afrikaans): uncle; *Tannie* (Afrikaans): aunt. Afrikaans youngsters are expected to address adult men and women as *Oom* and *Tannie*, in a similar way that Xhosa people are expected to address their elders as *uSisi*, *uMama*, etc., see Notes 4 and 5. In some English-speaking South African families, especially in the past, this practice of calling adult family friends 'Aunt so-and-so' and 'Uncle so-and-so' is also a norm.
(9) Particularly in rural constituencies, there is often dissonance between politically elected local councillors and the traditional leaders or chiefs (an inherited position).
(10) The verb 'respect' here means 'behave respectfully towards'. There are specific ways in which respect should be shown.
(11) *Boere Xhosa* (Afrikaans): literally, farmers' Xhosa.
(12) This phrase usually means: 'Attribute certain behaviour to the fact that a person belongs to a particular race group and therefore has certain characteristics and prejudices'.
(13) Kaschula (1989) finds that it is common that black farmworkers accommodate the farmer in this way, using a form of isiXhosa which the farmer can understand. This often leads to farmers having an inflated opinion of their own command of the language.
(14) The Grahamstown Festival is a major festival of the arts, held in Grahamstown.
(15) The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) is a political formation, which held, at the time, that Africans needed to gain political freedom on their own, without the help or participation of other racial groups. It focused on land restitution, and also believed in the unity of all Africans, across the continent. Under certain circumstances, if they committed themselves to the ideals of the organisation, whites and members of other 'racial' groups could be defined as 'Africans'. The organisation still exists in the new dispensation, as a political party.
(16) This was clarified in a later discussion with him.
(17) At the time, violent incidents were also being experienced on farms, making people like his parents fearful.
(18) *Izibongo* (isiXhosa): isiXhosa praise poetry.
(19) *Thwasa* (isiXhosa): someone called by the ancestors to become a traditional healer and medium.
(20) As with schools in South Africa, universities are divided into those that were 'previously disadvantaged' (i.e. ethnically based colleges set up in the homelands with government funding during apartheid) and 'previously advantaged' (i.e. those which were situated within white South Africa, had some measure of independence from government, were attended by white South Africans, staffed by white South Africans and international academics and were well-resourced through bequests, etc., by successful alumni, as well as government subsidies).
(21) He speaks here of the sister of his childhood friend, who at that time still lived in his father's home.
(22) It is interesting that Ernie says 'he had stolen a item from the shop'; this could mean either that he was found guilty or that Ernie viewed him as being guilty.
(23) *Madiba* is the clan name of Nelson Mandela, first president of the democratic South Africa, and is often used to refer to him. This comparison of Ernie with Mandela probably refers to Mandela's strong commitment to reconciliation.

6 Identity Across Spaces: White Discourse and Hybrid Space

*It was always <u>that</u> sort of feeling that you go so far and no further, and I think you - as children, you worked out what the boundaries were, sort of thing, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) um, although you didn't really understand <u>why</u> they were there, but obviously - you were <u>told</u> that - this was what happens, (**Liz**: Ja) you know.*
Brendon, transcript 2.62

*Like on a farm its fine, on the farm we used to slaughter our own cattle and our own sheep, (**Liz**: Mm) but in today's life you must also respect other cultures; (**Liz**: Mm) you can't just go and do it in your back yard, (**Liz**: Mm) in a built-up area.*
George, transcript 2.89

In Chapters 3 through 5, I have followed the lives of George, Ernie, Riaan and Brendon chronologically. In this chapter, I use a different organising principle in presenting my analysis of the data, focusing on the dimension of 'space', geographical, as well as political, social and personal. This involves considerations of power, separation and boundaries. Data analysed in previous chapters have shown how most apartheid and post-apartheid space is polarised in terms of race and language. In this chapter, I examine the four men's positioning and identity construction at points in the space spectrum of the apartheid and post-apartheid worlds in which they live. I analyse incidents taking place in polarised space, where my participants' ways of speaking can often be called 'white discourse', of one of the types described in the introduction to Chapter 5. The chapter also examines narrative about boundaries between racially polarised space and shared space and who constructs and maintains or breaks them, as well as incidents where boundaries seem to collapse, where space becomes 'hybrid' and where the racially divided norms and conventions of modern society – apartheid, post-apartheid, colonial and postcolonial – are overturned, largely through the men's multilingual repertoires.

I make use of theoretical constructs discussed in the section 'Identity in Time and Space', in Chapter 2. My analysis relies on concepts of ethnicity of the margins, hybridity (Hall, 1992a) and 'in-between space' (Bhabha, 1994), linked with concepts from Bakhtin (1981) and Bourdieu (1991). I also

refer to work on 'boundary demarcation' and make use of 'white discourses' derived from researchers such as Frankenberg (1993), Durrheim and Dixon (2005) and Steyn (2001).

In my analysis, I distinguish between shared space and 'hybrid space'. In shared space, black and white people are simply doing things together. This is very common with my participants, most of whom work with black people, in a range of relationships, some of equality, like Brendon and Riaan with their colleagues, and some more asymmetrical, like George's relationship with the workers he supervises. The term *hybrid space* describes a more exceptional experience, which moves the men into a different dimension, beyond the reach of dominant discourses. In speaking of his concept of third or in-between space, Bhabha (1994) asks,

> How are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories …, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable. (Bhabha, 1994: 1–2)

This description seems to capture something of the 'in-between' space that my participants inhabit, where they encounter and communicate with people from groups usually seen as 'having values, meanings and priorities' which are 'antagonistic' or 'incommensurable', but who have 'a shared history' (Bhabha, 1994: 1–2). My term *hybrid space* refers to situations in which, sometimes, in these 'in-between' spaces, my participants seem to fall out of the world of racial binaries which are so pervasive in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa and into another dimension, where separations are irrelevant and 'life is one' (Bakhtin, 1981: 209). The catalyst for this move into 'hybrid space', where they can exceed 'the sum of the parts of difference' (Bhabha, 1994: 1), seems to be the ability of the white man to speak isiXhosa. The impact of the shift is often (though not always) a sense of freedom and joy, usually accompanied by laughter (which I relate to the folk laughter of Bakhtin).

I analyse mostly stories from the adulthood of the four men, but start with one childhood story from Brendon's narrative. Although some stories were related in the first interview, many, particularly those of George and Ernie, were told in response to my story-eliciting questions in the second and third interviews, where I was seeking more detail about their experiences involving isiXhosa. I first examine three stories featuring

'boundaries' between shared space and polarised apartheid space. I then analyse one or two stories from each man, in which they are positioned largely within polarised apartheid (and post-apartheid) space. When the men describe incidents from this standpoint, they tend to use one or other kind of white discourse. Finally, I look at incidents where boundaries seem to collapse, where space becomes 'hybrid' and where the norms and conventions of apartheid, post-apartheid, colonial and postcolonial modern society are upturned.

Boundaries

Eastern Cape colonial history features, as we have seen, an ongoing process of setting up, breaking, shifting and negotiating boundaries between colonial space and the space where the indigenous people lived; the region between the Fish and the Kei Rivers is still referred to informally as 'Border'. It is not surprising, then, that the four stories point, at times, to places where white space begins and blacks cannot cross the boundary.

In more recent times, apartheid, which lingers on into the present in many social practices, envisioned a South Africa where each racial (and even ethnic) group had its own space, its own language, its own culture and traditions. Separation, or 'apartheid', implies boundaries, and transgressing boundaries was only done for instrumental purposes. For instance, blacks in white areas were defined as 'temporary sojourners'; they were needed as a workforce, but the 'grand' scheme of apartheid could not accommodate them as permanent citizens of white South Africa. Command of a black language was useful for managing the workforce, and courses in isiZulu, isiXhosa, etc., often focused on forms and functions appropriate to this purpose. Beyond this, knowing isiXhosa was an instance of 'transgression' of the boundaries of apartheid's binaries.

Brendon: 'So far and no further' (B2.62)

In the four life stories, the homestead on the farm was clearly, in some sense, 'white space', although there were differences between the four boys' situations with regard to how firmly black people were excluded from this space. George mentioned explicitly that his friend Gigs used to come and sleep in the house. Ernie's parents seem to have taken the young black boy who couldn't hear or speak into their home and brought him up almost as a second child in the family. In Riaan's case, though most play took place outside, his friends came into the

house when he was sick, and shared his books, which were read to them by his childminder.

In contrast to these examples, the story which follows, from Brendon's childhood narrative, shows how strict the boundaries were, between shared and white space, for him and his friend. It also shows the profound mistrust with which certain white people regarded black people, a mistrust which formed the basis for a belief in separation rather than relationship.

This story was told in the second interview, in response to one of my questions probing more deeply into the story told in Interview 1. Referring back to the incidents where his mother demonstrated shock at his closeness to Xhosa people, I asked:

(1) **Liz**: - are there other experiences of that kind that have occurred in your life – (…) you know, (…) - white people reacting to the fact that you speak Xhosa and have this close connection?

After speaking of the envy that people have of his isiXhosa fluency, and one aunt's warning to him not to 'bring a Xhosa woman home', he narrated this incident, which his father had reminded him of and which he has written up as a short story. The narrative is, then, in a very particular sense, a construction of his mind.

(2) Sonwabo, in fact, and myself, we had little wicker chairs on the veranda - he was allowed to sit with me on the veranda in those wicker chairs but - I don't remember him ever sort of coming inside the house or anything. (**Liz**: Oh) It was always <u>that</u> sort of feeling that you go so far and no further, and I think you - as children, you worked out what the boundaries were, sort of thing, (**Liz**: Mm, mm) um, although you didn't really understand <u>why</u> they were there, but obviously - you were <u>told</u> that - this was what happens, (**Liz**: Ja) you know.
(3) And a policeman had come to visit my father, and um - he - we had been playing outside, or whatever, and they were having tea, - in the room sort of leading on to the veranda, and Sonwabo and myself came and sat down on the chairs, -
(4) I can't remember the full incident but, - um - I ordered two teas (*slight laugh*) sort of like from my mother -
(5) um, and this policeman turned around and said something like, *'Ja, en volgende week sal hy jou keel afsny'* (Yes, and next week he will cut your throat). (**Liz**: Ja) You know, which was quite a

profou:nd thing, - I mean, you know, why would my friend do that to me? so –

(6) there was obviously a sense of - I think from that person a sense of - this this is obviously wrong that these two kids are allowed to be such good friends, which they clearly were. (B2.62, 63)

Brendon describes here something 'normal' in colonial/apartheid society: a situation where an invisible line was drawn between the space where white and black could associate and the space strictly reserved for white people, in this case the farmhouse. This kind of rule was imposed by those in power – adults, in this case, who represented the dominant, legitimate discourse: 'you were told that – this is what happens'. This 'normality' was fully accepted by Brendon: you also 'worked out what the boundaries were', not understanding why.

The policeman in the story, using the discourse of the 'white master-narrative', articulates another norm or belief of white society: that black people cannot be trusted. Even those you consider friends will turn on you, their primary loyalty being to those on the other side of the boundary. For this reason (Brendon assumes the policeman's logic goes), it is 'wrong' to allow black and white children to be friends. Brendon calls this 'profound', a word he uses quite often for things which affect him deeply. For him, the norm is the opposite; disloyalty to a friend is unthinkable; the possibility of betrayal is completely blocked out, invalidated ('why would my friend do that to me?', par. 5). He articulates here his childhood view – a genuinely colour-blind one. He did not then see things in terms of colour, but of friendship; the racialised point of view made no sense to him. Deconstructing the situation, and his own whiteness, he followed up on this story, after a short interval, with the one which follows.

Brendon: 'Something blocking me' (B2.74)

This story comes from Brendon's adulthood, and shows how enduring the boundaries set up in childhood can be, in spite of the best will in the world. It concerns another close friend of Brendon's, someone whom he speaks of with great appreciation and affection, and whom he indicates has 'had quite a profound effect on the way that {his} interaction has developed with Xhosa-speaking people' (B2.52).

Brendon broke into the theme of the preceding conversation (his nephews) to tell this story, clearly anxious to get it off his chest, although hesitant about it ('um – I'm not sure – whether this is relevant or not', par. 9):

(7) **Liz**: Ja - ja, ja, that's quite a wonderful sense, isn't it, that your - almost your life is being continued in them [the nephews] and - and fulfilled in some sort of way.

(8) **Brendon**: Quite. That's how I would see it. Um, ja. But even with my –

(9) **Brendon**: if I could just tell you another incident um - um - I'm not sure - whether this is relevant or not, but and - I, I mean Phumeza and {her children} came to visit me - Phumeza's husband passed away unfortunately from cancer - (**Liz**: Mm) - um, {at the coast}.

(10) And we were going up - we went up to Lesotho together - and and we had a great fun time, and spent a week, cavorting around and doing this that and everything, and came back to {the coast} and then, um - on the way to Lesotho, that's right, they said why don't we stay with my father, you know, for the night on the farm. [pause]

(11) And I w - you know - I would have loved that, and I'm sure that he probably would have - accepted it, but - I didn't do that - because there was something blocking me, you know um - and in a way I don't know if I was protecting him, or if I was protecting them - from him, or what I was doing - or protecting myself from a tense situation, or something that I - that I thought might make him feel uncomfortable. (B2.73, 74)

This is clearly a story that Brendon was not comfortable with telling, because he constructs himself as someone whose norm is 'shared space', space which has no racial boundaries like those which applied in his childhood. But in this recent episode, he finds himself still subject, emotionally, to the racial boundaries imposed by his father; 'there was something blocking' (par. 9) him from taking his dear (black) friends, with whom he had shared such a good holiday, to his father's home. He is uncomfortable with this incoherence in his identity.

In questioning his own behaviour, Brendon asks himself who he was protecting. He 'would have loved that' (par. 9), he says; it would have been good to have been able to share his family with his friends and vice versa. But there was a sense in which he wouldn't have loved it; there are significant hesitations before that phrase ('I would have loved that', par. 9); he imagines that it would have caused tension and discomfort to someone, or maybe to all involved. The long pause at the end of paragraph 8, and then the pauses in his statement about his father: 'he probably would have – accepted it, but -' (par. 9) speak volumes; acceptance

does not necessarily imply approval, or enjoyment. The boundaries still apply. Brendon's 'deconstructing discourse' here examines, very honestly, his own whiteness; how his upbringing and respectful though conflicted relationship with his father still holds him to the norms of a polarised racist society, much as he would wish it to be otherwise.

Speaking about his father's death, which occurred between our second and third meetings, Brendon commented that, difficult though it was to admit this, his father's passing brought a sense of relief and release. The boundaries were now gone, he said, and this opened the way for new possibilities.

George: Transgression of boundaries

The extract which follows, already referred to in Chapter 5, tells of an experience during the early years of George's working life, before he was married, and shows George being reprimanded for the 'transgression' of boundaries into which his fluency in isiXhosa had led him. It shows a situation of great ambivalence, where George's loyalties are divided between Nathi, the friend whom he encounters in the shared space, speaking isiXhosa, 'where the laws of price formation … are suspended' (Bourdieu, 1991: 71) and the white group with whom he is identified within the formal, legitimate, binary black and white South African system. Nathi is characterised as 'his friend', and George stands up for his friendship with him against a work colleague, who is clearly challenging him to declare whose side he is on.

This conversation took place as part of Interview 2, where I was probing more deeply into parts of the story recounted in the previous interview:

(12) **Liz**: Ja, now you've talked a lot about erm, the fact that you have had black friends all the way through your life. Erm ...Can you think of a time when, because of the laws of the land, or because of other people's attitudes, that you had - that that caused you problems, or that the friendships were er, you know threatened, or you know where something happened which was a bit awkward?

(13) **George**: There's a lot times, where you know, people that I know, (**Liz**: Mm) that, erm, don't like black people. Period.

(14) You know, they, but our, my whole family we've grown up knowing blacks and, (**Liz**: Mm) I mean, my grandfather always used to say, 'You catch more flies with a bowl of milk than with a bowl of vinegar'. (**Liz**: Mm) You know, it doesn't cost you a cent to be friendly to a person. (**Liz**: Ja) You know, it's not his fault that he's

black, (**Liz**: Yes) (*laugh*) at the end of the day! (**Liz**: Ja) Nobody asked to be born that way, (**Liz**: Ja) and I don't, when I say that, I don't mean it in a disrespect, (**Liz**: Mm) that they different to what we are. We all human beings. (**Liz**: Mm) (…)

(15) I'll give you one incident when I was working (…) (**Liz**: Mm) There was a guy there, his name was Nathi (…) He was a cleaner there, (**Liz**: Mm) and this guy used to come - into my house, he used to come and have a beer with me at home. (**Liz**: Yes)

(16) And this other guy (…) he turned around and said to me, um, 'How can you let a black guy into your house? What's wrong with you?'

(17) I said, 'He respects me; I respect him! (**Liz**: Mm) You know, he's my friend', (**Liz**: Ja) and I said, 'I'd rather let him in my house than some white people that I know'. (**Liz**: Mm, mm) (…) He was always well-mannered. (…) When we walked into the house, he'd walk straight to the kitchen and tell me, 'No, let's sit in the kitchen'. (**Liz**: Mm). He respected my house and he was respectful and (**Liz**: Mm) when I was having a beer, I used to offer him a beer. (**Liz**: Mm) There was nothing wrong with it.

(18) But there are a lot of people that have got the wrong attitude. (**Liz**: Mm) I think that is the problem, (**Liz**: Mm) is their attitude towards black people. (**Liz**: Mm) (G2.32–40)

George seems to find it difficult to explain what happened here. He is torn between defending his friendship with a black man, in terms that I, as a white person whose position on racial matters he is not sure of, will understand, and affirming the importance which such friendships have in his life.

He introduces the story of his friendship with Nathi with reference to the ongoing relationships with black people in his family, offering a piece of family wisdom in support of this: '"You catch more flies with a bowl of milk than with a bowl of vinegar". You know, it doesn't cost you a cent to be friendly to a person' (par. 14). While all the statements in paragraph 14 are presented in support of friendliness between races, they carry the implication that friendship with a black person needs to be justified when talking to a white person. Dominant discourse (the 'white master-narrative') does not see it as 'normal' for a white South African to have a black friend; anyone who has friendships with black people needs to be ready to justify them in terms of some instrumental purpose (catching flies, as this saying goes). In the white master-narrative, friendship between white and black is a transgression, as later statements

from both parties in the dialogue show: 'What's wrong with you?' his accuser asks (par. 16).

