

ARTICULATING DIFFERENCE: TEXTS OF IDENTITY IN  
POST-INDEPENDENCE NAMIBIA

by

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## Summary

The objective of this research project was to investigate how the articulation of human subjectivity in the Namibian context may be constitutive of transformation at the individual and/or societal plane. Two major theoretical frameworks are drawn on, namely critical theory and social constructionism. Postmodern ideas and hermeneutics also inform the project. More specifically, a number of concepts pertaining to "transformation" are interrogated, namely "ideology critique", "liberation/emancipation" and "deconstruction". To address the psychology of transformation, concepts pertaining to psychology's subject, including "autonomy", "affirmation", "consciousness/awareness", "judging" and "relationality" are unravelled.

The empirical investigation is situated within a qualitative research paradigm. Three phases constituted the data generation. Phase I was aimed at accessing the symbols and norms that are generally available for appropriation into individual texts of identity in Namibia; students commented on a video of the Namibian independence celebrations of 21/03/1990. Phase II was aimed at enabling the articulation of texts of identity; norm originators were involved in a group discussion pertaining to the symbols and norms elicited during Phase I, and to their values and commitments. The objective for Phase III was to elucidate how narrated events and life stories might be retold and transformed; the same norm originators discussed the researcher's analysis of their previous discussion.

The data generated in each phase was analysed according to Parker's (1992) criteria for recognizing and analysing discourse.

The insights yielded by this study revolve around the following issues:

- firstly, the relationship between new ways of speaking and (problematic) old discourses,
- secondly, the tension between re-membering and envisioning in the constitution and legitimation of texts of identity,
- thirdly, the relationship between "grand narratives" and local personal stories,
- fourthly, the articulation of divisions and connections between people in terms of power, coercion and solidarity,

fithly, the relationship between discourses of helplessness/powerlessness, and a "lived sense" of powerlessness/helplessness.

Over the past approximately twenty years psychological processes have been increasingly articulated, not as processes "in people's heads", but as socially constructed. The significance of this study is that it takes this "turn to language" seriously while trying to counter the excesses that characterize this trend.

### **Key terms**

individual and societal transformation; postmodernism; power-knowledge; ideology critique; deconstruction; commitments and identifications; judging; self-awareness; emancipation; the interpersonal; reconciliation



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

On 21 March 1990 Namibia gained its independence from South Africa which had ruled the country for a period of 75 years. When a people gain the right to govern themselves after having been deprived of that right for many years and when, through the deployment of a variety of symbols and practices these people articulate a break from the past, processes of individual and societal transformation become pertinent. An event such as the gaining of independence from a former colonial regime takes shape in terms of and feeds the discourses of change and transformation.

The gaining of independence is an occasion for (the) re-mem-bering of 'the' past and the imagining of new futures. To re-mem-ber the past is to tell 'it' anew. Can 'it' be told any way or are there constraints? Is the re-telling and the re-writing fiction, a matter of letting the imagination run wild? How is the imagination constrained by the 'real world'? It is conceivable that the narration of 'the' past could be sheer escapism, a denial of what was. The matter is complicated further by the fact that human beings tell 'the' past towards various ends and sometimes we are trapped by these ends. We situate ourselves in the stories we tell of 'the' past and sometimes we tell ourselves into tight corners. The following two tales may illustrate some of the complexities. The first is narrated by a Namibian who was born and raised in that country. It is a tale about Namibia's past. The second is told by Appiah (1992, pp 8 - 9) about Africa but it may be read as a story of Namibia's past.

"When a people have been marked by a socio-economic and political system that inculcated passivity, helplessness, powerlessness and mistrust, when daily living was for many years structured in terms of the social and psychological obliteration of one group of people by and 'for' another group, then a telling of the past in a way which would open up a new future is very difficult indeed. Then it may be well-nigh impossible to put the past behind."

"If we read Soyinka's own *Ake*, a childhood autobiography of his own upbringing in pre-war colonial Nigeria - ... - we shall be powerfully informed of the ways in which even those children who were extracted from the traditional culture of their parents and grandparents and thrust into the colonial school were nevertheless



fully enmeshed in a primary experience of their own traditions. ... To insist in these circumstances on the alienation of (Western) - educated colonials, on their incapacity to appreciate and value their own traditions, is to risk mistaking both the power of this primary experience and the vigour of many forms of cultural resistance to colonialism. A sense that the colonisers overrate the extent of their cultural penetration is consistent with anger or hatred or a longing for freedom; but it does not entail the failures of self-confidence that lead to alienation."

Is the second narration a case of an African reclaiming 'the past' or does it amount to a denial of 'reality'? Is the first tale one which looks 'reality' in the face or does this tale from the other side of independence amount simply to a perpetuation of the past in the sense that one group of people is constructed as entirely powerless while another is constituted as all-powerful?

It would seem that the advent of independence in Namibia has in several ways become the occasion, not for re-articulating 'the' past but for shrouding 'it' in silence. This silence is cemented by calls for national reconciliation. If 'the' past is spoken of at all the telling tends to be in terms of clichés: of 'the good old days in South-West' and 'the South African colonial regime'. As such, talk of the past becomes either a nostalgic exercise, or an avenue for excusing and perpetuating present failures by blaming them on a past which one had no part in making.

The event of independence, as a symbolic break from the past, has the potential to engender new visions for the future. Prior to independence the majority of people in Namibia were systematically restricted, firstly in terms of physical mobility, where the people in the populous north of the country, the 'war zone', experienced the worst constraints in the sense that curfews rendered even family visits hazardous. Secondly, people were restricted in terms of what they could think and say; for instance, the ideology and practice of Christian National Education which was pervasive in 'white' schools was extremely restrictive and authoritarian. Third, for the majority of people in Namibia the possibilities for choice were severely limited, one example of which consisted in the policy and practice of job reservation for white people. When a system which imposed all these (and many more) constraints is finally brought to an end, then the opportunity for structuring

something new presents itself. As part of the process of exorcising the old order, attempts may be made to put in place a new order. Hopes for the future may be made concrete in plans and programs. Thus the future is envisioned. This however may be the way to perpetuate oppression and subjugation. The new order, because it is an order calls for standardization. Because an ideal has been placed before the eyes, difference may no longer be tolerated. Furthermore the willing of and planning for a new and better future may be seen to arise out of the present lack, emptiness and neediness and may seem to serve a means-ends rationality, a rationality which has been questioned by authors such as Lyotard (1992; in Bennington, 1988) and Bernstein (1983). Nevertheless, is the living of human life outside the ambit of goals, plans, ideals possible? Would it be a life of immediacy, of simply doing where the doing would be for and in and of itself, no longer in the name of anything or anybody?