In defending his right to have a black friend, George offers a number of truisms and stereotypical constructions of the other: 'You know, it's not his fault that he's black'; 'Nobody asked to be born that way; we all human beings' (par. 14); 'I'd rather let him in my house than some white people that I know' (par. 17). George's intention is to proclaim his freedom from prejudice and his fellow-feeling for black people; at the same time, all these kinds of statements are truisms of 'white colour-blind discourse', used here to justify friendship with black people, which by implication is seen as 'wrong'.

The word 'wrong' is used three times in this extract. With different sets of values in mind, George asserts that, 'There was nothing wrong with it' (presumably the fact that he and Nathi were friends and that he offered him a beer) (par. 17). There could be two (or maybe three) sets of values at play in George's phrase 'nothing wrong': the values of the white master-narrative (there was nothing wrong because Nathi showed the 'proper' respect), the values of the shared space (there was nothing wrong because this was a case of simple friendship) and the values of 'colour-blind white discourse' (there was nothing wrong because I am not a racist; racism is wrong). George's discourse simultaneously subverts and reinforces the master-narrative, offering the listener alternative ways of interpreting what he says.

Another example of this can be seen in George's use of the word 'respect', a word which we have encountered before in Riaan's narrative, and which has a number of resonances in the Eastern Cape context, all of which probably live and are mixed within George's frame of reference. *Respect* is a key term in Xhosa society, where one's seniors in terms of social position, but more importantly in terms of age, must be treated with deference and addressed with appropriate titles (see Chapter 5). Apartheid and the colonial white master-narrative constructed white people as automatically senior, which meant that they were to be given the traditional 'respectful' treatment, often regardless of age. Thus, the Xhosa virtue of respect, rarely fully understood by whites and often ignored when whites dealt with adult blacks, fed into the colonial, apartheid system.

In defending himself against the 'other guy's' challenge, George starts by saying that Nathi is his friend, and that they respect each other (par. 17). Here, he seems to be speaking of a mutual, two-way respect, the respect of friends for each other. In commenting on the situation, he shifts quite quickly to using 'respect' in a somewhat different way. Nathi was 'well-mannered'; he 'respected my house and he was respectful' (par. 17).

These remarks hold a reassurance for those favouring white superiority: Nathi showed the kind of 'respect' that is the norm in colonial discourse between a black man and a white. He 'knew his place'. Knowing the risks involved in transgressing apartheid boundaries, Nathi said, 'No, let's sit in the kitchen' (par. 17). By doing this, Nathi made it easier for George to defend himself against those who saw him as 'a transgressor', and even against those parts of himself which might have felt guilty or fearful about 'transgressing' society's norms. Bourdieu (1991: 71) describes a space, usually where 'private exchanges between homogenous partners' take place, where the 'normal' ways in which people's value is determined, in terms of the linguistic capital they possess and their position in society, do not apply. When George and Nathi are on their own, the 'formal law is suspended rather than transgressed' (Bourdieu, 1991: 71), but the law catches up with them very quickly, and requires them to defend themselves for transgressing it, once George is back with his white colleagues.

In saying that he doesn't mean 'a disrespect' (par. 14), he shows awareness that I could perhaps interpret some of his statements in 'the wrong way'. He seems somewhat uneasy, not sure, perhaps, how to construct in words his friendships with black people. Having been brought up in the divided South African world with its dominant discourses, he struggles to find appropriate ways to speak, in English, about his experience in shared and 'hybrid' space.

Having told the story of Nathi, George continued with another, on an even more serious theme:

(19) At one stage, *laugh*, I was accused of having a black girlfriend. (**Liz**: Oh) (…) And so I said to them, 'Now who's this black girlfriend I'm supposed to have? (**Liz**: Ah)
(20) Now they don't know, they heard.
(21) So I said, 'From where, who told you? (**Liz**: Mm) Let's sort this out'. (**Liz**: Ja)
(22) No, he can't remember who told him.
(23) So I said to him, 'Then you must stop spreading rumours'. [pause] I said to him, 'There's my girlfriend'. And I'm married to her today, and she's not black, I'm not going to lie (*Both laugh*)
(24) So, no, (**Liz**: Mm) people, I think, just can't accept change. (**Liz**: Mm) But even before, when it was still apartheid era, (**Liz**: Mm) I mean, I've always had a black friend. (**Liz**: Mm) <u>Always.</u> (G2.42–46)

In this story, George's white workmates issue him with the ultimate challenge: Would you marry one of 'them'?. In apartheid South Africa, marriage – or sexual relationships – across the colour line would constitute a radical instance of boundary crossing, declared wrong and made a crime, through the Immorality Act[1] by colonial and apartheid authorities. 'Accused' (par. 19) of having a black girlfriend, in his story he tacitly accepts the assumption that this would be wrong, and relates how he defends himself in 'courtroom' style, first by trying to trace the original accuser (par. 21), and secondly by bringing evidence that he is 'innocent', having a girlfriend who is 'not black' (par. 23), whom he goes on to marry. He may have black friends, he seems to say, but he is still a bona fide member of the white group, evidence being his white wife. In his marriage to a white woman, he affirms where he belongs: on the 'right' side of the boundary. It is important for him to maintain and continue the sense of family into which he has been born, thus ensuring security and a racial identity acceptable in the broader society.

Clearly, in the stories narrated in the two extracts above, George was caught. The story makes it seem that his friendship with Nathi was spontaneous and 'natural', and took place within shared space where they could meet on terms which were in some senses equal. However, it also shows him needing to defend himself against 'others' for whom his friendship with black people is 'wrong' and constitutes a betrayal of his own group. In the isiXhosa space, Nathi is one of 'us', and in his conversation with me he describes 'this other guy' (par. 16) and those who 'can't accept change' (par. 24) as 'other' in some way. However, in his accusers' white space, and even in conversation with me at times, he adopts the discourse of the white camp (the 'master-narrative' and colour-blind discourse), almost in spite of himself.

His last statement, distancing himself from those with 'the wrong attitude', is a proud assertion that, 'I've always had a black friend. Always' (par. 24). His identity is indeed a 'site of struggle' (Weedon, 1997), and his story is full of conflict and ambivalence, but his tone communicates the message that his friendships with black people are not negotiable. It seems that George moves in spaces which he sees as shared. Being a practical and sociable person, and not too distanced, in many instances, from his black colleagues by economic, educational or lifestyle factors, it is possible for him to share spaces with isiXhosa speakers quite often and quite comfortably. Responding to the objections of other whites, however, he quite easily 'falls into line' and adopts the boundaries and the ways of speaking that are important within the master-narrative of whiteness.

These stories show Brendon and George positioned in shared space with their friends, and coming up against the barriers created by the authorities. In the adult stories, there is a sense that the world of childhood play is being recreated (e.g. Brendon says 'we had a great fun time (…) cavorting around (…)', par. 10). In all three stories, the boys/men and their friends tacitly accept the boundaries, and make the right moves to conform to the expectations of dominant polarised space (e.g. Nathi walking straight to the kitchen, par. 17). Brendon is very aware of this, is uncomfortable about it and is able to articulate it. He positions himself firmly as a person who opposes and works against boundaries and racial polarisation. Using deconstructing discourse, he is able to express his relief that the pressure to conform is eased, now that his father has passed away. George's discourse also displays ambivalence, but he seems to handle it with philosophical acceptance ('… People that I know…that, erm, don't like black people', par. 13). He finds ways of living 'in-between', 'where the laws of price formation are suspended' (Bourdieu, 1991: 71), while accepting the non-negotiability of dominant discourse and its requirements, which also work to his own advantage as a white person. His discourse is filled with ambiguity and multiple meanings, allowing for a variety of interpretations, suiting a number of audiences. In spite of their differences, both Brendon and George find ways of negotiating for themselves, or slipping into, a shared, private space where they can continue the lifestyle that they love and the friendships which are important to them (e.g. 'I've always had a black friend', George, par. 24). While many whites in the post-1994 democracy have quite extensive contacts with black people in the workplace, socialising with black people is not yet general practice among whites in the Eastern Cape. In the narratives of the four men, these two stories show instances of such socialising; there are none in the stories told by the other two men.

Polarised Space

In all of the incidents related in the following subsections, whether they take place during or post-apartheid, the men position themselves largely within polarised space, and as white people, over against black people. In line with this, they use one or other of the kinds of white discourse identified earlier. While the binaries of apartheid and colonial space continue into post-apartheid times, differences which have come about in the men's lives and relationships through the shift of political power from white to black can, once again, be detected.

Riaan: The incident at University of Free State

In the following extract, Riaan compares his time at university, in the apartheid era, with the situation which led to the then recent incident[2] at the Free State University, where a group of white students made a video of a mock initiation, in which they subjected black cleaning staff to a variety of demeaning activities, including tricking them into drinking urine. This extract appears in the context of an exposition by Riaan, with minimum input from me, of how the respect of young people for the older generation, in black and Afrikaner contexts, is breaking down (see Chapter 5). He characterises this as 'a huge problem in society in South Africa - a huge, massive problem' (Ri1.126), and in this story, constructs the 'old' apartheid days positively, because, in his view, discipline and respect were maintained among the students, and between students and workers. The story has shades of the Afrikaner 'narrative' which Steyn (2004: 152) titles 'The good old days of way back then', describing it as 'a blend of nostalgia, confusion … self-righteousness and tenacious faith in a discredited world view' (Steyn, 2004: 153).

(25) **Riaan**: (…) just imagine if that had happened in the o:ld days; (**Liz**: Mm) in the apartheid days. (**Liz**: Mm) You know what would have happened to those white guys. We had a number 14 *takkie*[3] in the residence, with a cake of soap in the front, and for misbehaviour, you were hit, - you could get up to 24 shots, with that takkie. (…)

(26) In the first instance, we observed discipline it wouldn't have happened. (**Liz**: Mm) In the first instance. In the residence. With the black ladies there. In the second instance, pe - I don't know - people respected older people, - black or white. I mean when I was in residence, all my roommates, some of them coming from, from the rightest er er er political backgrounds, never considered doing something like that to the cleaners in the residence. (…) (Ri1.128)

(Here, he tells of his emotional reunion with one of the cleaners in more recent times, referred to in Chapter 5, to illustrate how positive relationships were, in his view.)

(27) and that's why I'm so cross (**Liz**: Mm) about this matter; (**Liz**: Yes) I'm very very cross with it, I'm very very cross because it's so unnecessary.

(28) Not that it's not happening, I mean there's no-one, when there's a white farmer murdered, no one makes a big hoo-ha about that. Which is also wrong.
(29) I mean I came, last - year before last, I was the first to be on a farm and that we see a lady's throat cut.
(30) So so but it didn't doesn't cause me not to respect a black person, or trust a black person. You understand the difference where it comes in (**Liz**: Mm, mm) If you hadn't been er brought up under those circumstances you could easily say that 'All black people are like that'. Easily!
(31) **Liz:** Very easy, very easy.
(32) **Riaan:** Very easily, which is so wrong; which is so wrong. And that's why I'm very very cross. Because now there's a contrary perception, that all white people are now - racists.
(33) **Liz**: And especially Afrikaners, hey.
(34) **Riaan**: Yes, now this happened at an Afrikaans university and (…) that's - It's so unfortunate - er. Things like that happen. Things like that happen. [pause] Jaaa - (**Liz**: Mm) (Ri1.130)

This section of Riaan's story is told in a very heated tone; the incident at UFS[4] has made Riaan extremely angry. He sees discipline as vital for the maintenance of respect, and together these form the pillars of his philosophy of life. His 'discipline discourse' reflects this strongly.

He constructs the way of life at the university residence during his student days as both respectful and disciplined. The very strict discipline of the time, which many would see as cruel, is constructed as effective, and his fellow students – even those 'coming from "rightest" political backgrounds' (par. 26) – are constructed as respectful to older people, specifically the cleaners in the residences. While a generally accepted view of white Afrikaner attitudes during apartheid times is that they dehumanised black people, and that older black people were treated as children (called 'boy/*jong*' and 'girl/*meid*'), it is important for Riaan that he sees these Afrikaners with whom he studied – his own people, by definition – as principled in ways that he approves. The pause and the phrase '- I don't know -' (par. 26) seem to indicate that he recognises in some way the contradiction in terms implied, but he insists that he does not recall any student in his residence who would have considered treating the cleaners as the modern-day students have done. He experiences the behaviour of these modern-day students as a violation of his principles, and almost as a personal betrayal. According to him, the incident makes it easy for people to label all whites (perhaps particularly Afrikaners, though

this was my suggestion) as racists, which means he can also be labelled as racist. He clearly does not construct himself as a racist.

The phrase, 'Not that it's not happening' (par. 28) suggests that as Riaan speaks, a number of incidents flash through his mind, perhaps incidents of disrespect and violence shown by white to black and also by black to white. When he speaks, however, it is to focus on an incident of 'black on white' violence. It is common among whites to lament, as he does here, using discourse which reflects some of the values of the 'white master-narrative', that racist behaviour by whites is noted much more than criminal and violent acts perpetrated by black people against white people: 'when there's a white farmer murdered, no-one makes a big hoo-ha about that' (par. 28). He says that this is 'also wrong' (par. 28). He goes on to paint a vivid picture of an example which he witnessed of what could be seen as 'black on white' violence. He can clearly empathise with whites who easily conclude that all black people are vicious when confronted with this type of incident. One could deduce that he shares their feelings about what happened; he comes from a farming family, enabling him to identify with the victims of the violence. He does set himself apart from the general reaction, however, attributing his different reaction to his closeness to black people during his early years (which resulted in him being fluent in isiXhosa), and emphasising, through repetition, that such generalisations are 'so wrong' (par. 32).

Riaan's introduction to the story 'Just imagine …' suggests that he sees me as an insider in relation to the experience he is about to relate. My own strong response ('Very easy, very easy', par. 31) shows that I do understand and am in a sense part of the discourse. In spite of having had close relationships with black people, I have spent significant periods in 'whites only' contexts, familiar to all whites who grew up under apartheid. I recognise that in such an environment it is the norm to view black South Africans as 'other', and is an easy next step to construct them negatively.

The extract depicts Riaan standing very much within white space, but demonstrating, once again, a conflicted identity and 'ambivalent discourse': 'two [or more] voices collide within it dialogically' (Bakhtin, 1965: 104). Riaan is an Afrikaner and subscribes to the values of discipline and respect. He feels solidarity with the students with whom he studied, and sees them as respectful and disciplined; he empathises, at a deep level, with white reactions to farm killings. However, his childhood in shared space, speaking isiXhosa, has shaped another deeply influential facet of his identity; it means he has much invested in being seen as someone who is respectful towards, has good relationships with and does not make negative generalisations about black people. Conflict between these identities is

clear in his condemnation of both the neglect of incidents of 'black on white' violence ('also wrong', par. 28), as well as generalisations about black people ('so wrong', par. 32). It also means that he reacts strongly and angrily against young Afrikaners who 'let the side down' by humiliating and degrading elderly cleaners at the university. It was difficult for him to acknowledge any forms of disrespect shown to the elderly by his fellow students; now he feels extreme discomfort in accepting the continuation of racism among the younger generation. It makes it very difficult for him to 'hold things together' as a person, and Riaan does not like ambivalence; he feels it is very important to be *konsekwent* (consistent).

Brendon: Paternalistic [paternal] responsibility (B1.94)

In the extract that follows, Brendon speaks about his current relationship with Nongugquko, the elder sister of Sonwabo, his great childhood friend. In the process, he also reveals something of his relationship with his aging father,[5] with whom the black family from the farm were then still staying, although in a house in the village, and no longer on the farm.

Brendon has just been talking about the dependence of farmworkers on farm owners:

(35) **Brendon**: …so in a way, it's quite - it's actually not ironic that Nomgqibelo is still looking after my 80-year-old father.
(36) **Liz**: Right. That was her place, and // that is her place. //
(37) **Brendon**: That was her place// That is her place and we have a fantastic relationship, we speak very openly in the last year or two, (**Liz**: Mm) more so than what we've ever done, (**Liz**: Mm) um, especially now that my father's got another partner, because - you know, I can ask her things, you know, we we - you know, we have jokes about it, (**Liz**: Yes, *laughs*) which has made us feel pretty connected, you know, um,
(38) and of course, you know, if she needs anything she knows she can phone me and tell me, (**Liz**: Ah) things for school, or whatever. (**Liz**: Ja) So there's partly - and her husband died many years ago, … so, (**Liz**: Mm) um, you know, there's a whole - I do feel a certain paternalistic kind of responsibility, paternal in the sense of kind-of fathering this child, you know, because he doesn't have a father, (**Liz**: Mm) um,
(39) and then, you know, Sonwabo's brother died of HIV, so (**Liz**: Mm) his two children are also there, and they're only little, 4 and 5,

(**Liz**: Mmmm!) so she's looking after them, and - I really don't mind, you know, assisting her, um,

(40) even although I don't really share that too much with my father, cause (**Liz**: Right) sort of in one way it doesn't concern him and and in another way,

(41) **Liz**: He might - not approve, in a way

(42) **Brendon**: um, he wouldn't - mind, I mean, … it's just that, I don't want to undermine his space, in a sense, (**Liz**: Right) and, I don't know what he pays her but I imagine it's not, you know - so, you know - so, I don't know how he remunerates her, and I suspect, (**Liz**: Mm) and probably not, um, the going wage, or whatever (**Liz**: Mm) it's supposed to be, (**Liz**: Mm) because she lives in a nice house and she's got her food, and all that sort of stuff - (**Liz**: Mm)

(43) but, you know, bringing up three kids, (**Liz**: Mm) actually four children because she has an older daughter, (**Liz**: Mm) who unfortunately is now 12 and never been to school, (**Liz**: Mm) so I don't know what's going to happen to her; she's, she's a young teenager, and she, we tried to get her into school and she went for one year this year, now she's already dropped out, so I think she's out of the system.

(44) So my, my vision would be to take the younger kids and actually put some effort into them to, you know, to get them a proper schooling, (**Liz**: Mm) um, but

(45) we've never spoken about, for example, that um Sonwabo's brother Thulani died of HIV, I mean, I mean he definitely had HIV and he was fully blown, he had, you know, he died of meningitis in the end, … but - we were not able to get him to say that he had it and (**Liz**: Mm) ask for help anywhere. (**Liz**: Mm)

(46) So I think there's that saddens me as well, that there's all this - kind of silence, even now, um, um, especially in the rural areas, um,

(47) so that is a debate that we, I've had with her, like have you been tested [for HIV], (**Liz**: Mm) and she has been tested and she's negative, um, (**Liz**: Mm) but it's not a debate that - it's a debate that's taken a while - for example my father could never have that sort of debate, (**Liz**: Mm, mm, mm). (B1.93–97)

He says that he and Nongugquko speak 'very openly' (par. 37) now. This is in some contradiction with what he said in Chapter 3 (par. 27): 'I've never been able to go full circle again'. It would seem that while there is no going back to his initial childhood connectedness with her, and

particularly with Sonwabo, who is now hardly mentioned, he currently has new points of connection with her (e.g. his father and the new partner) within the shared space made possible by his fluency in isiXhosa.

While the space is shared, a great deal of ambivalence is apparent, created by the huge differentials in education and economic circumstances between these two friends, differentials set up by the patterns of privilege and deprivation which were perpetuated by apartheid and the social system which went with it, and which preceded it and has continued even with its passing, in many ways.

Nongugquko and Brendon are connected by their common background and common interest in Brendon's father. The other connection Brendon feels towards her and her family is one of 'paternalistic' (par. 38) responsibility. He doesn't mind 'assisting her' (par. 39); she can telephone if she needs anything. He is careful to explain that his use of the word 'paternal' (par. 38) relates to the fact that her children are without a father, rather than a paternalistic attitude. He, as a close and advantaged family friend – almost a family member is how he positions himself – feels that it is appropriate for him to step in. He goes to a lot of trouble giving details which justify his assisting in this way, e.g. she's bringing up four children, two of whom are her brother's, who died of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS); he imagines she's not remunerated well by his father (pars. 38, 39). This probably points to the fact that he does sense that there is, unavoidably, a conflict in his actions between the paternal and the paternalistic, and a point where the one becomes the other.

He also explains that he gives this help without his father's knowledge, something which possibly also gives rise to some level of residual guilt. This is linked to his awareness that his attitude and response to Nongugquko's situation would not be his father's (he makes it clear that he does not know how much and in what ways his father supports her, and suspects that it is not much), and he is unwilling to cause conflict by discussing this or by helping her openly. He and his father have a history of conflict around racial issues, something which is very difficult to reconcile with the respect which he feels a parental relationship requires. He manages the conflict by a strategy of avoidance and silence; one could even call it subterfuge.

He also explains this silence in terms of respect for his father's 'space' (par. 42): how he handles his household affairs. He and his father operate from different spaces: his father's space is that of the 'white master-narrative'; the old authoritative colonial and apartheid relationships between black and white; Brendon's is the shared space of his 'imagined community' of 'going full circle' to the kind of world he experienced as a child, and of the idealised new South Africa. The 'high walls' between these spaces are

made apparent by the fact that he does not discuss Nongugquko's affairs with his father at all. Brendon's space could also perhaps be characterised as an 'enlightened' or 'academic' space: the space of rational, 'enlightened' approaches to problems, and 'enlightened discourse' – in many ways quite a white and Western space.

There is discomfort for Brendon, as well as satisfaction, in his 'paternalistic' role, quite apart from his sensitivity towards his father and fear of offending him. He definitely has power to help now, by virtue of his education and earning power, and the political system should be on the side of the Xhosa family. It frustrates and saddens him when, in spite of this, members of this family still suffer and seem 'stuck'; the 12-year-old whom they tried to help dropped out of school, and they were unable to get Thulani to admit to having AIDS and ask for help. Silence defeats his efforts, so the fact that Nongugquko has been tested for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is something of a triumph. He has now turned his attention away from these defeats to the new 'vision' of helping the younger ones to get 'a proper schooling' (par. 44). He constructs himself as someone whose efforts are characterised by perseverance and a determined optimism.

While Brendon here is fulfilling a role as a 'member' of Nongugquko's 'family' – quite a 'normal' response in Xhosa society – and is in some senses an 'insider' in her world, the discourse he uses and the principles at play have largely been inculcated in him by his colonial Western upbringing and education: rational attitudes towards illness and poverty; the value and desirability of education; the obligations and responsibilities which come with privileges; the need to contribute to making other people's lives better. There is also a strong dimension of what could be called guilt in what he does; an intense desire and sense of obligation to make up for injustices, inequalities, separations and divisions of the past – his own and that of South Africa generally.

It is clear that Brendon's fluency in isiXhosa enables and constitutes an integral part of the close relationship with Nongugquko and the extended family. The debate on whether Nongugquko should be tested for HIV has 'taken a while' (par. 47), and there has clearly been much conversation with Thulani as well, unfortunately not successful in Brendon's terms. The 'very open' (par. 37) interactions that Brendon has with Nongugquko about his father, and the laughter that they share, also involves linguistic subtlety. Through his linguistic repertoires and his upbringing, he is a 'participant' in the world of these people, who are 'stuck', dependent and deprived, perhaps as no other group in South Africa is, but he is also a participant in the privileged world of the university educated, with the 'enlightened'

ideology which goes with it. All of this points to tremendous complexity and multiplicity in his identity; his discourse is both enlightened and deeply ambivalent.

George: 'Racism from both sides' (G2.53)

In the extract which follows, George speaks from a position firmly within the binaries of 'us' and 'them', characteristic of colonial, apartheid – and post-apartheid – discourses. In the lead-up to this extract, he reflects on how things have changed in his relationships with black people post-apartheid, saying that he is glad that they are no longer 'treated with disdain' (G2.48) and are receiving 'better treatment' (G2.50). He believes, however, that racism is still very much alive and 'today is coming from both sides' (G2.53). He describes a situation where the tables of the apartheid days are turned. 'There's a lot of black people that are upset with white people, maybe they think they are better than us now' (G2.53) he says, claiming that they 'bring up apartheid' even though they are the post-apartheid generation. The following story, like the preceding statement, erects a very clear and strong divide between 'us' and 'them', constructing him as a white person threatened by a changed and changing society, and by new behaviours in 'the other'. His fluency in isiXhosa does, however, facilitate a shift in relationship towards the end of the episode.

(48) **George**: They are a new generation. (**Liz**: Mm) But yet they bringing up the apartheid era, (**Liz**: Mm) but yet they were never part of it. (**Liz**: Mm)

(49) **Liz**: Can you tell me of an incident where - you know - people have talked to you in that kind of way? Black people…

(50) **George**: One time, a guy rode into my vehicle, (…) and um he was very arrogant about it, and he called me a racist and all that. I said to him 'Excuse me, I'm not a racist, how can you accuse me of being a racist?' Then he looked very violent, and (…) all I said to him was, 'Where is your driver's licence; I'd like to see your driver's licence'. (**Liz**: Mm) and he started going off his head and swearing at me, (**Liz**: Mm) and erm, it ended up when we went to the police station to sort this out. (**Liz**: Mm)

(51) But he was very arrogant, spoke to me as if I was a dog, (**Liz**: Mm) and things like that, any human being will get cross, (**Liz**: Mm) because you wouldn't want to be treated with disdain. (**Liz**: Mm, mm) And he brings up the apartheid era and I said to him you weren't even living in the apartheid era. (**Liz**: Mm) (…)

(52) **Liz**: And er…in those situations, have you used Xhosa?
(53) **George**: Yes. If he speaks to me in English, I answer in English. (**Liz**: Mm) (…) He got out and we were speaking English to each other, (**Liz**: Mm) but we got to the police station, he spoke to a black policeman in Xhosa (**Liz**: Mm) (…) and then when I spoke to him in Xhosa he got a fright actually, (**Liz**: Mm) 'cause he thought I couldn't speak it, (**Liz**: Mm) and I understood everything that he said to the policeman. (**Liz**: Mm)
(54) **Liz**: And did that make any difference to the situation?
(55) **George**: Yes, it did. (**Liz**: Mm) He calmed down very quickly, because he was giving a false statement, (**Liz**: Mm) and I told him that in his own language. (G2.56–65)

George constructs this man's behaviour as 'arrogant' and deranged ('he started going off his head and swearing at me', par. 50). He has expressed regret about the past when Xhosa people were 'treated with disdain', but now he maintains that he finds *himself* 'treated with disdain' (par. 51), spoken to as if he was 'a dog' (par. 51). He appears to experience the black man's assumption of a superior stance as inappropriate. The stance that whites expect and are used to experiencing from black people, appropriate within the master-narrative, is one of humility, friendliness, gratitude, compliance, perhaps even servility. George, in particular, sees himself as someone who has friendly relationships with black people. As a white person, he is not used to black people's expressions of anger; they jar, offend and anger him. He is particularly angered by the fact that the man 'brings up the apartheid era' (par. 51), again an implied accusation of racism. George says, surprisingly, that the man wasn't 'even living in the apartheid era' (par. 51). As people who were born after the democratic elections in 1994 were then[6] only 13 or 14 years old, this is hardly true, but probably reflects George's strong need, surely typical of many white South Africans, to put the past with its burden of guilt behind him. It is striking that his need to distance himself from the thought that he is, or might have been, a racist, causes such feelings of conflict and ambivalence that they distort his perception of the passage of time. He expresses himself with great feeling and intensity, and repeats this view three times in the full version of this incident.

In his version of the conversation with the man, he emphatically rejects the description of himself as 'racist' and constructs his request to see the other man's driver's licence (par. 50) as a simple, rational, innocent request. It seems that this was not how the other man constructed it. The fact that he 'looked very violent' (par. 50) suggests that he saw George's behaviour as typical of a white person who feels it is his or her right to question the

legality of a black man's actions. George's agitation, in his account of this incident, is palpable. 'Any human being will get cross', he says (par. 51). In saying 'any human being', he uses colour-blind discourse to defend himself against an implied accusation that he is reacting like a white racist. He is battling here with a violation of the colonial assumptions that make inequality between white and black something natural and permanent (Steyn, 2001: 21). The assured pride of place of the European can no longer be relied on, and this undermines the ground he stands on, in spite of his friendships with black people.

My questions about the use of isiXhosa seem to defuse George's agitated mood. His account of events at the police station suggests that his use and understanding of isiXhosa also defused and calmed the situation somewhat. In a sense, it gave him the upper hand again, working in his favour and making him feel that his anger with the man was justified, and that he was in the right. His fluency in isiXhosa seemed to operate as 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1991: 14); it restored his sense of control, in this particular situation. It is possible that it also changed the 'arrogant' man's perception of George (changed his 'identity' in the man's eyes). Another possibility is that the man realised that, because George understood what he was saying, he could not give vent so freely to his feelings. Whatever the case, it seems to have put George in a position where he could challenge his antagonists on more equal terms. In other words, it created a more shared space, no longer as polarised in terms of black and white.

George: 'In your back yard, in a built-up area' (G2.90)

The next extract, which follows on from the section of narrative where George speaks about initiation (see Chapter 5), shows his strong conviction that certain things are appropriate in some spaces, but not in others. It suggests that the movement of black middle-class people into 'once-white' suburbs gives George a feeling that his space – his comfort zone – is threatened. This is a feature of the 'culturalist discourse' of white South Africans in the new democracy, which is identified in the studies of Steyn (2001) and Durrheim and Dixon (2005).

In response to my requests for other experiences illustrating his views on black culture and its appropriateness for certain spaces, George comes up with this story:

(56) **Liz**: So are you - you're saying that in some way, in the modern world, their culture is not really making sense any more.
(57) **George**: No, it doesn't. (**Liz**: Mm) It doesn't

(58) **Liz**: Give me any more detail about that, or experiences that make you feel that that is so.

(59) **George**: Yes, also, like this one guy lives in town, he's accepting the change. OK? He works for government. He's in town, but yet he still believes he has to slaughter an ox the old way, and all that, in his yard, for his forefathers that have passed on.

(60) I mean, that's wrong. I mean, if you're going to get the change to that effect that you're top management, and you still got these old beliefs and are doing things the old way.

(61) Like on a farm its fine, on the farm we used to slaughter our own cattle and our own sheep, (**Liz**: Mm) but in today's life you must also respect other cultures; (**Liz**: Mm) you can't just go and do it in your back yard, (**Liz**: Mm) in a built-up area.

(62) So they...in some way I feel that they must also change - I mean, they can't expect the whole world to change. (**Liz**: Mm) They must also effect change, and bring their part. (**Liz**: Mm)

(63) And then again, I might be wrong by saying 'they'. (**Liz**: Mm) I am sure there are a lot that have effected change and that don't do that anymore. (**Liz**: Mm) You know, so I shouldn't actually say 'they', (**Liz**: Mm) because …I should actually say 'those that don't accept the change'. (*laughs*) (G2.88–92)

Here George, expressing a view which is very common among white people, once again speaks as one who knows about Xhosa culture, and how it 'should' be practised. He positions himself as having the authority to advise Xhosa people on what is right and wrong and how they should adjust (as he did when discussing initiation). The identity position he assumes here is a very different one from that which he adopts in the story about his friend Nathi. It is the identity of the archetypal rational white male from the 'white colonial master-narrative', whose views represent 'common sense' from the white point of view, and a somewhat patronising 'top-down' attitude towards the 'other': 'On the farm it's fine (…) but in today's life you must also respect other cultures' (par. 61).

George's story of the government official who slaughters an ox in town contains a number of innuendos. Firstly, there is the suggestion that 'the change' (pars. 59, 60) for the black man is a change to the Western lifestyle. Secondly, there is the suggestion that it is 'wrong' (par. 60) to retain any part of the traditional lifestyle if you have accepted 'the change' (pars. 59, 60), i.e. a job and house in town. There is an assumption that traditional practices belong in the rural areas and not in town, where 'you can't just go and do it' (par. 61), because it is not part of the accepted

norms of the white people who have lived in those areas up until now. In white space, the white lifestyle must be adopted. In his talk about culture, George, from his stance as the authoritative white male, adopts the moral high ground, implying that certain practices which are out of tune with what he is used to are not ethical ('I mean, that's wrong', par 60). Having been involved in such discussions myself, I was very quiet while George told this story. Aware of the 'enlightened' value-systems (e.g. health and animal rights) which can be brought in to support a stance such as George's, as well as people's rights to their own cultural practices, I was also coping with inner conflict.

The fact that George feels so strongly about cultural practices in town, could speak too of a need to protect the integrity of his space, or a feeling of displacement, or 'loss of home'. Steyn (2001) finds that many of her respondents experience changes in the country post-1994 as a 'loss of home', home being a psychological space as well as a physical space. She says that they suddenly feel '"out of place". Believing for several centuries that they were feudal lords, they woke up to find they had actually been squatters all along' (Steyn, 2001: 156). What was once familiar, secure and loved has changed. Durrheim and Dixon (2005: 207), similarly, discuss at length, place, identity and dislocation, concluding that 'desegregation becomes experienced (and talked about) as a disruption to self-in-place'.

The spaces where George feels at home are the farm and small town, in each of which, he feels, certain activities are appropriate. Post-apartheid South Africa turns some of this upside down. The activity of initiation, with its rules and norms, is coming from the rural areas to town, and rules are being changed. Black people are taking on Western jobs and houses, but retaining traditional practices, which don't 'belong' in town. He finds this disturbing and disruptive to his sense of 'self-in-place'. At the same time, George seems aware that what he has been saying may be inappropriately emotional, and possibly prejudiced, and tries to correct himself: 'I shouldn't actually say "they"…' (par. 63). In all of this, there is conflict and ambivalence; there are many voices within his discourse.

Ernie: 'It saved my life once' (E2.8)

In the following story, describing an incident which took place some 10 years before the interviews (early post-apartheid times), Ernie tells of how knowing isiXhosa saved his life.

(64) **Liz**: (…) can you think of any er - experiences you've had - um involving the use of Xhosa, understanding Xhosa which have

kind of changed your - feelings about the world and yourself? [Pause]

(65) **Ernie**: Well, what it did help me with, it it saved my life (**Liz**: Ja) once - when I was - I was attacked - here in town (**Liz**: Umm) and so I was well prepared, I heard what these three *tsotsis* were saying, (…) I heard them saying that they're going to rob me and kill me (**Liz**: Wow) (…) and I was well prepared and I, - when they did come across I knew what to expect, (**Liz**: Ja) and er - and unfortunately I had - I had to shoot the one (**Liz**: Ahhhh!) that had - drew a knife on me and he had me by the throat and had I not understood Xhosa (**Liz**: Yes) they would have, - I wouldn't have known what they were talking about (**Liz**: Yes)

(66) so they always say - if you're prepared you've - won the battle, sort of thing - if you're well prepared (**Liz**: Yes, yes) I wouldn't have known what they were up to (**Liz**: Ja, gosh hey). I think that was -

(67) **Liz**: so you were armed[7]?

(68) **Ernie**: I was armed, I always had - you know it was a bad area down there, still is in fact and (…)

(69) **Liz**: Umm, hmm, so you used to walk up and down there quite regularly?

(70) **Ernie**: Yes, this was about quarter past six in the evening

(71) **Liz**: Ja, no that's not a good time of day, hey.

(72) **Ernie**: Ja, we used to work quite late on a Friday.

(73) **Liz**: Wow, that was a frightening experience!

(74) **Ernie**: Yes, - so I know when these people get attacked and so on, I know exactly what they - //**Liz**: what they go through// **Ernie**: what they go through , ja. (**Liz**: Ja) Ja

(75) **Liz**: Ja, and then the others – the other two ran away when you, when you fired?

(76) **Ernie**: They, no, they - they still came across and er - a black gentleman pulled up in a car there and he still said, 'Shoot those two!'; I said 'No', I said, 'they haven't done me anything yet' and then this guy collapsed and they helped him down the street, and do:wn onto the Market Square, he was just dragging his legs and anyway, I went I phoned from {a shop} (**Liz**: Umm) those days to the police station, they said they had no transport and when the report comes in they'll contact me and so on,

(77) I said well I couldn't wait there any longer, I had to get home and see to my farming (**Liz**: Mm) and then a little further up (…) I met a - I stopped another police van, and I - there was a white

constable in there - and I told him what had happened so he said, he'd make a note in his pocket book and if they get a report they'll come and contact me out at the farm.