The gaining of independence may be predominantly constituted in terms of the discourses of 'personal liberation', 'freedom' and 'autonomy'. This may be so from the point of view of the 'liberated'. From the vantage point of those who were privileged in terms of the pre-independence system, independence may be constituted in terms of discourse of 'corruption', 'nepotism', 'incompetence', 'loss of order', 'chaos', 'increasing dysfunction'. The discourses of personal autonomy, of the freedom of the individual are constitutive of and have been perpetuated by humanism and, more specific to this project, by humanistic psychology. In the sphere of humanistic psychology these discourses are inextricably intertwined with that of the self. This school of psychology may be regarded as trying to re-install human beings on the throne from which we had been kicked by Freud. Human beings can occupy that throne by virtue of being (fairly) rational, independent decision makers, conscious of their actions and capable of controlling and channelling these. This school of psychology conceives<sup>2</sup> of the ideal life as lived in the name of the self. Postmodern voices and the practice of deconstruction have shown up the sinister side of humanism. The self, the hub around which humanistic psychology turns has been exposed by Foucault (in Rabinow, 1986) as the cite of power so that, in his hands, that which for the humanists holds the promise of human freedom, has become the very embodiment of subjugation. By the same token the dearly held (western) value of personal autonomy is deconstructed as just another means, perhaps the cruellest, whereby we are kept in line. The self, personal

autonomy, freedom: these are examples of what Foucault has referred to as the positive construction of power. Thus human beings are restricted, not in terms of lack (of possibility, freedom, choice) but in terms of what they have build or constituted for themselves. This would include plans of what to do, narratives for how and what to be.

Furthermore, Lacan (in Marta, 1987) has articulated how human beings are doubly subjugated, to the other and to language. Human beings do not use language as a means to 'express themselves' as the humanists would have it, but are spoken by language.

The sorts of issues raised by authors such as Foucault and Lacan, arising as they do in a western context and as a critique of certain tenets of modernism are pertinent in the Namibian context. They are pertinent in the sense that a struggle with these ideas may be enabling of a speaking of aspects of psychology that is contextualized without being isolationist and parochial.

Relating Foucault's and Lacan's ideas regarding 'the human subject' to the Namibian context it would seem, on the face of it, that the rejection of notions of personal autonomy, of a rational, independently acting person, of a self-conscious being may be premature where the sense of worth and the courage to do of the vast majority of people have been undermined at every turn. Furthermore, we may question whether in a context where new self understandings need to develop such endeavours are best served by notions of the self as disintegrated, scattered and spoken by any number of discourses. On the other hand authors such as Geertz (1979) have pointed out that a conceptualization and articulation of the self in modernist terms, that is, as an integrated centre of awareness and the source of independent, autonomous action standing over and against other such centres is a peculiarly western phenomenon.

Even as authors in disciplines other than psychology (Agger, 1992; Benhabib, 1992; Holub, 1992) argue for the importance of human subjectivity as the source from which societal change may emanate, the discipline of psychology under the influence of authors such as Lacan, Gergen, Shotter, Foucault and Lyotard is reconstituting and often obliterating human subjectivity. How, if at all, is or could the articulation of human subjectivity in the Namibian context be constitutive of transformation at the individual and/or

the societal level? This is one of the questions which will be addressed in this project, by way of an interrogation and unravelling of a number of 'postmodern' insights/expositions.

Postmodernist and post-structuralist insights regarding power need to be interrogated in 'the' Namibian context. Foucault's (in Rabinow, 1986) thesis that power is everywhere serves as an antidote to starry-eyed notions that an event such as independence could bring immediate deliverance from subjugation and oppression. Furthermore, his work is enabling of a deconstruction of notions such as reconciliation and nation building which serve to obscure power relations. However, by positing power in such monolithic terms, Foucault's work also serves to conceal important differences in the relative power that people exercise. In 'the' Namibian context it seems vital to recognize that certain groups of people exercise more power than others. Furthermore, while any particular person may be quite powerless in one situation, s/he may well exercise considerable power in other contexts. To remind people who for years have been denied the right to exercise economic and political power that power is everywhere may seem cynical or a recipe for hopelessness and despair.

A similar argument applies to the Lacanian (in Marta, 1987) exposition, that human beings are doubly subjugated, by language and by the other. What seems to be required in a situation such as Namibia after independence is an articulation of how human beings might come to participate actively in the formulation of the discourses which help to shape them. An unravelling of part of the title of this project namely "Articulating difference" will help to elucidate what this may entail. Some pointers to this unravelling may be outlined here. Firstly, how is difference to be conceptualized and how is articulating difference manifested in practice? Secondly, are there better and worse ways of articulating difference? The moment standards are set for speaking differently the spectre of prescriptiveness and of conformity appears. Thirdly, is articulating difference an individualistic exercise, one entailing severance from all that surrounds the individual and open only to the genius?

Returning for a moment to Lacan we may ask whether giving narcissism ontological status, as he does, whether the conceptualization of humans as being by nature narcissists for whom an other being can only ever become

present as the vehicle for the fulfilment of own desires, appears merely as an instance of 'more of the same' in a context where large numbers of people have suffered on account of this inability /unwillingness to recognize and to behold another person as a person in his/her own right, and not as part of the landscape. To a large extent people in Namibia still live their lives in accordance with the divisions instituted and/or perpetuated by the South African policy of apartheid (separate development), this despite the rhetoric of national reconciliation. In this context what seems to be required is the articulation of relationality; an articulation of human nature as narcissistic would seem simply to perpetuate old divisions and to militate against engagement. In this way - and there are surely others - silence is allowed to persist. In this work a number of concepts in terms of which relationality may be explicated will be interrogated. These include the concepts of understanding, communication, empathy and difference.

Marxist and feminist literature (Agger, 1992; Smith, 1993) frequently espouses the importance of drawing on the life-world as a way of effecting social change. Smith (1993) develops what she refers to as a "method of speaking from experience" in terms of which those who have not 'had' a voice can come to articulate on their own terms, can come to speak of their lives in ways other than the dominant discourses. In this connection the degree to which the local, the particular is implicated in processes of achieving voice is emphasized. Postmodernism(s) entail the proliferation and celebration of a multiplicity of voices and ways of speaking, and is in 'itself' a resistance to notions of Truth and Knowledge. The various possible implications of these issues for 'the' Namibian context will be interrogated here. Firstly, could not all this emphasis on the local lead to a new form of isolationism, something Namibia could hardly afford after years of isolation from the world community? Secondly, could not the so-called playful celebration of difference amount to a mere defensive manoeuvre by those whom it is supposed to benefit and to their continued marginalization: a case of old established western voices drowning out all the others to the tune of promoting plurivocality? Thirdly, does not speaking differently, which this project is an investigation of, entail speaking at a remove from the world as known? Is it not possible that the reliance on experience, on the so-called life-world would amount simply to a repetition of what has already been. Experience is at times posited as something inalienable, as our 'very own'. But this same language can also amount to a stubborn persistence in what

has been. Because our experience is 'untouchable' it is also non-negotiable. We refuse to be moved.

This brings to the fore the matter of the private and the public sphere. In western society the private sphere has often been constructed as a safe haven, as the place to which human beings can withdraw and feel secure. The safety of the private sphere stands in contrast to the harsh world 'outside'. However, the harsh world 'outside' has tended to be constituted as the 'real' world. Furthermore, the private sphere is seen to allow for rejuvenation, so that the 'real' world 'out there' might be faced with renewed strength and vigour. In the western world the obsession with the private is articulated in several ways, not the least of which is private property and ownership. Rorty (1989) posits the private as the domain where no compromise is required and where the mediocrity which appears as a concomitant of the kindness and decency of public-mindedness can be avoided.

The present project developed, at least in part, from the author's perception that in the Namibian context there is increasing withdrawal into ever smaller private spheres and that this has an impoverishing effect on people. It would seem that, as the spheres within which people operate to make themselves over shrink, so the chances for renewal and transformation also shrink. There is an increasing insularity. There is no longer room for conflict, for debate. This is the phenomenon whereby each has his own little kingdom, but there is no engagement across kingdoms.

## **Chapter 2: Processes of knowledge-making and transformation from a postmodern perspective.**

This chapter begins with two processes of knowledge-making, namely that of unravelling a tightly-knit whole and of self reflexivity or "strik[ing] a critical distance from language" (Parker, 1992, p 4). The focus for these processes is the title of this project "Articulating difference: texts of identity in post-independence Namibia." The unravelling and self reflexivity will also serve to introduce some of the issues to be discussed in this chapter and the next.

As noted in the introductory chapter, what appears to be required in a situation such as Namibia after independence is an articulation of how people might come to actively participate in refashioning and in recreating the discourses that shape them. Furthermore, it was maintained that an unravelling of "articulating difference" would help to clarify what this might involve. What follows is such an unravelling, which will be effected in conjunction with an explication of the notion "texts of identity."

The title of this project contains a juxtaposition; between a process "articulating difference" and two nouns which qualify one another "texts of identity". "Articulating difference" is an ongoing process involving change, transformation, activity.

According to Parker (1992, p 6), texts are "delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in *any* form that can be given an interpretative gloss." [emphasis in text]. Texts are structured in a certain way. They are text-ured in the sense that different strands are woven together in a specific manner to produce a particular surface. "Articulating difference" is the process whereby the text is unravelled. The unity, the coherence of the text is undermined, ruptured. The minutes of a meeting can serve as an analogy. The minutes of meetings present outcomes, decisions, courses of action/plans for the future. However, these finished products always entail the repression of other, disparate voices. The neatness of the decision, its well formulated nature smothers dissonance. The text that is the minutes, that which is presented publicly for everyone to see, the finished and polished product always contains within it strangled voices, dissonant murmurings which are

inaudible, but potentially there. Articulating difference consists in recovering the unsaid from the unity of the said.

Articulating difference is about making the dissonance audible. Above the sea of voices the yell can be heard, or shrill laughter. The analogy of the orchestra is apt in this regard. The harmony of the orchestra is disturbed by the (violin that plays) a false note. Usually the instruments in the orchestra harmonize with each other. The harmony is made possible because all the players are bound by, channelled in, a certain direction by something outside themselves. Something bigger than the individual instruments is guiding them. Solos may of course be played; an instrument comes to the fore, (and the one who comes to the fore is presumed to have somehow earned that place). The other instruments echo this voice, provide the background and the back-up. They enable the individual action to be carried forward, sometimes to the splendid crescendo.

Dissonance happens because an instrument, a voice is out of order. It does not wait its turn. It is not integrated.

There are ambiguities in both the title and the sub-title of this project, and in the way these two portions are juxtaposed. "Texts of identity" may be read as expounding a notion of personhood according to which there is nothing outside the text. The idea that identity is something specific which 'belongs' to a person or is the mark of an individual seems to be pushed aside in "texts of identity". The pinning down of identity in the sense of attaching 'it' to a person is questioned and identity as collectivity comes to the fore in the work of authors such as Shotter (1993a; 1993b) and Shotter & Gergen (1989). Identity as posited in the title appears as 'something' public rather than as that which is privately owned. On the other hand, "articulating difference" may seem to entail a notion of human agency (articulating) and individuality (difference), but that which is doing the articulating is absent. 'It', 'the subject' remains indefinite, amorphous. The title makes it possible to pose any number of questions; it would be as legitimate to ask 'who is articulating?' as it would be to ask 'what is articulating?'



## 2.1. Vicissitudes of articulating difference

Returning now to the analogy of the orchestra, a question arises as to what would happen if everyone were to play differently. The question brings us face to face with the distress, the anguish of difference and the potential horror and threat of chaos. Everyone playing to their own tune would seem to amount to *Id* reigning supreme. On the other hand, the call for harmony and the imperative of unity which seem to be implied above, may well be a repressive measure, rather thinly disguised, a case of *superego* reigning supreme.

Some authors (Agger, 1992) have argued that the celebration of difference which, to put it simplistically, *is* postmodernism, has been made possible by and is a reflection of 'high' capitalism. In terms of this argument the proliferation of difference is cast as an addiction to fads which become the 'order' of the day in an era of hyper-change. Speaking differently becomes an imperative and just another form of consumerism. According to Agger, postmodernism of this sort is closely linked with narcissism and possessive individualism, and eschews any concern with social problems. A postmodernism which entails a refusal to engage in politics and which posits ironic detachment as a central value amounts to an endorsement of consumer capitalism.

In the attempt to analyse the charge of consumerism, the complexity of the notion of deconstruction will be briefly elucidated. In a sense deconstruction entails a return to 'the' roots, to 'the' source, 'the' origin. What is disturbing about the practice of deconstruction is that, in returning to the roots it does a great deal of uprooting, it is a matter of articulating the new in the old. In this way the integrated whole, the smooth *text-ure* of the old is ruffled, it is unravelled. The finished product is no longer finished. This process is disturbing, but it also has the potential to open new worlds.