(78) I was barely there and then, they came along - there, then they found enough vehicles all of a sudden and they (**Liz**: Umm, umm) said could I come and identify him, he's - passed out in front of {the doctor's} surgery down in the (…) Square (**Liz**: Umm) so I said yes, and I went there and it was him (**Liz**: Umm) - lying there in a coma and er –

(79) then of course I had to go through all the palaver of statements, - and they withdrew my firearm for ballistic testing and the rest of it and (**Liz**: Umm) till it was all finalized (**Liz**: Umm) - and er - anyway they put it down to self-defence fortunately and um, - next thing they phone me and said I could fetch my firearm (**Liz**: Umm)

(80) that was the end of the story, as I said it was a frightening experience it shook me for a time (**Liz**: Yes, I'm sure) but it didn't change my feelings toward the - the the the outlook on on life and you know to the rest of the black community; you ca:n't sort of comb everybody with one comb, you know and - (**Liz**: Umm) people are not - not all like that. (**Liz**: Umm, umm, umm) - ja. (E2.8–12)

Ernie constructs himself here as someone who is careful and well prepared ('I was well prepared' he says twice in par. 65, and 'if you're well prepared you've won the battle' twice in par. 66). In saying this, he seems to be referring both to the fact that he had heard and understood what his attackers said in isiXhosa, and to the fact that he was armed, having what he regarded as a realistic sense of the dangers which could be lurking in certain parts of town ('you know it was a bad area down there, still is in fact'; 'we used to work quite late on a Friday', par. 72).

Like Riaan, Ernie moves towards empathic identification with people who experience attacks (par. 74). Also like Riaan, it is important for him, at this stage, to affirm that his 'outlook on on life and (…) to the rest of the black community' (par. 80) is unchanged. He uses a truism from the 'colour-blind' repertoire ('you ca:n't sort of comb everybody with one comb (…) people are not - not all like that', par. 80), to support his claim that he is not prejudiced. Included in the story, he presents support for this assertion, the fact that 'a black gentleman (…) in a car' urged him to 'Shoot those two!' (par. 76). Here, Ernie uses his accustomed respectful terminology 'gentleman' to describe this man, who is taking his side

against the criminals. He disagrees with the view of the 'black gentleman', however: 'No (…) they haven't done me anything yet' (par. 76). He is careful to present himself as someone who will only use a gun for its legitimate purpose – self-defence. He certainly does not construct himself as a violent person; simply as one who is realistic and prepared ('{U}nfortunately I had - I had to shoot the one {that} drew a knife on me', par. 65).

While he is careful not to complain explicitly about the inadequacy of the initial police response, he does make specific reference to the race (white) of the constable in the police van whom he met on the way home, and adds ironically that 'they found enough vehicles all of a sudden' (par. 78). The innuendo here is either that the white policeman is more efficient, that his word carries more weight or, perhaps, that it takes a white policeman to come to the help of a white man in trouble.

He constructs himself as 'fortunate' in having been acquitted of the charge against him because 'they put it down to self-defence' (par. 79). The process of making statements and having his firearm 'withdrawn for ballistic testing' was a 'palaver' (par. 79), and 'it was a frightening experience it shook {him} for a time' (par. 80).

In this story, Ernie could be seen as a victim of 'black on white' violence. The drama and horror of his predicament shakes me temporarily out of my reflective mode and into a closer sympathy: 'Wow, that was a frightening experience!' (par. 73). While Ernie remarks that the incident gave him empathy with other victims of crime, with whom he identifies here, he is also careful not to stereotype all black people. He distinguishes between *'tsotsis'* (par. 65) who are attacking him and a 'black gentleman' who encourages him to shoot the *tsotsis*[8] (par. 76). There is a suggestion that the white policeman was more able to 'make things happen' for him than the first people he contacted, and a strong possibility that his being white did mean that the process went somewhat more smoothly for him. He constructs himself as a non-violent person, who is, however, realistic about possible danger and prepared to defend himself, and who is extremely fortunate to be able to understand isiXhosa. This ability, he says, saved his life. He was badly shaken by the incident, but has managed to recover his equanimity, and claims that he has emerged with his attitude towards black people unaltered.

In this section, I have examined stories in which all the men, now adults, position themselves in polarised and adult space. They use different white discourses: the 'rational white male', who rejects all superstition and knows best about black culture (George); colour-blind discourse which denies racism and prejudice (Riaan, George, Ernie) and a discourse which values the kind of respect and discipline which Riaan remembers prevailing during

his student days at university. All of the above discourses are very much focused on identifying what is right and, especially, 'wrong' in different kinds of behaviour (George, Riaan, the policeman). I have also identified an enlightened discourse expressing the obligations and responsibilities of a privileged white person in relation to those less fortunate and needing his support (Brendon). Using these kinds of discourse, often very mixed within the same story, and within the same person's stories, some identify with white victims of violence (Riaan, Ernie), and see white friends and colleagues as respectful and having similar attitudes to themselves (Riaan). Some battle with post-apartheid changes which affect accustomed ways of relating between white and black people (Riaan, George) and lead to a sense of 'loss of place', because geographical spaces which were dominated by white norms are changing through desegregation (George).

All the stories are strongly tinged with the conflict and ambivalence that arise out of the men's fluency in isiXhosa, which means that they are pulled in different directions. They find it impossible to succumb to stereotypical responses ('you ca::n't sort of comb everybody with one comb', par. 80) (Riaan, Ernie, George), in spite of empathy for victims of 'black on white' violence. Their fluency also makes so much possible: for George and for Brendon, friendships and a great deal of discussion and debate (Brendon with Nongugquko); for George, more equilibrium after the incident with the 'arrogant' man; for Ernie, his life saved.

Hybrid Space

In this final section, three incidents are analysed in which boundaries dissolve and space becomes not simply shared, but *hybrid*. This kind of space seems to occupy another dimension from that of polarised space. It is not politically correct or incorrect, or threatened by the norms of dominant discourse; nor does it change those norms, which are reasserted once the participants re-enter formal space. It is incongruous, coming upon people unexpectedly, taking them by surprise.

George: 'He's very loud (...) and he jokes, and I joke with him' (G3.50)

George is conscious that he is not only in a different 'space' when he speaks isiXhosa, but that he is also, in a sense, 'a different person'. The difference becomes especially marked when he is with Oupa, a friend and colleague from one of his jobs, who draws him completely into another isiXhosa space, seemingly out of reach of dominant discourses.

George had been saying that it felt strange to him to speak English to a black person:

(81) **Liz:** Ja…ja… So in a way what you're saying is that you've got a different…like almost, a different...you're a different person when you're talking to Xhosa people and when you talk to to English speaking people.
(82) **George:** Yes…yes.
(83) **Liz:** Ja, You become a different…a different person, in some way.
(84) **George**: That's right. Like here at {my previous work}, there's this one guy, old Oupa, (**Liz**: Mm) (…) and um, he always used to tell everybody, I'm a white man by mistake (*both laugh loudly*)
(85) Even today, he's very loud, and - yeao - when we see each other, he…it's actually emb... my wife gets embarrassed, (**Liz**: Mm) because he's very loud. (**Liz**: Mm) And he jokes, and I joke with him, (**Liz**: Mm) and ja… [pause] But he's a very friendly guy, (**Liz**: Mm) well mannered, (**Liz**: Mm) we get on very well.
(86) **Liz**: Ja – ja – So - (…) when you say he's very loud, you're meaning that he's, er, that's the way Xhosa people speak, (**George**: Ja) and then when you speak to him, you kind of enter into that.
(87) **George**: Yes. *Laughs* That's why my wife gets embarrassed, especially when we meet at the mall! (*both laugh*) (G3.51–54)

George obviously enjoys Oupa's construction of him as 'a white man by mistake' (par. 84). It denotes acceptance. Oupa jokes with him and is 'very loud' and they 'get on very well' (par. 85). But it embarrasses his wife when she sees him in this mode, says George, 'especially when we meet at the mall!' (par. 87). The shopping mall is a highly public space where Western norms dominate, and where they might encounter white friends and acquaintances. His wife feels most uncomfortable when they are at the mall, and George communicates loudly, with a lot of laughter, with a Xhosa person.

In this extract, he constructs Xhosa people as 'very loud'; later in the interview, he describes himself as 'very loud' as well (G3.100). I suggest that, with Oupa, George may be entering into what Bakhtin (1981: 20) calls, 'the common people's creative culture of laughter … the eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought'. Laughter, according to Bakhtin (1981: 23), strips of falsity and destroys hierarchical distance, and the monoglossia of authority structures. The eruption of the language of folk laughter into white public space and discourse is shocking. George moves right out of the normative structures of white

discourse, to his wife's consternation, and to his and Oupa's delight. This is a 'language' and a space beyond the reach of the centralising control of those in power.

It is interesting to note, however, that George once again reassures me, after quite a long pause, that Oupa is well-mannered (par. 85); that he doesn't overstep the norms of respect. This probably includes the norms of respect observed in Xhosa society, as well as the norms of respect between black and white. While this language of folk laughter destroys hierarchical distance, George does not experience it as something which transgresses either of these bounds of 'respect'; it represents a shift in dimension. Bourdieu's (1991: 71) words are once again relevant: 'the formal law, which is thus provisionally suspended rather than truly transgressed, remains valid, and it reimposes itself … once they leave the unregulated areas where they can be outspoken'.

Riaan: 'A more comic type of meeting' (Ri1.70)

A role that Riaan plays at work, as he did on the farm, is that of 'broker', someone who interprets between outsiders and insiders. His favourite story is one which challenges racial stereotypes, and shifts into hybridity. This story was unsolicited; Riaan inserted it into his narrative for no apparent reason:

(88) **Riaan**: In some cases, I don't know whether I told you, it was quite a funny incident in {an important meeting} here; he's a friend of mine {from} one of the African countries (**Liz**: Mmm) - not Nigeria (**Liz**: Ghanaian, or…) Ghana, or one of those countries, (…) sitting next to me (…). So we're sitting (…) and some of the questions are asked in Xhosa, and there are white managers whom I assume haven't got a clue what's going on there, but people don't realize that {my friend} can't speak Xhosa.

(89) **Liz**: They think, because he's black, hey?

(90) **Riaan**: Because he's black, it's assumed that he can speak Xhosa.

(91) So one of the {big guys} asks the question (…) in Xhosa, (**Liz**: Ja) to the chairperson. So the Chairperson looks at {my friend}, and says, 'Answer the question'. (**Liz** *laughs*) {He} obviously hasn't got a clue.

(92) So the Chairperson says, 'Someone translate to him', and here I sit and I translate, because he's sitting right next to me, so I translated to him, which was - that was an outburst - luckily changed the whole approach of the meeting into a more comic type of

meeting, because here's a white chap now translating to a black guy in Xhosa from Xhosa to English.

(93) So that was quite an incident that was that was that was fun and noteworthy. (Ri1.69, 70)

It is clear that this episode takes place in a highly official setting; it was an 'important meeting' (par. 88), involving 'big guys'[9] (par. 91). The story also shows clearly the racialisation of language in the Eastern Cape: if you're black, it is assumed that you speak isiXhosa; if you're white, English.

By translating to a black man from isiXhosa into English, Riaan is doing the unexpected and completely breaking the stereotypes, and this changes the atmosphere, suddenly, with 'an outburst', from formal to comic. As with George and his friend in the shopping centre, the meeting suddenly moves from official monoglossic space into 'third, hybrid space', and Riaan, by doing something completely natural to him, unexpectedly and unintentionally assumes the guise of 'the rogue, the clown and the fool' (Bakhtin, 1981: 159). 'Essential to these figures is … the right to be "other" in this world'. These characters, says Bakhtin (1989: 162), are 'opposed to convention and [function] as a force for exposing it'. While the authorities in the Eastern Cape do speak English as well as isiXhosa, they have conventional expectations of what language is appropriate for each person to be able to speak, and a monolingual situation (with English added as a lingua franca) is the accepted norm.

It is interesting to note that while cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) is usually tied to English in South Africa, this formal governmental situation, like many in the Eastern Cape, inverts the conventional norms: isiXhosa is being used by 'big guys' (par. 91). IsiXhosa is the legitimate language and the white managers whom Riaan assumes 'haven't got a clue what's going on there' (par. 88) are at a distinct disadvantage, in spite of the usual advantages, in a colonial or postcolonial situation, of being white and English speaking. In this situation, Riaan unexpectedly shows that, despite appearances, he commands the dominant discourse.

Brendon: 'A very special relationship' (B1.84)

Both the previous stories show a spontaneous shift into a different dimension, triggered by white men speaking isiXhosa and characterised by iconoclastic bursts of laughter.

The extract that follows describes a very different kind of situation from the two that precede it. For me, what the following story has in common with the two previous stories is the incongruity of what is

described, which seems to speak of another dimension which exists apart from, and unconnected to, the rational dimension constructed by dominant forces in society. One could see this as one of the 'in-between spaces' referred to by Bhabha (1994: 1–2). The story involves Brendon's father, and once again, is a story which Brendon has worked into a short story, meaning that he has constructed it into something of his own. It probably therefore tells us more about Brendon than about his father. He compares his experiences of friendship with black people with those of his father:

(94) **Brendon**: obviously for my father it's a totally different experience {of friendship} to, to what I had, or what I have, (**Liz**: Mm) um, he doesn't - I think I've always seen him as someone who gives instructions in Xhosa, (**Liz**: Yes, yes) // you know what I mean//

(95) **Liz**: It's a different kind of Xhosa//.

(96) **Brendon**: Yet in this um, short story I've given you, (**Liz**: Mm) he had a very close relationship with, um, Nongugquko and Sonwabo's father, Zamani, (**Liz**: Mm) he really did, they had some weirdest, oddest, I don't know how many times the old man wasn't fired, but he just never went, (**Liz**: Mm) he just stayed, (**Liz**: Mm)

(97) I mean, they knew each other from before my father was married, (**Liz**: Mm) (…)

(98) and my father and that old man had a very special relationship, even though it was a constructed by apartheid relationship, (**Liz**: Yes)

(99) and I remember before the old man died, he brought my father a brand new pair of, um, sort-of-like plyers, and he gave them to my father, (**Liz**: Mm)

(100) and, and I still remember my father saying, (…) you know, (**Liz**: Mm) why does it look like you want to leave me, old friend, you know, which for me was a very profound, intimate moment between two men that have really known each other their entire lives, um. (**Liz**: Mm)

(101) So I think, there's such a deep sense of connectedness between these two families of which I'm part, (**Liz**: Mm) um, and - that is my history, I suppose. (**Liz**: Mm) (B1.83–85)

In his father's relationship with the old man, Brendon sees something completely at odds with the superficial 'facts', i.e. that his father spoke

what Riaan would have called 'boere Xhosa' (the authoritative variety), indicating essentialist racist attitudes; that he tried numerous times to fire Zamani; and that their relationship was 'constructed by apartheid' (par. 98) – master–servant, representing the suppression, dependence, deprivation and 'stuckness' of the farm labourer in relation to the farm owner. What Brendon saw was something 'weird' and 'odd' (par. 96), something which cannot be rationally explained: a rare kind of intimacy, a profound connectedness, in which he, Brendon, feels he shares – which is his 'history' (par. 101).

Is this the wishful thinking of the white man's son, who has in his memory positive memories of a relationship with the black family, and longs to see signs of something similar in his father? Does this represent just one more instance of the oppressed person's deferential behaviour, enacted in the interests of his own survival, or in this case his family's survival? Does hybrid space overlay, or underpin, and in some profound sense overcome apartheid space, in this story? Is it the implicit and intuitive sharing of this hybrid space which means that the firing of the old man never sticks? Or does he stay because he does not see another option, for himself or his children and grandchildren after him? These are questions which remain hanging in the air around Brendon's story. But Brendon constructs this incident as evidence of a special intimacy between the two men, a lifelong friendship which underlies, and is finally stronger than the master–servant, 'dominator–dominated' relationship. I found myself strongly drawn to Brendon's view as he told this story. I wanted there to be a redemptive and even mystical dimension to the life of this man who gave the impression of being a racist. Indeed, I longed for this to be true about the whole of life, which often feels so tragically divided and fragmented.

Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has shown that all four men are fundamentally positioned in white space by the boundaries set up for them through their schooling and socialisation and by the expectations of those around them, black and white. This is their ascribed identity. While they comply with the minimum requirements of the divided society into which they were born, they are always poised, by virtue of their early socialisation on farms and their knowledge of isiXhosa, on the margins, and often move into shared space, as a matter of preference, when they can. It is also possible for them, because of their backgrounds and linguistic repertoires, to tumble unexpectedly into another dimension, a hybrid space, out of reach of dominant discourses.

Evidence of their positioning in white space can be seen in the 'white discourses' which they adopt when speaking of matters relating to relationships between black and white, and changes that have taken place since 1994, most still describing the world in terms which imply, blatantly or subtly, the superiority of whites over blacks. All have benefited in many ways from the superior status assigned to them as white people, and some show signs of being thrown quite badly off balance by the changes which have overturned this, or which portray them as racist.

In spite of this, they clearly have access to a much broader range of genres and experience than that of white people restricted to English and/or Afrikaans. Their linguistic repertoires open up to them shared and hybrid spaces removed from the racial binaries of dominant South African culture, and they persist in enjoying interactions and relationships with black people.

Their experience of moving across spaces and their understanding of isiXhosa mean that they often experience conflict and ambivalence, being pulled in different directions by their white positioning and their empathy and friendships with isiXhosa speakers. George's discourse clearly reflects the 'multiple' nature of his identity, sometimes having features of 'essentialist white racist discourse', and other times issuing directly out of hybrid space. In spite of being emotionally torn at times, for all four men their multilingualism is a source of power and joy, and they seem to handle the ambivalence without undue stress, and construct themselves as 'fortunate'.