If articulating difference can become commodified, 'it' can also be readily romanticized. Thus the lone hero, the pioneer and the genius take their place alongside the designer blue-jeans.

It seems then that articulating difference can be conceptualized differently. Firstly, there is that 'articulating difference' which seems to be an imperative

in a world obsessed with autonomy, individuality, uniqueness, singularity. As far as this conceptualization is concerned, the following observations seem apt. In western society the split between individual and society seems to have brought in its wake that one part of humanity lives the one side of this dichotomy - the individual/unique/ autonomous/valued/phallic(?) while the rest is the 'other' for all that. These very values require an other, a background against which they might stand out. One way of construing the agony of Fanon's (1986) 'black man' as he tries to prove to himself and the world that he has a unique contribution to make, that he is something other than what he 'has been defined as by the white man', is that he tries to play this game of uniqueness from the place of the other. He is trying to extricate himself from this amorphous, undifferentiated mass while, at the same time being the requirement for the uniqueness and singularity which he wishes to attain.

Such a conceptualization of "articulating difference" can be related to the Namibian context as follows. "Articulating difference" in the sense of an overriding concern with autonomy, uniqueness and singularity would certainly form part of the value system of certain elements of the Namibian population. However, the majority of the population would most probably operate in terms of a value system where such individualism is excluded, in other words, a value system more in line with collectivism. Considerable numbers of people, including many of those who spend years in exile in western countries would live their lives in terms of a 'mix' of values. "Articulating difference" would conceivably be manifested in the lives of such people in ways which partake of both the collectivistically and individualistically inclined value systems.

Secondly, as an imperative, articulating difference seems to become what may be referred to as 'institutionalized radicalism'. Standards are set for how to articulate difference and even for what is to be considered as difference. In this way articulating difference would become, not an ongoing process, but the setting up of an opposition to what is generally accepted/the status quo, the positing of a dichotomy. This seems to be what happens in much of party politics: there are certain pre-established criteria, certain party lines in accordance with which criticism may be voiced. Thus all becomes predictable.

In the third place, articulating difference may be regarded as a never-ending process of becoming unstuck, a constant detachment from a monolithic block - of opinion, belief, received knowledge. As such articulating difference is the process whereby pretensions to power can be undermined. Flax (1990) points out that the effects of power are evident wherever a population appears to be homogeneous, orderly and marked by a minimum or even lack of conflict. This argument of Flax indicates why the discourses of reconciliation, especially national reconciliation (a double unity) need to be deconstructed so that subjected, local knowledges can be articulated and can thus come to undermine "'totalizing' discourses of authority" (Flax, 1990, p 41).

Within the Namibian context the discourse of national reconciliation has become quite prolific since independence. This raises a question regarding what deconstructions of that discourse might look like and how such deconstructions might be sanctioned. Furthermore, a question arises whether and to what extent multiple tellings of 'the' past, different remembering - which were posited in the introductory chapter as a concomitant of independence - are possible in the presence of this discourse of national reconciliation.

At least two questions arise as part of the discussions in this chapter and, at the same time, serve to guide the discussion. The first question concerns the extent to which individual and societal transformation is a deliberate, planned process involving conscious action. Secondly, it may be asked whether, by positing ideals for a different and potentially better future, human beings inevitably create the conditions for hegemony.

## **2.2. Challenges to modernist conceptualizations of knowledge**

In the introductory chapter it was pointed out that the event of independence can engender new visions for the future, and that hopes for the future may be rendered concrete as goals and plans. Furthermore, the possibility that such visions, plans and goals might perpetuate subjugation and oppression was alluded to. These ideas require further explication.

As part of the triumphant mood of modernism it was envisaged that academic disciplines would be instrumental in building a better world, in helping to

structure societal transformation along rational lines. This project, which was meant to ensure progress, entailed gathering knowledge in a systematic manner thereby enabling prediction and control. Even as (social) scientists have lost confidence in this project, especially in the wake of two world wars, the rise of Stalinism and Nazism, and the fall of Communism, and no doubt helped on and expressed in postmodernists' eager efforts to "dethrone the intellectuals, who in a time of secularization tried to climb the empty throne of God..." (Fokkema, 1984, p 41), there have been renewed attempts to conceive of ways in which social science might be self-consciously instrumental in effecting societal transformation, for example, in helping to fashion a "democratic public space" (Brown, 1994). Such a "democratic public space" would, at least in part, be fashioned by social scientists as they become involved, through their writings, in imagining better narratives for the political communities which they are part of. Furthermore, within a "democratic public space" truths, whether these be cognitive or moral truths, would not be regarded as fixed entities or as universal. Such a space would also be constituted in the ongoing critique of theory, method and practice.

The link between knowledge, and societal and self transformation has been variously articulated, and the role/place of knowledge in processes of societal and self transformation is now a highly controversial one. What is the nature of that knowledge which may conceivably play a role in these processes? The modernist project in terms of which it would have been possible to amass and to build systems of knowledge which would serve as the basis for managing human affairs rationally and scientifically seems no longer to be tenable. It seems no longer to be tenable because, for one, knowledge cannot be fitted in a non-contradictory way into coherent systems. Furthermore, knowledge does not guarantee "progress" and the very idea of "progress" has become highly controversial.

### **2.3. Knowledge and power**

The extent to which knowledge in the modernist sense of coherent integrated systems in fact has the potential for the control and suppression of human beings, rather than their emancipation has been lucidly articulated by Foucault (in Rabinow, 1986). Smith (1993) shows how the "relations of ruling" are, at least in part, constituted by scientific discourses which, together with other discourses interpenetrate and coordinate multiple loci of

ruling, that is, bureaucracy, management and professional organizations. It seems that that knowledge which is implicated in relations of ruling is organized as systems, as Shotter (1993b, p 9) puts it: "great systems of certainty". Within these "great systems of certainty" there would presumably be no room for idiosyncrasy, or for surprises, or individual difference. Everything, including human being would be perfectly predictable.

#### **2.4. Power-knowledge and the intellectuals**

Lyotard (in Bennington, 1988) situates the activities of intellectuals squarely within this modernist project. He regards intellectuals as delineating a general subject who is given a (potentially) universal value and with whom they identify. Intellectuals then analyse the situation in accordance with their subject in order to prescribe what ought to be done so that this collective subject can develop, reach its potential or attain some destiny. In other words: intellectuals regards it as their task to uncover the nature of a general subject and to use this nature as an anchorage point in terms of which to judge a present situation and to recommend changes which would enable the flowering of this subject. From the above explication it is clear that intellectuals are responsible to a public.

This conceptualization of the activities of intellectuals allows an understanding of Lyotard's scepticism in respect of the social sciences. The delineation of a general subject would very likely lead to repression because difference would not be allowed. Furthermore, intellectuals would assume for themselves a prescriptive role of knowing what is best for the rest of humanity.

Flax (1990) shows how the products of the intellectuals are used by the state to ensure control. She points out that the state relies on a widespread acceptance of models of "human nature" which would ensure a high degree of homogeneity in the populace. This is because individual human beings attempt to fashion themselves in accordance with the parameters provided by these models of "human nature". In this way control is internalized and the exercise of power becomes all the more pernicious because, in a sense, it becomes self imposed.

Postmodernism entails a deep scepticism of the potential for intellectual hegemony and absolutism which seem to be expressed in the myth of emancipation through rationality (Lyotard, 1984). While it is clear that societal and individual transformation can be fruitfully elucidated from the perspective of postmodernism, a number of critical questions may be raised regarding the implications of postmodernism for these processes.

Postmodernists reject the idea that it would be possible to find some Archimedean point, some set of principles or standards in terms of which it might be possible to judge claims to knowledge. As part of this notion postmodernism is a celebration of diversity, of difference, of a plurality of voices (Fokkema, 1984). From a postmodernist perspective an extreme reticence in respect of justification can serve as a counter to a prescriptive attitude. As Flax (1990) points out, the disrespectful polemics of postmodernism and the emphasis on play and differentiation serve a strategic purpose, at least in part. This is to undermine the power of the so-called "normalizing" discourses which made possible and legitimated the patterns of domination which are part and parcel of post-Enlightenment western states. Some strands of feminist theory of which Irigaray's work (1990) is representative have added their voice to the call for a commitment to plurality and difference and have expressed scepticism regarding the possibility of grounding feminist theory in an authoritative truth.

## **2.5. Problematic of postmodern response(s) to knowledge-power**

### **2.5.1. Contingency and plurality of voices: an antidote to power?**

Amongst those who feel that the postmodernist resistance to any form of reified meaning, while being constitutive of its radical potential, may have a number of negative consequences are feminists such as Hawkesworth (1989) who maintain that the tolerance of multiple perspectives impedes the feminist desire to build a new science that would be able to refute the distortions of androcentrism. Authors like Hawkesworth worry that the contingency which is a concomitant of a plurality of voices and a refusal to search for epistemological certitude is not in itself effective in undermining pretensions to power and authority. What she seems to be arguing, in other words, is that the undermining of existing systems of knowledge requires the building of 'counter systems' which would enable, and be constitutive of, a refutation of existing, dominant systems.

A similar argument has been put forward by those (Koka, 1996; Vorster, 1996) who want to see the establishment of knowledge systems which emerge 'the' African context, and which have particular relevance to that context. This line of reasoning has pertinence in the Namibian context, whether one agrees with it or not.

In this argument knowledge is cast in terms of metaphors of combat. The problematics of conceptualizing knowledge as such will be elucidated in a later section of this chapter under the heading 2.11.1.: *Ideology critique as a combative game*. Flax (1990) argues that feminist theorizing has an ambivalent relationship to the postmodernist project in the sense that, if it is accepted, as the postmodernists do, that there is no objective basis for judging the truth or falsity of ideas, then the outcome of competing truth claims may be exclusively determined by power.

### **2.5.2. Meta-narratives: a requirement for change or the way towards hegemony?**

A concern which is related to the one articulated by Flax has been expressed by those who have pleaded for the possibility of ideology critique. Billig & Simons (1994) point out that the postmodern mood might undermine confident criticism. Furthermore, they question whether it is possible to sustain hope for a future emancipation in the absence of faith in a grand meta-narrative. McLaren & Lankshear (1994) argue that human beings require a meta-narrative in order to nourish a sense of political focus and purpose. Thus, with regard to the question raised in the introductory chapter, namely whether the living of human life outside the ambit of goals, ideals and plans is possible, they certainly would exclude such a possibility. McLaren & Lankshear do, however call for such meta-narratives to have 'only' provisional authority. What these authors seem to be arguing is that human beings require examples, that they rely on existing stories and personages to inspire them and to kindle the fires of hope, and yet there is also an awareness of how these stories and personages might become imprisoning and may lead to a denial of one's 'own' experiencing. The line between fanaticism and commitment seems to be a very thin one.

### 2.5.3. Escaping old language: fostering obscurantism and elitism

Billig & Simons (1994) raise a further dilemma faced by the potential social critic: on the one hand, she is in danger of being trapped by the dominant ideology if she draws on the traditional language of philosophy in articulating her critique, and, on the other hand, she risks not being heard if she rejects this language. Thus, while the increasing totality of mass ideology may necessitate the development of new forms of rhetoric which are increasingly marginal, the indirect and allusive articulation of critical themes might at the same time render the language so obscure that it can hardly be heard. In this sense the social critic becomes increasingly autistic. Such obscurantism may amount to a particularly insidious form of specialization which, as Macedo (1994) argues serves to perpetuate power differentials, even as those who articulate thus, claim for themselves a role as social critics. In other words, this 'breed' of social critic, usually an academic, may articulate in a language which can be engaged in by a very small minority, usually academics. Such social critics lay themselves open to a charge of elitism. Such a charge is of course based on the assumption that it is possible to communicate, i.e. to make oneself understandable to others and to understand others. This assumption has been subjected to trenchant criticism by postmodernist authors. The charge of elitism is furthermore based on the presupposition that the social critic should make herself understandable to a broad mass. This, too is a contentious matter as Lyotard (in Bennington, 1988) has explicated.

It may be argued that the very fact of 'local' knowledges remaining relatively uncontaminated by the central, dominant discourse is a reason for these not having any leverage against the dominant discourse which persists unabated (Flax, 1990). It is this impasse that is at the heart of Rorty's (1989) strict separation between the private and the public, a theme that will be addressed more fully in Chapter 3 under the heading 3.31.: *Justice and creativity: mutually exclusive spheres?*

### 2.5.4. All talk and no action?

The articulation of critical themes in a 'different' language may not be enabling of practical action and may even detract from such action. Thus, according to Flax (1990), it is conceivable that an oppressive social system persists unchanged while postmodernists engage in playful readings of texts.



Giroux (1988, in Billig & Simons, 1994) argues that the scepticism with respect to claims of truth is also a flight from politics. He calls for a political project which, instead of simply dismissing history and meaning engages these. The potential for postmodernism to become an elitism and a form of escapism which can be indulged in by intellectuals in their ivory towers is exemplified, albeit in an extreme manner by Hassan (1975, p 49) who maintains: "Style takes over; let life and the masses fend for themselves."