Bakhtin maintains that dominant social groups attempt to impose their monologic views on society to unify and centralise meaning, but heteroglossia 'stratifies and fragments ideological thought into multiple views of the world. … and creates the conditions for the possibility of a free consciousness' (Morris, 1994: 15–16). There are examples in this chapter of 'society's monologic views' (Morris, 1994: 15–16). The policeman in Brendon's story and George's colleague from the railways insist on the dangers and wrongness of friendships across the colour line; Riaan's meeting expects people of certain colours to speak certain languages; the relationship between Brendon's father and Zamani is locked into the master–servant boere Xhosa paradigm. Societal pressures are experienced by Brendon as he considers taking his friend home, and by George's wife in the shopping mall. But in each of these situations, the multilingualism of the boys/men releases some of the stranglehold of these views: Brendon's friendships, made possible by his language repertoire, work against the policeman's expectations and the societal pressure imposed by his upbringing; carnival laughter breaks open the formality of the meeting

and the humdrum atmosphere of the shopping mall; and the relationship between Brendon's father and Zamani *may* be much more multidimensional than it seems. Polarisation yields, here and there, to hybridity, which brings with it a sense of greater freedom.

Notes

(1) The Immorality Acts (1927 and 1957) made sex across the colour line illegal, and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) prohibited mixed race marriages.
(2) This incident took place in late 2007.
(3) *Takkie* (colloquial South African English): a running shoe.
(4) University of Free State.
(5) His father died in July 2008, between our second and third meeting, somewhat changing the situation described here.
(6) At the time of the interview, the end of 2007.
(7) Appendix 9 gives some background on firearms in South Africa.
(8) The distinction he makes here is similar to that which he made when discussing the theft of his turkeys (Chapter 4), where the boys who stole and damaged his turkeys were 'tsotsis' and the others his friends.
(9) Both *important meeting* and *big guys* are substitute terms I have inserted to obscure identities. I believe they convey the same sense as Riaan's original terms.

7 Conclusion

… those that are free and equal are also those bonded in fraternity (…) – i.e. by love and friendship. Without this investment, 'the people' themselves do not exist. Hence, they cannot be free or equal.
Do South Africans Exist? – Chipkin (2007: 209)

The curiosity that gave rise to this research was, first of all, a curiosity about how people such as George, Riaan, Brendon and Ernie acquired, developed and maintained fluency in isiXhosa, and a desire to understand how this process interacts with identity construction. As the study progressed, it developed into a quest to understand more about the connections between language, power, identity and change in settings of societal multilingualism, specifically South Africa. The study is not unique in focusing on race and language learning. However, its location in the context of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, characterised by stark racial inequalities, means that the specific ways in which language, power, race and identity can work together and influence language acquisition and use have been thrown into sharp relief. This chapter highlights new insights gained into these relationships through the findings of the study, these insights constituting the contribution to knowledge represented by this research. The chapter also outlines some of the limitations of the study, highlighting areas for further research. The postscript returns to the personal concerns which prompted the study.

The four white South African men who became participants in my study grew up on farms in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, and developed fluency in the African language of isiXhosa, in addition to their 'languages of inheritance' (English, Afrikaans and German), in a period of history when law and policy were rigidly focused on keeping black and white South Africans apart. Through analysing the men's stories, I have shown how the boys acquired their initial fluency in isiXhosa before they went to school, and in periods after school such as weekends and holidays, through legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice (CoP) of the farm (Wenger, 1998). In this context, they engaged in childhood play with the isiXhosa-speaking children of farmworkers and in the practices of the farm with both children and adults who spoke isiXhosa. Here, they were also socialised into the language and culture of the farm,

and to some extent, of the isiXhosa-speaking community, by isiXhosa-speaking caregivers and 'second parents', as well as other adults and the older siblings of their playmates. Their identities as legitimate peripheral participants in the farm gave them full access to interaction in isiXhosa, and their 'farmer identity' was constructed and reinforced, in turn, by this developing language repertoire. Their deep investment in isiXhosa, developed through the pleasurable experiences of play and involvement in the practices of the farm, ensured that they continued to develop and maintain their linguistic competence into adulthood. Their own parents and family members also played a part in the language socialisation of the boys, speaking isiXhosa to them and to other farm members, as well as English, German or Afrikaans, the 'language of inheritance' (Leung *et al*., 1997: 555), or the 'first language' of the white family, used when communicating with other whites, or within the family circle.

In my introduction to the study, I commented that the bilingual situation most similar to that of these boys is that of children whose parents are speakers of two different languages. This appears ironic when one looks more deeply into the power dynamics of the apartheid farm, where authority and control is stacked on the side of the white farmer, and farmworkers have very limited power in the realm of farm affairs, depending heavily on the farmer for their livelihood. The farmer's power is shared by his children, although in their preschool years they are not aware of this, and live in a world of illusory 'equality' with their black companions, who share their parents' dependency. This childhood milieu could be viewed as a 'second world' of carnival (Bakhtin, 1965: 6) for the boys, where the hierarchical arrangements of the outside world are temporarily suspended. Here, the children's shared identities as farm children 'equalises' power relations between the black and white children in their early years and enables access to isiXhosa conversation for the white child.[1] The deceptive side of this 'equality' reveals itself when the white child goes to school, and disillusion, to one degree or another, sets in. The realisation that 'carnival time' has ended can cause a strong sense of betrayal, hurt and anger for the white child (which is seen particularly in the case of Brendon). This is surely more painful for the black child, when it becomes apparent that the 'friends' are destined to inhabit very different worlds, the white person to be groomed for ownership of the farm or for a profitable career or profession, while the black person remains marooned in a position without prospects, usually not even having learned English, commonly regarded as a key to upward mobility (de Klerk, 2002; McKinney, 2007; Probyn *et al*., 2002). Chapter 1 showed that white farmers often resisted providing education for their workers,[2] seeing this

as something which would deflect them from their destiny as farmworkers and their commitment to the farm.

IsiXhosa is, then, the language of control on the farm,[3] enabling the farmer to instruct his workers, preparing the farmer's son for his future position of authority on the farm and minimising 'hidden transcripts' (Scott, 1990): aspects of workers' lives and thoughts which they want to keep private from the farmer, or insubordinate intentions which they might have. Kaschula's (1989: 102) research suggests, however, that farmers are not always as fluent in isiXhosa as they would like to think, because workers often accommodate the farmer's language, adjusting to his register over time. This is one way in which the isiXhosa speakers retain for themselves an area of privacy which is not open to their master's scrutiny. Indeed, indigenous languages can be seen as creating a sacrosanct space, where dominant power relations can be subverted, and where African people in colonial and apartheid South Africa are free and in charge, safe from the invasive attention of white people. A white person fluent in an African language can therefore be seen as dangerous or as 'knowing too much',[4] in the eyes of a black South African.

The power relations described above are very different from those in previously researched bilingual or second language acquisition (SLA) situations, and from the situation of other white South Africans engaged in the learning of an African language in a more formal context. The context of immigrants learning English in Canada, Britain or the US, for instance, is often also characterised by large power differentials, but in their case, depending somewhat on social class position, learners have little power in a situation dominated by the hegemony of English. The learner often struggles for participation and has to invest in particular identities which enable access to conversation (McKinney & Norton, 2008; Norton, 2000). The position of the black isiXhosa-speaking learner in a previously white-dominated South African school is similarly one of little power in relation to the dominant Western ethos of the school which imposes its powerful norms on all who enter its portals (McKinney, 2010). As a white English-speaking learner of isiZulu, particularly in the apartheid years, I wielded considerably more power through my race and class positioning than did members of the isiZulu-speaking community in which I needed to participate in order to gain access to the language in use. On the other hand, I had very few of the skills and competencies which I needed to cope in a black township or rural community. Within a power mismatch of this kind, it is difficult to find an identity in which to invest which enables extended participation and access to conversation in isiXhosa. It is not too difficult for me to gain access to conversation with

middle-class isiXhosa speakers, but most such interactions would occur more naturally in English, which most middle-class black South Africans have had to master in order to succeed in educational and employment contexts.

The Language Acquisition Made Practical (LAMP) language learning system on which the Transfer of African Language Knowledge (TALK) project was based recognises how crucial and difficult access to conversation is, and lays down as a guiding principle that the language learner explicitly positions himself or herself as 'learner' (Brewster & Brewster, 1976: 7), as a starting point for any interactions with mother tongue speakers. This indicates a focus, in this method, on identity and positioning, as well as on the unequal relations of power which it is assumed would often exist between a Western missionary and members of a Third World community.[5] The missionary is also an immigrant, but is often in a very different position from those already discussed. He or she is often a white, middle-class, educated, English-speaking, Western, Christian person, all characteristics that currently carry extensive cultural capital in many contexts. Communities in which missionaries hope to work, on the other hand, are often 'other' in the colonial sense: dark-skinned, from 'Third World' countries, perhaps rural and poor, with little Western education, 'heathen' in a colonial evangelical Christian sense and speaking languages which are not of Germanic or Latin origin. The people in such communities are also likely to be multilingual, in the sense that Canagarajah (2007) describes. This learning situation is similar, in a number of ways, to that of a white South African learning an indigenous African language. While it seems appropriate to adopt a learner identity in an attempt to mitigate the power inequalities inherent in the South African context, access to participation in an African community where a white South African could develop fluency in an African language was very difficult during apartheid times because of enforced racial segregation, and even now, would usually require fairly drastic and long-term changes in lifestyle.

Returning to the question of my participants' language and identity development, the study shows that their identity as farmers' sons meant that the boys had to attend a white school, where 'language practices … are bound up in the legitimization of relations of power among ethno-linguistic groups' (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996: 128). This meant an interruption in the development of their isiXhosa, which they now used mainly on occasions when they returned to the farm. Brendon, wanting to extend his engagement with the isiXhosa-speaking community through imagination, took isiXhosa as a subject at school, but this developed his

grammatical rather than his communicative competence. Attendance at a white school introduced subjective conflict and ambivalence in different degrees to each of the boys, finally confirming their white identity through discourses of white superiority in English and Afrikaans, and bringing about, for Brendon at least, a subjective 'shift' into a different space, distanced from his erstwhile companions. Much of the rest of his life is a struggle to undo the shift and circle back to that original intimate space, which becomes his 'imagined community' (Norton, 2001; Pavlenko & Norton, 2006; Wenger, 1998).

The childhood period was irrevocably concluded for the young white men by the Xhosa initiation ceremonies of their black friends. These were effectively closed off from the white boys because of jealous parental control of white identity, as well as Xhosa traditional authority which protected sacred space. Having left school, two of the boys went to university. Academic and literary discourse, in isiXhosa as well as English and Afrikaans, brought with it identity shifts, such as Riaan's shift into 'research Xhosa', which constructed a more respectful and equal relationship with research respondents, and 'poetic Xhosa', which brought Brendon into close relationship with oral poets. These more equal relationships once again led to language development that extended into their working lives. Through creative writing in English and isiXhosa, Brendon crafted further imagined communities on the basis of his childhood experiences. The other two men, in more working-class environments, found that their knowledge of isiXhosa extended their scope and usefulness, Ernie in the public service, and George in more supervisory roles in relation to isiXhosa speakers. Both men had ongoing and new friendships with black people, and each in his own way built on and extended his childhood lifestyle, Ernie continuing his farming activities and George engaging in outdoor pursuits which recreated the imagined community of his childhood. For all four men, the power which was theirs by virtue of their racial identity as white men was augmented by their isiXhosa competence.

The 1994 shift of political power into black hands in South Africa also meant a change in identity, language use and power for the men. Brendon found that new national policies and priorities expanded his work scope tremendously, and opened up endless possibilities, both personal and professional. As a white man in a previously white institution, who speaks isiXhosa, he has legitimacy and credibility as well as the ability to promote a 'transformation agenda'[6] for African languages. This translates into power to realise his 'imagined community' in a number of ways. Riaan also finds himself working on a 'transformation agenda' in rural

development; however, in 'black-dominated' government circles he has to walk a fine line to retain credibility, making sure that his isiXhosa discourse has no trace of the 'boere Xhosa' of white superiority in it; his white identity can make him 'marginal' rather than 'peripheral', in Wenger's (1998: 167) terms. Ernie's life and roles have changed little in the post-apartheid era. Working for a white-owned company, he finds that his role as mediator and peacemaker, which makes use of his language repertoires, is as valued now as it was pre-1994. While George still enjoys using isiXhosa, 'kitchen Xhosa' (like 'boere Xhosa') has less power and usefulness in the post-1994 democracy: he finds himself replaced in his interpreter role by an isiXhosa speaker, who sometimes prefers to communicate with him in English. In other words, the fact that he is white carries less and less weight, in and of itself, and the register of isiXhosa which he commands also has less credibility.

Lave and Wenger (1991: 36) assert that 'Legitimate peripherality is a complex notion, implicated in social structures involving relations of power'. They also comment that 'unequal relations of power must be included more systematically in [their] analysis' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 42), something which is not done in Wenger (1998), as the contributors to Barton and Tusting (2005) demonstrate. This study offers more clarity on the concept of legitimacy in relation to participation for language learners in target language communities, showing how closely this legitimacy is bound up, as Norton argues, with inequitable relations of power. The contexts of language learning and use that are examined in this study demonstrate that legitimate peripheral participation in a community, and thereby language learning or development, requires investment in an identity which establishes a degree of equality, albeit temporary or illusory, between members of the two language communities. This conclusion is confirmed by a re-examination of other research contexts. So, in spite of huge power differentials, the small white boys gain legitimacy of participation because they share a 'farm boy' identity within the 'equal' world of childhood play; Riaan invests in 'research Xhosa' and in respectful isiXhosa, and Brendon in poetic isiXhosa, thus levelling out the stark disparities between black and white in their worlds. Similarly, Martina, an Eastern European immigrant to Canada (Norton, 1995: 23), needs to invest in her identity as 'mother', rather than 'quantity surveyor',[7] 'immigrant' or 'broom',[8] to gain legitimate participation on terms of relative equality to conversation in English with co-workers in a Canadian restaurant; black learners in a desegregated South African school seek legitimate participation in the imagined English-speaking community of fashion and media icons within the commercial world, where money 'has no colour', equalising relationships and making

identification with the dominant white community of the school unnecessary. By adopting the identity of 'learner of isiZulu', I can lessen the power differentials between myself and the community of African language speakers, but successful learning will require access, on somewhat equal terms, as a legitimate peripheral participant to the practices of a community which uses isiZulu as its dominant linguistic repertoire. This is difficult because of extreme power differentials, relating particularly, in the democratic dispensation, to the power of English as a global language. Examples of people who have achieved the necessary access to participation in order to learn an African language include those involved in missionary work, research, agricultural or development projects and enterprises, whose work involves extended stays in rural or township settings. Such people are often from abroad, and therefore not as saturated with South African power polarities and discourses.

Bourdieu's (1991: 67) work shows that language is a form of symbolic power related to social class, and that the worth of an utterance is closely linked to its speaker's cultural and linguistic capital. My research, focusing on the South African context, adds the dimension of racial identity and power to Bourdieu's theory. IsiXhosa is not usually a language invested with a great deal of power in the broader South Africa, specifically in educational, commercial and political contexts. Exceptions to this include Eastern Cape government contexts (e.g. meetings attended by Riaan) and those involving traditional leadership and cultural practices (e.g. oral poetry). White people, on the other hand, have long wielded a great deal of power and influence in South Africa and in spite of political changes this still tends to be true in a number of contexts. The hegemony of English also continues unabated; in fact, globalisation and electronic communication have rendered it almost unassailable. This power has combined with the power of 'whiteness' and the power of the Western capitalist and consumerist lifestyle to become hugely dominant in South Africa, as it is worldwide. The men's stories demonstrate that isiXhosa can become a language of power when combined with whiteness, its privilege and resources. So, for the white farmer, isiXhosa is a tool of power and control; isiXhosa augments Ernie's usefulness on the railways and makes him eligible for more employment opportunities; isiXhosa makes George a more useful supervisor; and as a privileged white university student, Riaan can use his isiXhosa competence to carry out research towards a master's degree, thereby extending his isiXhosa competence further. There is evidence that this has changed somewhat in the post-1994 political dispensation, and that the white men's power is diminishing; this is not universally the case, however. While George is replaced as

interpreter by an isiXhosa speaker, Brendon is able to use his power as a white person to extend the power of isiXhosa, as I have discussed above. The men's whiteness can be a liability in contexts where power is in black hands, but there is evidence that their language repertoires can still enable them to negotiate something closer to inclusion. Brendon experiences rejection by the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) as a white person, but intense discussion, using isiXhosa, leads to an invitation to join the black organisation. Riaan sometimes feels marginal because of his whiteness, but his background and language repertoire enable him to invest in isiXhosa discourses which do not position him as superior, and thus enable his continued inclusion.

My research shows that, in line with their socialisation into the rigid racial binaries of South African society, the men position themselves, in their conversations with me, in white space, usually a space of power and superiority, using discourses on race which are typical of white people (Frankenberg, 1993; Steyn, 2001). However, it also shows that the facet of their identities which experienced, in childhood, what could be called 'carnival space', where inequalities are inverted and 'life is one' (Bakhtin, 1981: 209), informs their attitudes and decisions, and the directions taken by their lives. In line with this, they use discourses of the margins, which display ambivalence and perform brokering functions: George's discourses are mixed and conflicting, suggesting the multiplicity of his identity; there is evidence that, in spontaneous moments of incongruity and laughter, the men can fall back into that 'hybrid space', which could be seen as a constant dimension of all life, not subject to the machinations of political and economic power structures. This is the space of Brendon's imagined community, of George and Oupa at the supermarket, of Riaan in the meeting which became comic. It is also, perhaps, the space underlying Brendon's father's relationship with Zamani.