Up to this point some notions of articulating difference - which is what postmodernism to a large extent is - have been outlined. Furthermore, a number of dilemmas presented by postmodernism to those who are interested in individual and social change have been elucidated. Some of the themes raised by the discussion will now be developed more carefully.

## **2.6. Ideology critique**

An investigation into individual and societal change has to grapple with the notion of ideology and with what has been referred to as ideology critique. Ideology critique may be regarded by some as a prerequisite for and/or an integral part of the actual processes that are involved in societal and individual change. However, ideology critique has been conceptualized in a number of ways and these need to be elucidated here. Whenever there is talk of critique, questions may be raised regarding the manner in which a critique might be justified. The notions of critique and of justification are, in turn, closely linked with the problematics of relativism. In the explication of these themes modernity and postmodernity will repeatedly be juxtaposed in an effort to develop a differentiated and nuanced discussion.

Ideology may be conceived simply as belief systems, as groups of ideas used by human beings to present, explain and justify the means and ends of organized social action, especially political action (Seliger, 1976 in Eagleton, 1991). In terms of this definition ideology entails the cognitive and moral dimensions of social action. This is a rather neutral version of ideology. A less neutral conceptualization is that ideology is the ways and means through which relations of domination are sustained (Thompson, 1984). In these terms ideology entails the ideas which serve to legitimate the power of the most dominant social class within a society (Eagleton, 1991). Thus ideology plays a significant role in practices of oppression which, as Young

(1992) argues, can no longer be fruitfully conceived simply in terms of the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group. Rather than being manifested as colonial conquest and domination, oppression, in the latter part of the twentieth century, frequently comes in the guise of "the everyday practices of well-intentioned liberal society" (p 175-176). Oppression as a product of such everyday practices would be extremely difficult to recognize and to resist because those who are oppressed would experience these practices as serving at least some of their interests, as being of some benefit to them. A further difficulty would be that these everyday practices would be experienced as natural and consequently as being beyond question.

In Namibia, oppression took place as colonial conquest and domination for many years. It may be expected that, with the gaining of political independence, which in Namibia was a peaceful process, oppression may have come to take on the more subtle forms alluded to by Young. This, however does not preclude the possibility that such subtle forms of subjugation would co-exist with and feed into the lingering oppressive effects of colonial conquest and domination.

Ideology critique would be made possible by and consist in (the development of) an awareness of the processes whereby the power of the most dominant classes is legitimated, and the manner in which these processes operate in a specific situation. The mechanisms of legitimation would include, amongst others, naturalizing and universalizing the beliefs and values which are supportive of the dominant group (Eagleton, 1991) or what Young (1992) refers to as "cultural imperialism". Other measures of legitimation would involve the exclusion of rival forms of thought and obscuring social reality in such a way that the ends of the dominant group are served. From this short explication of some of the mechanisms of legitimation it emerges that ideology critique would not simply be concerned with whether a philosophical system is logically elegant and conceptually coherent. An important aspect of ideology critique would consist in assessing how (intellectual) ideas are situated with respect to the interests of the ruling class (Billig & Simons, 1994).

In a context such as Namibia after independence this may be a particularly difficult exercise because the newly emerging ruling class may constitute

itself and be constituted by others in terms of discourses of 'liberators' and 'freedom fighters', while any critique of this ruling class may be constituted as reactionary.

The difficulty with the above explication, in terms of ideology critique, is that it paints a binary picture of one class pitted against another and of class interests as being definitive. This explication does not pay sufficient attention to the multi-layered nature of society and the complexity of human lives whereby human beings occupy multiple positions, some of which may entail subordination, while others involve being relatively powerful. On the other hand, a focus on the complexity of human living may serve to obscure the fact that some people are, on the whole, less powerful than others or more exploited than others. Thus, too strong a focus on the multi-layered nature of social life might serve to detract from 'real' inequalities because it relativizes everything. In order to counter such relativization we need to grapple with the problematics of 'reality'.

The level at which it would be appropriate to pitch ideology critique would depend on one's ideas regarding the nature of ideology. According to Eagleton (1991), Althusser conceptualizes ideology as the ways in which human beings are at an unconscious level tied into social reality. From his point of view ideology is bound up in our seemingly spontaneous and private experience; it does not consist in sets of abstract doctrines. Instead, ideology is highly subjective. In terms of this perspective emancipation would consist in liberating ourselves from ourselves. Eagleton points out that ideology can however also be manifested as a universal truth. Furthermore, deception, rather than being regarded as based in psychological processes could be seen to be generated by an entire social structure. From this point of view ideology critique would necessarily be sociological in nature.

If Eagleton's and Althusser's conceptualizations of ideology are taken together, then ideology critique may be seen to entail a peculiar form of self reflexivity which is both a private, psychological process and one involving social analysis. This would involve a form of self consciousness which is, at the same time a social consciousness. One question which arises from this is whether the knowledge making which is involved in ideology critique is seen to give rise to a specific product, a definitive answer.

## 2.7. Ideology critique and postmodernism

If the concept of ideology is seen to encompass a notion that this is a belief system which deceives human beings about the 'actual' nature of social reality, then, especially in a time when postmodernist ideas have gained considerable currency, attention will have to be given to that 'reality' about which human beings might be deceived or deluded. It may be argued that, from a postmodernist perspective human living is always textually mediated. There is nothing outside the text or, to put it in other words, it is not possible to judge belief systems as being more or less true because there is nothing that they are more or less true to.

Modernism entails, amongst other things, the idea that it would be possible to develop a set of principles in terms of which claims to truth might be judged. The principles of science and rationality have been posited as a sort of neutral ground, as a type of Archimedean point in terms of which such judging may happen. Postmodernists have argued that these so-called neutral principles are themselves driven by interests. Furthermore, they have denied that these principles are in any way absolute; rather they are historically situated and partial.

## 2.8. Judging without recourse to criteria

Lyotard's ideas regarding judgement may arguably be regarded as exemplary of a postmodernist 'position.' What is distinctive about Lyotard's conceptualization of judgement is that it happens without recourse to criteria (Beardsworth, 1992), prompting the charge that postmodernism and Lyotard's position in particular undermine confident criticism. If judgements are made without recourse to criteria does this not amount to arbitrariness? It would seem that a position adopted on this basis simply cannot be countered, and the one holding the position can stubbornly persist. Refutation would no longer be possible. Perhaps more seriously, if there can be no agreement on the principles in accordance with which claims to truth might be judged, would this not amount to a world where each one lived his or her solipsistic life? Surely this would be a world in which debate, and communication for that matter would be impossible. The possibility for the exchange of ideas and for argumentation seems to be contingent on a framework of common principles and understanding.

## **2.9. 'Interests' as reference point for judging**

There are probably very few thinkers today who would argue for any absolute set of principles or criteria for judging claims to truth and yet many would also want to find ways to avoid the scourge of relativism. Eagleton (1991), for instance, argues that it should be possible to judge a system of ideas against the interests of those whose lives are shaped in terms of those ideas. The implication of this argument is that there is another reality, apart from that constituted by a system of ideas which, although it may be buried under, or falsified by a system of ideas, is still potentially accessible. For instance, Agger (1992) maintains that for Marcuse alienation is never complete, but that there is always a libidinal political substratum which directs human beings towards political freedom. It is these libidinal depths which are the source of revolt. In terms of this argument, ideology critique would involve the assessment of a system of ideas in terms of the interests of the people whose lives are shaped by that system of ideas, by that ideology. Does this argument necessitate the positing of true interests as against false interests? How shall the truth and the falsity of interests be conceptualized?

## **2.10. 'True' interests and speaking from experience**

Smith's (1993) "method of speaking from experience" may be said to be a process whereby people come to articulate their interests counter to the way these interests would have been shaped in terms of a dominant ideology. Although Smith never uses the concepts ideology or ideology critique, it may be argued that her account of how woman, faced with a lack of an 'own' language, may come to speak from her everyday life and the world as she knows it and is active in it as an authority, is a form of ideology critique. In thus speaking from experience, relations of power can come into view. Thus, subjectivity (though not in the sense of a personal subjectivity, but in terms of local interpersonal relationships) is the place from which human beings can become aware of how they are situated within relations of ruling.

A major concern of this research project is how people might come to actively engage in reformulating and refashioning the discourses in terms of which their lives and identities are constituted. Can such refashioning and reformulating be adequately conceptualized in terms of ideology critique? To address this question, a closer consideration of the practices of

postmodernism is required, including a juxtaposition of these practices with ideology critique. This juxtaposition will be developed around a number of questions. Firstly, does the reformulating and re-articulating referred to above inevitably entail the setting up of dichotomies and does this, in turn, invariably entail hostility and rivalry? Secondly, how important is justification as part of reformulating and refashioning the discourses in terms of which one is constituted? This is closely linked with the third question, namely whether playfulness as in the dance of postmodernism(s) entails 'irresponsible' voicing, or is this the only way to avoid stuckness and entrenched positions? Fourthly, does reformulating and refashioning as deconstruction, and the concomitant refusal to envision the future simply amount to cynicism? Finally, and closely related to the above question: what is the place of (discourses of) affirmation in the process under discussion?

## **2.11. Juxtaposing ideology critique and the practices of postmodernism**

As has been mentioned before, the conceptualization of ideology often involves the notion that there is some reality about which people have false ideas, that there is a gap between people's belief system(s) and 'reality'. The postmodern scepticism in respect of 'reality' has led to the charges of relativism and, sometimes, of cynicism (Smith, 1994). To put the argument in somewhat simplistic terms: playful rereadings seem to be a rather idealistic and inappropriate way of dealing with 'real' material deprivations and social injustice. The practice of rereading may be appropriate for middle-class academics, but is one justified in calling oneself a social critic if that criticism does not tackle difficulties in the 'real' world? The problem with this argument is that it comes close to being reductive in the vulgar Marxist sense where the economic base is determinative of everything else.

### **2.11.1. Ideology critique as a combative game**

The postmodernist rejection of the notion that truth claims should be justified has enabled them to avoid involvement in the typically modernist combative 'game' in terms of which definitive positions are put forward to be critiqued, and counter-positions are brought into the arena to be questioned, so that through the submission to public scrutiny positions may either be refined and strengthened or abandoned. Thus Schmidt's (1984) accusation, that postmodernism is tantamount to avoiding conflict.

Ideology critique would seem to be an instance of modernist language in accordance with which particular stands are taken, specific positions are adopted and there is a concern with justifying these positions and stands. It would appear then that ideology critique entails being for certain 'things', ideas, policies and being against others. Gergen (1994) points out that ideology critique tends to be binary and that, as such, it is akin to rivalry and hostility. In line with Gergen's comment it may be argued that positing 'real' interests as opposed to 'false' interests amounts to the construction of a - possibly spurious - dichotomy. Rather than proposing that there are some more or less immutable 'real' interests which persist beneath the overlay of false interests, it may be more appropriate to think in terms of difference, upon difference.

The process of deconstruction, which may be seen as the process of rescuing the unsaid from the said, prevents us from getting stuck in these binary positions because it entails a constant being on the move.

### **2.11.2. To articulate or not to articulate alternative visions**

The practice of deconstruction certainly does not entail the development of any positive visions. The vagueness and lack of specificity that seems to be postmodernism is manifested in 'its' express refusal to articulate (a) new, alternative position(s). 'It' is not about articulating any program or vision for the future and 'it' is not a counterforce to modernity. Postmodern politics would not involve the development of any new and supposedly better programs for the future.

Lyotard, for example, favours a form of practical political action which avoids all mediation (Dews, 1987). Such action proposes no alternative but simply shows up the contradictions in, and the arbitrariness of, the 'accepted', the unquestioned scenario; it happens on the spur of the moment rather than in accordance with a pre-worked-out plan. Furthermore, the political action is not carried out in the name of overall goals and plans. It is action without a 'Vorstellung', a conception, a picture of where it is going and of its own purpose. Thus, political action is not directed at anything, whether at transformation or at the democratization of political power or anything else. Political action as favoured by Lyotard does expose the manufactured nature

of the social scene, its arbitrariness. In this sense it 'shows up' the scene and exposes it as being neither 'natural' nor inevitable. Thus, tensions may be made present without solutions or resolutions being proposed.

Returning to the title of this particular project, Lyotard's politics seems to be a case of articulating difference. Political action escapes a means-ends rationality and, as a consequence leaves room for chance.

The scepticism about constructing perspectives for the future in part arises from the concern that a channelling of behaviour/actions in accordance with pre-formed plans and goals would only serve to restrict spontaneity and creativity. The scepticism also arises from the recognition that visions for liberation can so easily become prescriptive so that the vision for emancipation becomes a recipe and, consequently repressive.

### **2.11.3. The dance of postmodernism; undermining confident criticism**

Whereas modernism entails, amongst other things, a concern with principles and positions, postmodernism has often been likened to a dance. A dance is about constant movement and change. In this sense postmodernism is - rather, postmodernisms are - constantly shifting. It would appear that what Schmidt (1984) refers to as 'confident criticism' is made impossible when the target of the critique is constantly changing and evolving, when it is difficult to know, from one moment to the next, what one is engaged with.