The stories indicate that the South African identity of the four men is strengthened and made more inclusive by their fluency in isiXhosa, which also reinforces their intimate connection with the familiar space of the Eastern Cape. Brendon's story shows him lost and without identity and meaning when he is outside of the country in the USA; Riaan claims he cannot stand living in a place where he cannot speak to his gardener, and he comes back 'home' without making much effort, it would seem, to acclimatise to the new environment. Ernie describes his feelings as 'lost' when he leaves his familiar environment to go to the army, and George, in a somewhat different way, suggests that he feels lost with black people who insist on speaking English to him. The stories show that the four men are far more able to participate in and contribute to the broader

Eastern Cape society than are South Africans with no African language competence. In a province where more than 80% of people are isiXhosa speaking, these men are able to occupy posts which would otherwise need a mother tongue isiXhosa speaker (e.g. rural development practitioner and isiXhosa lecturer), and are able to interpret and mediate between white and black, rural and urban, uneducated and academic, on a number of levels. They are able to listen to and appreciate interchanges in isiXhosa covering a number of topics; they are able to joke, challenge, argue and negotiate with speakers of isiXhosa in isiXhosa. This certainly constitutes a more inclusive South African identity than that of monolingual or bilingual English and/or Afrikaans speakers.

Chipkin (2007: 200ff.) spends some time discussing the term *fraternity*, in the context of the French revolution and French politics. This term, which he sees as more important than 'liberty' and 'equality' in defining democracy, implies that: 'the demos coincides with the community of brothers. Its unity and its limit are given by the especially strong, "virile" affective bonds that exist between its members' (Chipkin, 2007: 203). 'Outside the demos lie, if not enemies, then not friends' (Chipkin, 2007: 210): the 'other'. The affective bonds are usually cemented through kinship, and through common language and culture, but another way of thinking of a fraternity is 'a very particular community of friends' (Chipkin, 2007: 202). Significantly for nation-building, the four men in this study refer often to isiXhosa-speaking people as 'friends'. More than 60 references of this sort are made across all the interviews, most prominent in the stories of George and Brendon. Ernie, an only child, twice refers to his black friends as 'brothers' (E1.6; E1.30). I have also shown that all had isiXhosa-speaking 'second mothers'. Their childhood experiences, then, built up a real sense of fraternity, family and friendship between them and the isiXhosa speakers with whom they grew up, something which constitutes raw material for true democracy, according to Chipkin. While school and adult experiences undermined this brotherhood, instilling a sense that white is superior and black is 'the other', all four men retain a strong connection with and, explicitly in the case of Brendon, a commitment to their place of birth and its people.

In summary, this study makes a contribution to research into naturalistic language acquisition, analysing a bilingual context not focused on before, in which language, power, race and identity interact in unique ways. It demonstrates the explanatory power of the theories from the 'social turn' in SLA which it uses, and adds to studies of language learning as participation, augmenting understandings of the importance of framing the CoP model (Wenger, 1998) within theories of power,

identity and discourse (Foucault, 1975, 1976; Weedon, 1997, 2004). The research shows that access to legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) in a target language community requires investment in identities (Norton, 2001) which ameliorate the inequities of power relations. It shows that in the South African context, where power differentials and dominant discourses usually make it very difficult for a white South African to gain the kind of legitimate participation needed for African language learning, once an African language is acquired, the power of a white person can be augmented by this linguistic competence. In the case of the four men in the study, isiXhosa could become linguistic capital for them (Bourdieu, 1991), depending on the context and the isiXhosa register that they used. The research also contributes to studies of identity and positioning, in particular postcolonial and whiteness studies in the South African context, focusing as it does specifically on white men who grew up speaking isiXhosa. While their discourses in conversation with me show similarities to white narratives identified in Steyn's (2001, 2004) studies, they also use, fairly extensively, what I have called 'discourses of the margins'. The powerful identity ascriptions of colonial and apartheid discourse have left the four men with a dominant identity position which is indisputably white, but the early period spent in a shared and hybrid 'carnival' space (Bakhtin, 1981; Bhabha, 1994) forms a facet of their multiple identities and a dimension of their lives. This influences them on an ongoing basis, constituting the basis for imagined communities and identities and, on occasion, breaking through dominant polarised space. The men's background and multilingual repertoires also intensify their connection with the Eastern Cape and make it possible for them to participate more broadly and become more deeply engaged in South African society.

This research only touches the tip of the iceberg in terms of the relationships of language, power, race, identity and African language learning in the South African context. Dealing as it does with a small sample of four white South African, middle-aged men, the study has many limitations. Future research projects could explore questions similar to those asked in this study, focusing on white women who speak isiXhosa, or on language, language acquisition, race and identity in the lives of younger white South Africans, growing up in the post-1994 democratic dispensation. Identity construction and isiXhosa learning could be examined in the lives of white learners in multiracial schools in the Eastern Cape, or youngsters currently growing up on farms. Another interesting group of participants would be white South Africans who have successfully learned isiXhosa at later stages in their lives, and

who were not brought up on farms. Similar research projects could be carried out in different parts of the country, where African languages other than isiXhosa are widely spoken, or where a number of languages are spoken (e.g. urban areas such as Johannesburg). Such studies could inform an action research project on African language learning for non-African language speakers in South Africa. In another direction entirely, significant findings could come out of research into the life histories and identity constructions of black farm labourers who grew up playing with the farmer's children.

Notes

(1) There are some differences between the four men; Ernie's friends, for instance, were not farmworkers' children, but children who lived in the neighbouring 'location'.
(2) Riaan's uncle had a farm school on his farm, and he supported some of the boys through secondary school.
(3) This language of control could be identified with Riaan's boere Xhosa or Authoritative Xhosa.
(4) This point of view was presented to me informally by one of the participants in my research, and it is confirmed by Brendon's views about Xhosa attitudes towards white people who undergo Xhosa rituals.
(5) '[I]n language learning, the attitude of superiority that often goes (subconsciously) with the sophisticated role, must be laid aside' (Brewster & Brewster, 1976: 7). The system insists that the learner needs to adopt 'a role that will be perceived as that of a servant rather than the ascribed role of master' (Louw, 1983: 167), in order to move towards becoming 'a cultural insider' (Brewster & Brewster, 1976: 7) or a 'belonger' (Louw, 1983: 4). Murray (2002: 117) comments that adopting the 'learner' role means that 'the learner has to give up some control, and in the South African context this may involve a reversal of the usual roles occupied by white and black African people'.
(6) In current South African terms, this means an agenda which transforms the culture of the institution away from Eurocentric spaces where whiteness is the norm.
(7) Her relatively high-status occupation in her home country.
(8) The identity that she felt was ascribed to her by the English speakers around her at work.

Postscript

The English-speaking white African, the European-African; a riddle still not unravelled after all this time, being left unsolved again by us, for our children to wrestle with one day.
The Native Commissioner – Johnson (2006: 280)

In closing, I return to my initial curiosity about white speakers of isiXhosa whom I encountered in the Eastern Cape, and to the assumptions with which I embarked on this research project. What have I learned, and what has surprised me in the stories of George, Ernie, Riaan and Brendon? I indicated that my interest in the project arose out of my own quest to learn an African language in order to close the gap between myself and black South Africans. My assumption was that knowing an African language would be a path to reconciliation and a more inclusive South African identity. When I came in contact with white people who spoke isiXhosa in the Eastern Cape, I was curious about how they had learned the language, whether they were 'bicultural' in any way, what kind of relationships they had with black people and whether their bilingualism caused similar tensions and ambivalences to those which I had experienced in the process of trying to learn African languages using the Transfer of African Language Knowledge (TALK) method. I also had questions about common perceptions that white farmers who spoke isiXhosa were often racist.

I have been delighted, but not really surprised, by the accounts of how the men acquired and developed their isiXhosa. It has been satisfying to find theories which account for this acquisition, and fascinating, as well as sobering, to see how identity and relations of power are implicated in it. In relation to my question about the men's 'biculturalism', it has been valuable for me to realise how multiple and complex identity can be, and to study the different ways in which the men deal with the experiences of ambivalence and multiplicity which are a part of living in a divided society, exacerbated by having language competences which enable movement across boundaries. Ernie seems to feel little ambivalence, following a lifestyle which has a great deal of continuity across generations; Riaan strives for consistency across the divisions of his life, and often seems to thrive on the challenge; as an adult, Brendon makes clear choices which enable him to live in spaces where he feels more comfortable and can be productive;

George incorporates a number of different and often conflicting identities into a life spontaneously lived. These diverse responses have enabled me to be more tolerant of the multiplicity of identities which exist within me, and the ways in which I move between them.

Riaan and Brendon both describe white people who speak an 'authoritative' isiXhosa, and who could clearly be viewed as racist in an essentialist sense. One can only speculate about the subjective multiplicity which they experience or suppress, or express selectively in different contexts, as I have done in looking at the story about Brendon's father. I conclude, though, that being able to speak isiXhosa does not necessarily promote reconciliation between racial groups in South Africa; on the contrary, it can sometimes exacerbate conflict. However, I observe a great deal of energetic participation across a fairly broad spectrum of South African society, black and white, in the lives of the four research participants, as well as instances of close fraternal bonds, in Chipkin's sense (2007: 200ff.), between black and white people. This, I argue, supports the view that knowing an African language *can* contribute to building in a white person a more inclusive South African identity.

The study has not increased my optimism, however, about the likelihood of white South Africans learning African languages effectively, in any numbers. In terms of how these languages can be learned by white South Africans who do not have the special circumstances of my participants, the study has confirmed my view that an extended immersion experience in a community of practice (CoP) where isiXhosa is the linguistic repertoire would be the best way to develop fluency. The study has given me new insight into the principles of the Brewster method (Brewster & Brewster, 1976), particularly that of adopting a 'learner' identity and becoming a 'belonger' or insider, and has extended my understanding about investment in identities that enable participation. It has also given me food for thought about the importance of learning 'culture', in this case meaning 'ways of behaving which are regarded as respectful among isiXhosa-speakers'.[1] Riaan expresses regret that his daughters have not had the opportunity to learn isiXhosa, but says that he believes that it is almost as important that he has managed to transfer 'the whole matter of trust and respect' (Ri1.88) which he learned along with the language as a child. I do believe, then, that the insights which my research has provided could inform future African language learning enterprises, as well as projects which have the aim of building a broader South African identity.

Two and a half years after completing the research and retiring from my university job, I have settled in a village in the middle of an Eastern Cape farming district. A majority of the white men and many of the

white women whom I meet use isiXhosa with ease, and in the streets of the small town I see black South Africans whose poverty reminds me that farmworkers are among 'the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country' (Roodt, 2007: 8). The white community is warm, friendly and mutually supportive, but with rare exceptions, racial segregation is an accepted norm in public life, in spite of 20 years of democratic rule. The research has given me some insight into other possible dimensions to the life of the community, but, on the whole, I still live with more questions than answers.

Note

(1) This clearly needs to be seen as very variable across contexts such as rural, urban, traditional, modern, etc.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Timeline of Events in the Eastern Cape (and South Africa)

1497–1498	Vasco da Gama sails to India via the Cape, and names Natal
1500	Earliest Portuguese shipwrecks and castaways on Eastern coast of South Africa
1600	Rise of Tshawe, chief who unified diverse groups as amaXhosa
1652	Dutch establish a refreshment station at Cape
1702–1780	Trekboers move out of the Cape into the hinterland, with Khoi servants, meeting amaXhosa in 1770s
1775	The amaXhosa kingdom divides, people of Rharhabe settle south-west of the Kei River; people of Gcaleka north-east of the Kei River
1778	Dutch governor agrees with Gwali tribe on boundary of colony along Fish and Bushman's Rivers
1779	First War of Resistance (Trekboers and amaXhosa)
1779	First missionary, J.T. van der Kemp, visits Ngqika, chief of Rharhabe Xhosa
1792	Second War of Resistance
1803	Third War of Resistance (during first British occupation of the Cape 1795–1803)
1803	Dutch reinstated and new governor visits Ngqika
1811	Fourth War of Resistance; amaXhosa driven out of Zuurveld across Fish River. Grahamstown established as military post
1816	London Missionary Society establish a mission among Ngqika Xhosa
1816	Slagtersnek: Some boers executed for plotting with amaXhosa against British
1819	Fifth War of Resistance (that of Nxele)
1820	Arrival of 5000 British to settle in the Zuurveld (Albany) to form a barrier against amaXhosa encroachment
1820s	William Shaw, a settler, starts to establish a string of Wesleyan missions across Xhosaland
1824	Three Church of Scotland missions established, one being Lovedale
1826	Brownlee establishes a mission on the Buffalo River
1820s	Nqgika dies and is succeeded by Sandile, whose regent was Maqoma
1820s	Kat River Settlement formed for Christianised Khoi and Bastaards in Maqoma's old grazing lands

1828	Ordinance 50 guarantees equality before the law for all free men, black, brown and white
1830	Restrictions on trade lifted; trade in firearms flourishes
1830s	Mfengu people, displaced by Shaka's wars in Zululand, move south, clashing with southern Nguni groups. Some settle as clients with Hintsa, chief of the Gcaleka Xhosa
1834	Emancipation of Cape slaves
1834–1835	Sixth War of Resistance (that of Hintsa); amaXhosa invade Albany (the Zuurveld)
1835	Hintsa is killed by Sir Harry Smith's men; British make pact with Mfengu
1836–1838	The Great Trek: Large numbers of boers leave the Eastern Cape for land across the Orange
1840	English proclaimed the only medium of instruction in schools and for administration
1845–1847	Seventh War of Resistance (that of the Axe)
1850	Charles Brownlee appointed in charge of Ngqika Xhosa by Harry Smith
1850–1853	Eighth War of Resistance (that of Mlanjeni)
1854	George Grey becomes governor of the Cape; new vision of combining settlers and amaXhosa into a 'civilised' community. Much support given to mission schools and hospitals. Non-racial, qualified franchise in the Cape. Chiefs of the amaXhosa accept stipends in exchange for surrender of judicial authority
1856–1858	Nongqawuse's vision, leading to 'the cattle killing'; amaXhosa population in British Kaffraria reduced from 105,000 to 27,500 by death and emigration into the colony
1858–1862	3400 German immigrants (soldiers and peasant farmers) land in East London to be settled on small farms
1867	Discovery of diamonds
1872	Charles Brownlee, First Secretary for Native Affairs; areas east of the Kei are brought under British rule
1877–1878	Ninth War of Resistance
1886	Discovery of gold on Witwatersrand
1894	Glen Grey Act introduces quit-rent to be paid on land, to district council
1857–1913	Rise of black peasant farmers, many mission educated
1899–1902	South African War (between boer Republics and British Empire)
1910	Union of South Africa (British colony and boer Republics); black rights sacrificed
1912	Founding of South African Native National Congress (ANC)

1913	Land Act, designed to protect white agriculture, forces blacks off the land into the labour force and ends private ownership of land by Africans
1914	Afrikaner National Party formed, focused on independence of Britain for Afrikaners (Hertzog)
1924	Afrikaner National Party comes to power
1933	Hertzog joins with Smuts to form the United Party – huge majority
1939	Smuts decides to join World War II on the side of the allies; Hertzog joins with purified nationalists (Malan)
1948	Election victory for Malan's nationalists, many of whom identified with Hitler's Nazism
1949–1957	A slew of race-based legislation passed (e.g. Population Registration Act; Mixed Marriages Act; Immorality Act; Group Areas Act; Suppression of Communism Act)
1954–1955	Resistance to apartheid legislation: The Defiance Campaign and Congress of the People (Freedom Charter)
1956–1961	Treason trial of 156 people, including Nelson Mandela
1958–1966	Hendrik Verwoerd prime minister
1960	Police fire on protesters against the Pass Laws in Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg
1960s	Vigorous implementation of segregation: 'black spots' 'removed'; tenant farmers expelled from white farms; Africans 'endorsed out' of towns, to 'homelands' (Ciskei, Transkei, etc.)
1961	South Africa becomes a republic outside the British Commonwealth
1961	ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, formed
1963	Rivonia trial; detention without trial becomes law, torture common
1963	Self-Government Act allows for elections in the Transkei 'homeland'
1967	Compulsory military service of nine months for all white male South Africans
1969	Steve Biko founds black consciousness organisations
1974	Independence of colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique: Conflict in Angola between rival parties
1975	Plans passed for consolidation of homelands – expropriation of white farms
1976	Uprisings by schoolchildren in Soweto spread to other groups and across the country
1976	'Independence' of the Trankei
1977	Military service extended to 24 months; Steve Biko dies at hands of police

1978	P.W. Botha becomes prime minister of South Africa; militarises government through security committees. Cross-border raids into neighbouring states. Reforms to free the economy
1980	Independence of Zimbabwe
1981	'Independence' of the Ciskei
1983	United Democratic Front (UDF) launched to campaign against tricameral parliament (whites; Indians; 'coloureds') and apartheid. Troops deployed to townships to work with the police. Widespread violence in townships
1985–1989	State of emergency
1987	Afrikaner reformists go to Dakar, Senegal, to meet the ANC for talks
1987	Major-General Bantu Holomisa seizes power in Transkei, lifts state of emergency and unbans ANC and PAC
1988	Nelson Mandela admitted to Tygerberg Hospital with tuberculosis (TB)
1989	P.W. Botha suffers a stroke and is succeeded by F.W. de Klerk
1989	Namibian independence
1990	Political organisations unbanned; Nelson Mandela released; armed struggle suspended; exiles return; negotiations begin
1994	Democratic elections; Nelson Mandela first president, with government of national unity. Restitution of Land Rights Act
1996	Nationalists leave government
1999	ANC returned to power with increased majority; Thabo Mbeki president
2000	Democratic Alliance formed; floods in Mozambique
2001	9/11 attacks; world conference against racism in Durban
2004	ANC returned to power with increased majority; Thabo Mbeki president for second term
2005	Shabir Schaik found guilty of fraud and corruption; Jacob Zuma relieved of his post as deputy president of South Africa and charged with corruption
2006	Zuma acquitted on rape charges
2007	Zuma elected chairman of ANC; South Africa wins Rugby World Cup
2008	Selebi dismissed as police commissioner; Mbeki recalled by ANC and Motlanthe installed as president of South Africa; Zuma's corruption case dismissed
2009	ANC returned to power with 66% of vote in elections, Jacob Zuma president
2010	Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup in South Africa

Appendix 2: Historical Events and the Lives of the Participants

Names	*Historical events*	*Ernie's life*	*Riaan's life*	*Brendon's life*	*George's life*	*Liz's life*
Forebears		*Grandfather one of original German settlers, coming to Eastern Cape in 1858; Ernie born and grew up on original settler farm; both he and his father married women of German stock.*	*Afrikaans-speaking father and mother from English-speaking family; not much detail about origins but all in Eastern Cape.*	*First settler ancestor came to Eastern Cape with German settlers in 1857; settled in border area. Father met mother when they were at school together; mother of Scottish origin.*	*Early ancestor of Portuguese extraction (likely an early castaway); grandfather and father both married women of German extraction, as did George. A long family history in the Transkei.*	*Great-grandparents arrived in South Africa in 1860 to work in Lutheran mission; paternal grandfather Swedish missionary in Zululand; maternal grandparents Church of Scotland missionaries in Eastern Cape.*
1945		Born				
1947						Born
1948	Election victory for Malan's nationalists, a number of whom were Nazi sympathisers					

1949–1957	A slew of race-based legislation passed (e.g. Population Registration Act; Mixed Marriages Act; Immorality Act; Group Areas Act; Suppression of Communism Act)			
1950		Starts school at local village school		
1951				Starts school at local village school
1954–1955	Resistance to apartheid legislation: The Defiance Campaign and Congress of the People (Freedom Charter)			
1956–1961	Treason trial of 156 people, including Nelson Mandela			
1958–1966	Hendrik Verwoerd prime minister			
1960	Police fire on protesters against the Pass Laws in Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg	Starts as day scholar at high school in nearby town		

1960s	Vigorous implementation of segregation: 'black spots' 'removed'; tenant farmers expelled from white farms; Africans 'endorsed out' of towns to 'homelands' (Ciskei, Transkei, etc.)				
1961	South Africa becomes a republic outside the British Commonwealth; ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, formed				
1963	Rivonia trial; detention without trial becomes law, torture common. Self-Government Act allows for elections in the Transkei 'homeland'		Born	Born	Matriculates
1964		Matriculates and starts work on the railways. Three months military service			Enrols for BA degree at University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

1967	Compulsory military service of nine months for all white male South Africans	Family farm expropriated for Ciskei; family buys another farm		Family moves to another farm, on border of Transkei		Mother passes away. Enrols for University Education Diploma at University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg
1968						Starts teaching at Inanda Seminary, high school for African girls
1969	Steve Biko founds black consciousness organisations		Starts school in English-medium school in nearest town, as a day scholar, after a short and unsuccessful period of boarding	Starts school at Afrikaans-medium school in nearest village, as a weekly boarder	Born in Transkei	
1972						English honours, Stellenbosch University

1974	Independence of colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique: conflict in Angola between rival parties		Moves to Afrikaans-medium high school in same town (still a day scholar)		Moves near grandfather's farm in corridor between Transkei and Lesotho	English teacher, Ladysmith, Natal (after teaching in Johannesburg and Durban)
1975	Plans passed for consolidation of homelands – expropriation of white farms	Second farm expropriated for Ciskei; family buys a third farm		Goes to English-medium boarding school in more distant town	Starts school in local village school	
1976	Uprisings by schoolchildren in Soweto spread to other groups and across the country. 'Independence' of the Transkei					
1977	Military service extended to 24 months; Steve Biko tortured to death by police				Parents' divorce; mother awarded custody; he goes reluctantly to town with her	English teacher, St Chad's school for Africans, Ladysmith

1978	P.W. Botha becomes prime minister of South Africa; militarises government through security committees. Cross-border raids into neighbouring states. Reforms to free the economy					
1979		Meets his wife				Moves to Alice; teaches at Phandulwazi Agricultural School
1980	Independence of Zimbabwe	Marries and later in the year has first of two daughters	Begins four-year degree in agriculture	Starts his university career	Grandfather moves to another farm in 'Border' region; George goes with father to Karoo town (Afrikaans-medium school)	Studies towards Master of Education (MEd) in Manchester, UK
1981	'Independence' of the Ciskei					
1982						Works on Teachers English Language Improvement Project at University of Witwatersrand

1983	UDF launched to campaign against tricameral parliament and apartheid. Troops deployed to townships to work with the police. Widespread violence in townships			Goes to technical school in high-school years	
1984			Honours degree		
1985–1989	State of emergency				
1989					Establishes Transfer of African Language Knowledge Project
1985		Mother and his friend who could not hear or speak both pass away	Masters research on farm labour relations		
1986			18 months military service		

1987	Afrikaner reformists go to Dakar, Senegal, to meet the ANC for talks. Major-General Bantu Holomisa seizes power in Transkei, lifts state of emergency and unbans ANC and PAC	Father dies			
1988	Nelson Mandela admitted to Tygerberg Hospital with tuberculosis (TB)	Boarded after serious operation; begins light work in retail business; still farming	Starts work in agricultural extension in home town. Continues part-time farming himself, until 2002		
1989	P.W. Botha suffers a stroke and is succeeded by F.W. de Klerk. Namibian independence			Goes to Mthatha to evade military service	Starts work on the railways
1990	Political organisations unbanned; Nelson Mandela released; armed struggle suspended; exiles return; negotiations begin				
1991			Marries	Awarded PhD	Marries
1992			First daughter born		

1993					Shifts to a job in industry	
1994	Democratic elections; Nelson Mandela first president, with government of national unity. Restitution of Land Rights Act	Section manager in supermarket		Works in the Western Cape until 2004	First son born	
1995	Inspired by Mandela, South Africa wins the Rugby World Cup		Moves from working only with white farmers to working with black farmers		Second child dies	
1996	Nationalists leave government		Second daughter born		Moves to a job in a local municipality	
1998						Marries; moves to Eastern Cape to work at Fort Hare
1999	ANC returned to power with increased majority; Thabo Mbeki president		Starts work for an international development agency		Third son born	

2000	Democratic Alliance formed; floods in Mozambique			Fourth son born
2001	9/11 attacks; world conference against racism in Durban		Mother passes away	
2003		Takes an academic post for a year, away from the Eastern Cape		
2004	ANC returned to power with increased majority; Thabo Mbeki president for second term	Returns to rural development work, based in Bhisho; lives in East London		
2005	Jacob Zuma relieved of his post as deputy president of South Africa and charged with corruption		Spends a year in the US	Leaves work in municipality; self-employed
2006			Appointed to temporary post in an Eastern Cape university	Starts working in forestry company

2007	Zuma elected chairman of ANC; South Africa wins Rugby World Cup	Permanent post and promotion in same university	Registers for PhD
2008	Mbeki recalled by ANC and Motlanthe installed as president of South Africa; Zuma's corruption case dismissed		
2009	Zuma becomes South Africa's president		
2010	FIFA World Cup hosted by South Africa		

Appendix 3: Interview Schedules (Initial Plan)

Interview 1:

I would like you to start by giving me an overview of your life, fairly brief, focusing on milestones such as starting school, moving house, starting a new job, etc. You will get a chance to go into more detail later. I will record what you say on this dictaphone, and also fill in the key details on a life history grid.

I would like you now to describe in detail (paint a picture of) the situation within which you became a speaker of isiXhosa: the place, the people, your relationships with them, the kinds of things you did and experiences you had. Tell me what it was like for you; what were your feelings at the time.

(Optional question, depending on situation) Were there periods later in your life when you gave attention to learning isiXhosa? Could you tell me a bit about those?

Interview 2:

I would like you now to focus on a few key incidents or experiences, involving the use or understanding of isiXhosa, which stand out in your memory. These experiences may have affected or changed you as a person, and your feelings about life and the world around you. You can include experiences which made you feel good, and experiences which made you feel bad. Please tell them as stories, as vividly as possible. I will not interrupt you, except to clarify details, but I may ask a couple of additional questions in-between incidents, or once you have finished.

Examples of questions which I may ask are:

How did your relationship with isiXhosa and its speakers change: e.g. when you went to school; when you started work; when the new democratic South Africa came in?

Are there Xhosa-speaking voices which live on in your memory, and inform your actions and decisions?

Are there parts of your story which you would prefer to have told in isiXhosa? Are there parts that you have left out, but would have told if you were telling the story to a Xhosa speaker? If you were to tell those parts, is there a particular person, or kind of person, you would choose to tell them to?

Although you communicate easily and frequently with Xhosa speakers, it seems that there are boundaries drawn in terms of your relationship with them, and what you do together. Would you like to talk about that?

Do people in your 'English/Afrikaans-speaking' circle of acquaintance know about your fluency in isiXhosa? Was this always the case? How? Why? Why not?

Do you ever speak isiXhosa to a white person? When? Who? Why? Why not?

Can you think of experiences where knowing the language made you feel you were participating in Xhosa culture/were in some way bicultural?

Can you think of experiences where knowing the language made you feel a sense of inclusion in the community of isiXhosa speakers?

Can you think of experiences where knowing the language made you feel excluded or rejected from the community of isiXhosa speakers?

Did the racism of the society in which you were living ever cause you painful experiences, in relation to the people with whom you communicated in isiXhosa?

Were there periods later in your life when you gave attention to learning isiXhosa? Could you tell me a bit about those? (If not covered in Interview 1.)

Interview 3 (after reading transcripts of Interviews 1 and 2):

Today, I would like to give you a chance to react to what you have read in the transcripts, and to correct or clarify or add to your story, any important elements which you feel you have left out.

Have your perceptions changed at all since our first meeting?

What has the experience of telling your story been like for you?

How would you introduce yourself – to an English/Afrikaans speaker; to an isiXhosa speaker (i.e. How would you answer the question, 'Who are you?')?

Interview 2 with the four participants

Notepad presession 2: George

Topic/theme	*Terms about situation, time, event, happening, occasion*	*Return-to-narrative questions*
Friendship	All my friends were little kwedinis, great pals, ol' Gigs, learning from talking and being friends; good black friends; nothing ever changed between ol' Gigs and I	You have spoken a lot about having 'good black friends'. Can you tell me about an experience where the friendship became difficult because of politics, the law of the land or other people's (anti-black or anti-white) attitudes?

Kitchen Xhosa	The Xhosa we speak is kitchen Xhosa	You have said that the Xhosa you speak is 'kitchen Xhosa'. Does this make it difficult at times to understand or communicate with black people? Can you remember an experience where you were lost because someone was speaking really 'deep' Xhosa?
Translation	If you translate it directly it doesn't make sense	When you recited Gigs' poem about John and Mary, you said that when it is translated directly it doesn't make sense. Have you had an experience with black people, speaking Xhosa, which was difficult to explain to white friends who don't know the language? Could you tell me about such an experience?
Love for farm life; small-town life	That's why I live in a small town; I love farm life; I could never live in a city; I'm not a city man	
Supervisory role	I was the traffic cop; used to make money from the other little {kids}. I've got 22 black guys underneath me; I'm their manager in the forest.	Meeting 3
Hunting and eating birds and mice	We used to lie to ourselves and say it tastes so lovely, meanwhile…; we even ate them; little skins drying out	
Not knowing their real names	I don't know what his real name was; I don't remember what his real Xhosa name was – but we knew him as Gigs; I can't remember his real Xhosa name	

Attachment of a black person to a white person	Him and me were great pals; He was just my gran's guy
Divorce/ separation of Mom and Dad	My mom and dad were still arguing; I don't mean any disrespect to my mom …
Only English guy in Afrikaans school	I took all my subjects in Afrikaans higher grade; the only English guy in that school; English girl
The baby of the family	I was the baby of the family from my mom's side; they were much older than me, and it was their job to do my homework with me (girls) there was a big age gap between us (brother)
Admiration for his Dad	My Dad is excellent in Xhosa, he went to a black school in U-town; the DoE have still got a project of my Dad on the Xhosa language; he was forced to play piano; he plays it very well
We always tell my kids they are fruit salad	People think I'm Afrikaans because of my surname, but because of the way it's spelt, I'm actually Portuguese. But I can't speak Portuguese We always tell my kids they are fruit salad; They are from Portugal, way back; my gran was a German; my father married a German; I married a German

Teased at school	I was teased a lot because I couldn't speak English properly	You said you were teased at school because you couldn't speak English properly – only Xhosa. Can you remember any details about a time when the kids at school teased you?
Partially Xhosa speaking; whole family speaks Xhosa	Even today… we speak a lot of Xhosa (no maid or anything) My kids all speak it fluently; middle one gets all the qi's and Xi's right; my wife can speak it; my whole family can speak	You have said you and your family speak Xhosa at home. Could you think of an occasion when you spoke a lot of Xhosa, just to give me an idea of the kinds of situation in which you speak Xhosa?
Negotiating meaning – multilingual repertoire	Not in Chinese, but he used to understand them, and …they used to understand him (middle son)	
We live for our kids	We all live for our kids… and to go and lose them …would be devastating. Maybe I'm being overprotective but I don't like them in the streets	

Additional questions for Interview 2:

Is there any experience you can tell me about which shows that things changed for you in your relationships with Xhosa speakers when the new democratic South Africa came in?

Can you tell me about an experience where knowing the language made you feel you were really taking part in Xhosa culture?

Can you tell me about an experience where knowing the language made you feel that you were part of the black community?

Can you tell me about an experience where knowing the language made you feel excluded or rejected from the community of isiXhosa speakers?

Notepad presession 2: Riaan

Topic/theme	*Terms about situation, time, event, happening, occasion*	*Return-to-narrative questions*
Different language speaking friends Comfortable in various societies;		Is there an experience you can tell me about when the racial divisions of the society in which you were living caused you difficulties, in relation to the people with whom you communicated in isiXhosa?
And then 94 came,	And that was obviously a very comfortable situation for me	Can you tell me about an experience or two which illustrates how things changed for you after 1994?
no fear; no threat		Can you think of an occasion where understanding Xhosa has made you feel threatened?
I had to play the middleman	One of the groups eventually felt left out of the game and left	You said that when white friends came to the farm and they didn't understand Xhosa well, you had to play the middleman, and that was a difficult role to keep up. Can you tell me about any difficult situation later in life where you have had to play the middleman?
Army		Can you tell me a bit about the experience of having to go into the army; how it was for you, in the light of the fact that you had grown up so close to black people?
Initiation school; rugby and leaving school (varsity)		Can you tell me how it was for you when your farm friends went off to initiation school? I'm assuming that you didn't go.

I was brought up by them After that we go our separate ways and go and sleep and …		You were brought up by these black people, and you were disciplined by them, and shared so much with them, and then there were moments, like when the evening story session was over, when you 'went your separate ways'. Could you tell me a bit more about occasions of that sort and how it was for you?
		Having been brought up by black people, in a way, I suppose one could say that you are bicultural. What experience have you had that has made you feel closest and most included in Xhosa culture?
Continuity of Afrikaans and Xhosa culture in terms of respect for elders Loss of culture of respect responsible for most of our problems		You see quite a similarity and continuity between the Xhosa culture of respect for elders and the Afrikaans culture of respect for elders. You say that the loss of it is responsible for a lot of our problems. Could you tell me an experience that you have had that bears that out?
Never start with Xhosa		Can you tell of an experience where you did start with Xhosa and it ended up badly?
Boere Xhosa	the worst thing that can happen; if you respect people you don't do that	I get the impression, with some of the things you say, that you have on various occasions watched white people putting their foot in it with isiXhosa speakers. You have said that using boere Xhosa is 'the worst thing that can happen'. Can you tell me about an experience which made you realise this? Or which illustrates it? You have said that when a white person doesn't understand how a Xhosa speaker approaches things, it can develop into a racial issue. Could you give me an example of this which you have watched happen?
Understanding how people approach	I often feel that – no, that person doesn't want to understand it, and it becomes a racial issue	

Notepad presession 2: Brendon

Topic/theme	*Terms about situation, time, event, happening, occasion*	*Return-to-narrative questions*
This meeting is essentially a continuation of the last one, and as you gave me such rich information about your life last time we met, you may feel that there is not much more that you want to or need to say. I'm going to start with a very open question and see where it takes us. I may add a couple of other questions later.		
Experiences changing sense of self		Are there any incidents or experiences in your life which you have not yet told me about, involving the use or understanding of isiXhosa, which have been key in affecting or changing your sense of yourself, and your feelings about life and the world around you?
His mother, non-acceptance of his Xhosaness by whites	I always had this feeling …that my Xhosaness was something that would never be accepted by my … late mother (17)	You said that you often felt your Xhosaness was not accepted by your mother. Can you tell me about any other experiences where people, or the racism of the society in which you were living, made you feel that your Xhosaness, or your closeness to Xhosa people, was not acceptable?
Conflicting things	A whole lot of conflicting things that were going on at that time (17)	You spoke at one stage about 'conflicting things going on'. Are there other experiences you could tell me about that show conflict brought about by your closeness, as a white person, to Xhosa people through the language and your upbringing?
Inclusion in Xhosa culture	I mean I used to partake in rituals (16); he was in a sense a thwasa, but he was a poet… (36); come full circle in Port St Johns, is the whole divinerhood thing (105)	You have spoken of participation in Xhosa rituals in your childhood, and relationships with imbongi and diviners in later life. Are there particular experiences you could tell me about, which you haven't yet described, where your knowledge of isiXhosa has made you feel a real sense of inclusion in the culture and community of isiXhosa speakers?

		Can you describe any experiences where knowing the language made you feel excluded or rejected from the community of isiXhosa speakers?
		Can you describe experiences which show the kinds of changes you experienced in your relationship with isiXhosa and its speakers when the new democratic South Africa came in? Or was there little change?

Notepad presession 2: Ernie

Topic/Theme	*Terms about situation, time, event, happening, occasion*	*Return-to-narrative questions*
Follow on from last time		Have you remembered any other experiences involving the use of Xhosa which you would like to add to what you told me last time we met?
Experiences changing sense of self		Could you tell me about any experiences involving the use or understanding of isiXhosa, which have changed your feelings about yourself and about life?
Nanny/black adults	'most of my friends were black boys … and that is where I picked up my Xhosa'	You have spoken a lot about your black friends. Were there Xhosa-speaking adults who were important in your early life? Did your parents put you into the care of a black 'nanny' when you were a baby or a toddler? Can you tell me any experiences from childhood involving black adults?
Parents and isiXhosa		You have said that isiXhosa was your strongest language when you went to school. Did you speak isiXhosa with your parents as well as with the Xhosa speakers around you?

Conflict or difficulty		Are there any experiences you could tell me about where your closeness to Xhosa people has caused conflict or difficulty in your life – in other relationships, perhaps?
Inclusion in Xhosa culture		Many of your childhood friends were Xhosa speakers. Could you tell me about any experiences where this made you feel included in the Xhosa culture and community?
Pre-and post-1994		Have you experienced changes in your relationships with isiXhosa speakers since 1994? Can you describe any experience which illustrates these changes? Or was there little change?
Army		Were you involved in military service? Can you tell me a bit about the experience of having to go to the army; how it was for you, in the light of the fact that you had grown up so close to black people?
Initiation school		Can you describe any experience relating to the time when your farm friends went off to initiation school?
School	You said that the biggest change, as far as school was concerned, was going to high school – that it was 'entirely different'	Would you like to say a bit more about what made high school so 'entirely different'?
Understanding	You said that you and your 'deaf and dumb' friend 'understood each other', and you also said that you and the travellers on the railways 'understood each other'	The understanding between you and your 'deaf and dumb' friend was obviously based on something other than language. Can you suggest what it might have been based on?

Hearings and interpretation		One of the important ways in which your knowledge of isiXhosa is useful to you is in acting as interpreter at hearings. Could you perhaps tell me about one specific hearing and the role that you played in it?
Reading and writing	'taught myself to read and write'	Would you like to give a bit more detail about how you taught yourself to read and write?; what kinds of things did you read and write, for instance?

Interview 3 with the four participants

Possible questions for Interview 3, George:

Would you like to react to what you have read in the transcripts, to correct or clarify or add to your story, any important elements which you feel you have left out?
Are there parts of your story which you would prefer to have told in isiXhosa? Are there parts of your story that you have not told me, but would have told if you were telling the story to a Xhosa speaker? If you were to tell those parts, is there a particular person, or kind of person, you would choose to tell them to?
(Refer to the friend who used to come and have a beer at his house, the fact that Gigs used to sleep over in the farmhouse.) Although you communicate easily and frequently with Xhosa speakers, it seems that there are boundaries drawn in terms of your relationship with them, and what you do together. Would you like to talk about that?
Do your white friends and acquaintances know about your fluency in isiXhosa? Was this always the case?
(Refer to the fact that he and his family speak isiXhosa to one another at home on occasion.) Under what circumstances would you speak isiXhosa to a white person?
Who have been the most important influences in your life?
Are there Xhosa-speaking voices which live on in your memory, and inform your actions and decisions?
How would you describe yourself?
How would you introduce yourself? to an English/Afrikaans speaker; to a speaker of isiXhosa (you can tell me in isiXhosa)

What has it been like for you to tell your story?

Has the experience of telling your story changed the way you see things, in any way?

Possible questions for Interview 3, Riaan

Would you like to react to what you have read in the transcripts, to correct or clarify or add to your story, any important elements which you feel you have left out?

We live in a society which is still very racially and linguistically divided. Would you say that there are different compartments in your life, in which you speak different languages? Are there boundaries between the part of the life where you relate to isiXhosa speakers and the part where you relate to Afrikaans speakers, for instance? Is it difficult for you to remain konsekwent across these contexts?

You said when we first met, when I was doing the other piece of research, that you don't speak Xhosa to whites. Would you like to say more about that?

Who have been the most important influences in your life?

Are there Xhosa-speaking voices which live on in your memory, and inform your actions and decisions?

Do you think that you, or members of your immediate family, would ever seriously consider leaving this country?

How would you describe yourself?

How would you introduce yourself?
to an English/Afrikaans speaker;
to a speaker of isiXhosa (you can tell me in isiXhosa)

What has it been like for you to tell your story?

If I had been a Xhosa speaker, how would the story you have told me been different?

Has the experience of telling your story changed the way you see things, in any way?

Possible questions for Interview 3, Brendon

Would you like to react to what you have read in the transcripts, to correct or clarify or add to your story, any important elements which you feel you have left out?
Are there particular things which stood out for you as you read your own story, in your own words?

Something that stood out for me, rereading the first transcript, was your sense of destiny; of somehow being guided in some almost supernatural way towards the work that you are now doing. Would you like to say more about that?

You mentioned moments of guilt about being white a couple of times in our first meeting. Would you like to say more about that?

You said that undergoing something like a circumcision ceremony would be one of the things which could 'tilt identity' for a white man. You also said that there are points in the life of a person like you, or your nephews, where 'one capitulates to parts of the European identity'. So it seems as if maintaining a truly hybrid identity in South Africa is quite a balancing trick. Key moments can topple you into one side or another. Moments you mentioned were ceremonies such as circumcision, ukuthwasa and starting work and becoming 'a boss'. I imagine another might be falling in love, or marrying, and raising a family. Would you like to comment a bit more on this as it applies to you? (Block out or avoid those things which might 'topple' you in a direction you don't want to go.)

You spoke about boundaries: the boundaries that you knew, as a child, that you could not cross with Sonwabo (onto the veranda but not into the house). A similar thing seemed to be operating in you on the occasion that you were on holiday with Phumeza and her child and decided not to stay with your father. Later you spoke of boundaries again, in a different context, where you were learning to set boundaries so that you didn't get too exploited, or taken advantage of. Any more comments on boundaries in your life?

It seems to me that academia has played an extremely important role in making certain things possible in your life. Would you like to comment on that?

Have there been key people who have exerted a great deal of influence in your life?

How would you describe yourself, in a nutshell?

What has it been like for you to tell your story?

Has the experience of telling your story changed the way you see things, in any way?

Anything more that you'd like to add?

Possible questions for interview 3, Ernie:

Have there been key people who have exerted a great deal of influence in your life? Who are they?

Are there Xhosa-speaking voices which live on in your memory, and inform your actions and decisions?

Do you think that you, or members of your immediate family, would ever seriously consider leaving this country?

We live in a society which is still very racially and linguistically divided. Would you say that there are different compartments in your life, in which you speak different languages?
How would you describe yourself, in a nutshell?
What has it been like for you to tell your story?
Has the experience of telling your story changed the way you see things, in any way?
Anything more that you'd like to add?
When I write about you in my thesis, I cannot give you your real name. Would you like to suggest a pseudonym for yourself?
Part 2
I know there are things which you felt you wanted to add to what you had said at our previous meeting. Let's start there.
What would you like to add, or correct, having looked at the transcripts?
Any other stories that have come to mind, connected to your speaking isiXhosa and relating to people through the language?
Many of your childhood friends were Xhosa speakers. Could you tell me about any experiences where this made you feel included in the Xhosa culture and community?
Something I'm curious about – the people who worked on your farm – had their families been there since the coming of your grandparents, or did they change from time to time?
If you were at a meeting or workshop, say work or church related, and were asked to introduce yourself, and say a bit about yourself, what would you say?
Last words; something else you'd like to add.

Appendix 4: Stages in Data Analysis

Stage 1: When I began my analysis, and throughout my reading of the transcripts, I had a number of fairly general questions in mind, arising out of my research questions:

- How do the men see themselves, in relation to their society, and particularly in relation to isiXhosa speakers and their communications with them?
- How is the construction of their subjectivity impacted on by their ability to understand and speak with isiXhosa speakers, and the situations in which they do this?

- What are the recurring themes and discourses in different individual stories?
- How does the narrative reflect change over time in themes and discourses, as the individual passed through formative life changes and experiences, and as the sociopolitical situation changed?
- How do these individuals incorporate into their identities contradictions and ambivalence resulting from the "different cultures, histories, traditions and social attitudes" (Kaschula, 1989: 104) and power relations which underpin the languages they use?
- How did they learn/acquire isiXhosa? What were the circumstances which facilitated this process?
- Do their stories throw light on what it means, for the person, to be a South African? Does their isiXhosa competence affect their level of commitment to the Eastern Cape/South Africa?
- Are there implications for the learning of African languages and for nation-building generally in South Africa today?

Stage 2: I divided the transcript into numbered sections and made an initial coding, using Labov's (1972: 363) model. Sections involving evaluation became the main focus of my attention.

Stage 3: I looked for recurring themes in the participants' stories and for themes which occurred across the stories (e.g. friendship with isiXhosa speakers; respect; initiation; playing the middleman; changing sense of self; separation). Like Wetherell and Potter (1992: 100), I searched for themes arising from: 'the concerns which had stimulated the study in the first place…; the powerful and vivid experience of interviewing … and from reading the individual transcripts'. I tried to read as openly as possible, feeling towards themes as I went over the recordings and transcripts again and again.

Stage 4: Following post-structuralist discourse analysis, I searched the narrative for indications of what was 'normal', 'natural' or 'common sense' (as well as what was 'abnormal' and senseless) for the person.

An extract from my annotated transcript of an interview with Riaan, where he speaks of the separation from his black friends when he went to school, illustrates Stages 2 through 4:

Section no.	*Labov codes*	*Transcript*	*Comments/themes*
47	OCE	No, no it wasn't // ja, it wasn't nice, especially at the end of weekends, or the end of school holidays. (**Liz**: Mm) Remember we didn't go to the same schools, (**Liz**: Sure) so it was a – You played now the whole holiday, or long weekend, or whatever, and now you had to split up again. But it didn't affect us because we knew we would get together again. (**Liz**: Mm) So it wasn't – it didn't affect – me that much. (**Liz**: Mm) It didn't really – it wasn't – it wasn't a big matter. (**Liz**: Mm) It was usual, life was normal; //life was (**Liz**: ja //you learned to take it for granted // that that was the way it was) Ja. // That's the way it was, ja. That was the system and we didn't know about another system. (**Liz**: No. There was a system that because you were white you went off in another direction.) Ja, I went off to the school in town, and my friends went to the farm school. (**Liz**: Mm)	*Separation* Two sides to this answer: acknowledgement that it was not nice, but also that it was 'normal' to them. This was the way life was.
48	CE	But I often went – because the holidays (**Liz**: Mm) – didn't necessarily co-incide, I often went to school with them. (**Liz**: Mm, mm, mm) Or even just play-time, or something like that. 'Cause the farm school wasn't far from where we stayed. (**Liz**: Ja) Otherwise I would have been alone on the farm. (**Liz**: Ja) So I was there. (**Liz**: Yes *both laugh*) And vice versa too. (**Liz**: Ja?) My friends came to come and play with me – Mlungisi and them came to come and play with me – during school time – when when when their school was on and I was on leave or vice versa. (**Liz**: Mm) We tried to play and so on. It was like normal times.	Another kind of 'normal' – the days when they played together and worked together. They tried to 'normalise' things by being together as much and as often as possible.

Stage 5: I looked in the stories for links with my theoretical framework: for references to power relationships between the people and groups in their stories; for features of white discourses in their stories; for references to the 'languages' of their heteroglossia; for contexts and processes which led to language acquisition; for indications of space and boundaries; for ways in which the men constructed themselves and others – people and behaviours they identified with and distanced themselves from, references to strong influences in their lives, principles they claimed to live by.

The following extracts are from an early summary analysis of Brendon's narrative:

Boundaries

- The house and the verandah (childhood) (2.62)
- Family fear that he will take a black lover? (2.61)
- Visiting father with black friends (adulthood) (2.74)
- After father's death; boundary gone with his passing; he represented that boundary; other family members don't carry the same 'threat' (3)
- Learned to set up boundaries so that he doesn't get exploited. (2.88)

His life's task (seen in his discourse)

- To 'shift' from abnormal to normal
- From alienation to connectedness (1.63)
- From separate to shared spaces
- To go full circle (1.26, 30, 105; 3) / bring it together (1.27, 80, 81)/ reconstruct (1.28)/ recapture (1.28)/ get back (1.44, 53, 54, 61) / reposition (1.49, 59) / reinvigorate / resurrect (1.51)

Power relations

- Beginning of school (especially the primary school; also the high school) (3)
- Coercion to move into Afrikaans at primary school (3)
- Boss position (capitalistic) – delineation of work relations (something he hasn't experienced) (3)
- Subconscious coercion in terms of what language you use and when (3)
- The draft

Stage 6: I then selected data for in-depth analysis. I read and reread the selected extracts, making notes and drafts, being sensitive not only to what the person said, but also to how he said it: hesitations, laughs, pauses, tone, emotion, volume, contrasts, choice of words and images.

An early draft analysis of the passage extracted from Riaan's story in the table shown in Stage 4 follows:

Normality (1)

In several places, including this one, he constructs himself as someone who is 'tough-minded'; who doesn't allow himself to be overcome by sentiment ('it didn't affect – me that much (…) it wasn't – it wasn't a big matter') ; who adjusts to realities which may not be very palatable but which have to be accepted. He also presents himself as frank and honest, someone who is not going to pretend to emotions which he does not feel; he struggles a bit here to express the fact that in those days, for him, this was 'normal'; people were separated according to race. They had to adjust, and luckily for him, he always had another time of being together to look forward to.

Normality (2)

In this part of his narrative, he tells how he compensated for the separation by getting together with his friends even during school times, at times when holidays didn't co-incide. Because his parents allowed him this freedom, he could visit them at their school, and take part in the activities there. Perhaps realizing there was an imbalance in his favour here, he adds that it was reciprocal; his friends came to play with him at times. This part does not quite make sense, and he stammers a bit in telling it; perhaps because it was not completely vice versa; his friends obviously could not come to his school, though they could play at his home.

'Otherwise', he says, 'I would have been alone on the farm'. Here he gives a glimpse of the loneliness he felt when he could not be with 'Mlungisi and them', the essential isolation which had resulted in his being entrusted to the care of this black community. Their companionship restored life to 'normality' for him; the normality of playing and working 'together'.

Stage 7: I looked for common themes across the stories, and organising principles by which I could arrange my analysis. I gradually put together frameworks for three data analysis chapters.

Stage 8: As I wrote these chapters, I moved backwards and forwards from theory to data, trying to refine the in-depth analysis of particular extracts, as well as the coherence of the analysis as a whole. Through this process, repeated over time, I eventually developed not only four chapters, but also a set of tentative conclusions.

Appendix 5: Military Service in South Africa, 1957–1994

In 1957, a Defence Act was passed which made white males liable for a period of three months compulsory military call-up to the Citizen Force.

In 1967, when guerrilla fighters of the ANC and other liberation movements started infiltrating South Africa and its neighbours, an amended Defence Act made it compulsory for all white South African males between the ages of 17 and 65 to serve a nine-month period in the South African Defence Force (SADF). 'A non-combatant option "as far as may be practicable" was granted to members of pacifist sects' (Connors, 2007: 59). Deferment of military call-up could be applied for by those registered for tertiary studies.

As the Caetano dictatorship in Portugal ended in 1974, independence was granted to Angola and Mozambique, and colonialism officially came to an end. Conflict was unleashed in Angola between three rival parties: the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA; regarded by the United States as Soviet backed), the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA; supported clandestinely by the Central Intelligence Agency; CIA) and União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA; which South Africa, urged by the United States, agreed to support) (Sparks, 1991: 299). In 1972, the government once again amended the Defence Act, extending military service from 9 to 12 months, to be followed up by 19 days annually for 5 years (Connors, 2007: 63).

In 1975, after a secret and unsuccessful invasion of Angola, the then minister of defence, P.W. Botha, began devising a military plan for South Africa to become a superpower in the region, to withstand what they perceived as a "total onslaught", part of a Soviet imperialist strategy to dominate South Africa' (SAIRR, 1978: 53). The Defence Act was again amended in 1976, doubling the length of initial military service to 24 months, with more annual camps. It also increased the sentence for 'peace-church' objectors, the only kind of conscientious objection recognised at the time (Connors, 2007: 64).

In 1978, John Vorster stepped down as prime minister, to be replaced by P.W. Botha, who rapidly militarised the government through a network of security committees. In the early 1980s, the army conducted cross-border raids into neighbouring states seen to be harbouring ANC cadres. At this time, Riaan and Brendon were undergraduate students.

In 1983, when the UDF, aligned with the ANC, came into being to campaign against the tricameral parliament, SADF troops, now committed to even more extended service periods, were deployed to the townships to work with the police in 'the prevention and suppression of internal disorder' (SAIRR, 1985: 422). This was associated by some with a reported increase in those failing to report for military service, and a 'steady stream' of 'draft dodgers entering Britain' (SAIRR, 1985: 327), supported by a growing network of local and overseas supporters and a United Nations (UN) resolution recognising the right of persons to refuse to go to war in support of the apartheid state (Connors, 2007: 66). Calls for more options for conscientious objectors and for an end to conscription gathered momentum.

In 1985, a state of emergency was declared, remaining in force for four years. SADF and police action in the townships became openly violent. During this time, Riaan did his basic and officer's training, and was then seconded to do agricultural research work, as part of his military service. In 1988, peace talks were held between Angola, South Africa and Cuba, resulting in the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola and the termination of South African rule in South West Africa/Namibia. In 1989, Brendon went to the Transkei, in a last ditch attempt to avoid the call-up.

It was not until 1993 that white conscription ended, and in 1994 it was finally announced that no person attempting to resist the call-up would be prosecuted (Connors, 2007: 111–112).

Appendix 6: Some Background on Firearms in South Africa

The early South African settlers lived and died by their guns, and in 19th-century Eastern Cape, gun-running to black tribes quickly became a lucrative trade. On the eve of the South African war (1898), it was 'unlawful for a man not to possess a firearm in the Transvaal Republic' (Besdziek, 1996: 2).

In present-day South Africa, the motivation to own a firearm is not so much the prospect of war as the fear of crime, or the wish to commit

crime. 'South Africa is … one of the few countries that will regard "self-defence" as a suitable reason to allow almost any applicant to possess a firearm' (Besdziek, 1996: 10). In 1996, there were more than 3 million legal firearms in South Africa, owned by almost 2 million citizens. There were also innumerable illegal weapons in circulation, imported and smuggled from neighbouring territories where wars of liberation and destabilisation had recently been fought, or stolen from private individuals, the police and the military.

Besdziek (1996) is of the opinion that only a more secure situation with regard to crime will significantly reduce the number of firearms in the country. Recent attempts to control this proliferation of firearms have been an amendment to the Arms and Ammunition Act, to limit the use of a licensed firearm to the person to whom it is licensed, and a firearm control act requiring people to prove their competency when applying for a firearm licence. A general 90-day amnesty in 2010, offering immunity from prosecution to anyone handing in a firearm, resulted in more than 32,000 firearms being recovered across South Africa; 27% of these were illegal and 53% voluntarily surrendered (SA Info., 2010).

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