The refusal to articulate specific positions may be regarded as a failure of postmodernism and has led to the charge that it is parasitical on the project of modernity which serves as a breeding ground for its proliferation. Schmidt regards the vagueness and the refusal to be definitive as a limitation in that it, at best, reduces the possibilities of postmodernity to cynical satire. Brown (1994) argues that "the hermeneutics of suspicion" which characterizes postmodernism should be supplemented by a 'hermeneutics of affirmation'. Bauman (1992, in Billig & Simons, 1994) charges postmodernism with proposing nothing and with being destructive and condemning of everything.

This accusation, that postmodernism is condemning and destructive of everything needs to be unravelled. It may be argued that postmodern



political action requires an existing order which, in a sense, serves as the nourishment for such action, hence the charge that 'it' is parasitical. Dews (1987) maintains that the sort of political action favoured by Lyotard requires an order which may be demystified. He argues that such a politics is ultimately self-destructive because the very order which is required for its practice is undermined by the practice.

The refusal to propound alternatives is a further factor leading to 'burn-out'. One who is critical of a present situation might be required to propose an alternative, to develop and offer a 'better' vision. This is usually seen to be 'constructive' criticism. Dews elucidates how the sort of political activity favoured by Lyotard displays "bad faith" in respect of its own political status because of its refusal to provide a framework for a new order. Is there any way out of this dilemma? Does the criticism of an old order necessarily require the proposal of an alternative which seems inevitably to bear within it the seed for a new order and, consequently further repression?

The impasse being sketched here is closely related to time. The sort of political action proposed by Lyotard is spontaneous, immediate. Implied in the modernist call for the formulation of alternative plans is a different perspective on time. The thinking here is long-term and there is a concern with sustainability and continuity, with building up over time. The other issue around which the differences seem to turn is that of numbers and organization. It would seem that political action, to be effective (in the long run) and in the sense of enabling change in social structures requires mass action which mass action calls for the suppression of difference in the name of a higher goal. This raises an important question namely whether solidarity inevitably entails the denial of difference and the pushing aside of subtleties. Political action may seem to require simplification as expressed in slogans.

Here the positing of a dichotomy with proposing/constructing on the one hand, and criticizing/deconstructing/demystifying on the other will be challenged. While the political action as advocated by Lyotard does not include the expounding of alternatives, it does in some sense entail a 'Darstellung', a representation, a putting forth which could conceivably be demystified in turn. The lack of mediation in the sense of a preconceived 'Vorstellung' does not necessarily detract from the substantiveness of the

'Darstellung' in the action, as in Lyotard's example (in Dews, 1987) of the factory workers who stop work and climb on the production line and travel along while chatting to fellow workers. Thus, what is being challenged here is the equating of demystification or deconstruction with an 'undoing' and an 'unravelling' which simply dissolves into nothingness. It may be argued that the taking apart which is involved in demystification is substantive. An analogy may help to make the point: the process of unravelling what an author wrote is always in some sense creative. It would seem then that it may be unjustified to simply view Lyotard's politics as parasitical.

In the light of the above discussion it would appear that Lyotard develops a 'model of transformation' which eschews lasting dualisms and persistent tensions or opposing forces. Instead, an everlasting process of undoing is conceptualized. Thus, it is not as though there is an existing order which is then opposed by an alternative order that seeks to occupy centre stage. Rather, there is perpetual articulation; every 'this is' is taken apart, every 'it is' is undone. The here and now impermanence is the 'order' of the day. In a sense this is what the articulation of difference entails. It is a refusal to be committed to any particular point of view. Thus, there is perpetual flux.

## **2.12. Deconstruction**

A further unravelling of the charge of destructiveness brought against postmodernism would involve a consideration of the process of deconstruction which is characteristic of postmodernism. Deconstruction has been referred to above as the practice of rescuing the unsaid from the said. The act of saying something, of asserting something is, in some sense, an act of violence because it pushes under and stands on. The said comes into being on account of and at the expense of all that which remains unsaid. Deconstruction is about fathoming what has to be repressed, what has to be left out for something to be said. The practice may be perceived to be destructive in the sense that it entails the unravelling of completed products, the taking apart of wholes.

Deconstruction arises from and is reflective of the idea that it is not possible to work towards a better, more complete and sophisticated product. Deconstruction will not produce a more correct or a more truthful perspective, only a different one. Thus, it is not as though we could attain to ever better

approximations of 'the thing'. This clearly has major implications for the scientific enterprise, specifically if the objective of this enterprise is to be seen as the search for truth. Whereas, from the modernist perspective it would be possible to work towards more complete knowledge, this notion of progression and progressiveness is rejected in terms of postmodernism.

### **2.13. Concluding comments**

As was noted in the introductory chapter processes of individual and social transformation become pertinent when a country becomes independent after an extended period of having been governed in terms of a system which was regarded by the majority of that population as illegitimate and grossly unjust. Furthermore, it was noted that independence is an occasion for envisioning new futures. In this chapter, processes of individual and social transformation were elucidated in terms of a number of different concepts. 'Articulating difference' was explicated as, amongst other processes, that of unravelling a tightly knit whole and of making dissonance audible. As such 'articulating difference' has strong parallels with the process of deconstruction which is so characteristic of postmodern practices.

Deconstruction does not entail the positing of alternative views, programmes or the envisioning of new and better futures. This, amongst other things has led to the charge that postmodernism is, in effect, a flight from politics, that 'it' entails political bad faith. Furthermore, postmodernism is said to feed off the project of modernism even as 'it' undermines this project. In this chapter an attempt was made to deconstruct the dichotomy of, on the one hand, critique/deconstruction and, on the other hand, proposing/constructing. It was argued that even though 'postmodern' political action as advocated by Lyotard does not include a 'Vorstellung', a plan or final goal which might mediate action, the showing up of the social scene as, in a sense, arbitrary and the articulation of tensions in existing 'wholesome' structures is also a creative process which involves 'Darstellung'.

The process of deconstruction allows for the articulation of that which is suppressed in the moment of saying 'it is' and as such may be regarded as rescuing the unsaid from the said. In a context such as Namibia where a multitude of voices were silenced over years, deconstruction in this sense is particularly pertinent. Deconstruction is also pertinent in this context where

the rhetoric of national reconciliation could readily lead to a new homogeneity, a homogeneity which, as Flax (1990) points out, always reflects the effects of power.

Apart from considering the process of deconstruction in connection with social transformation and with articulating difference, this chapter also focused on ideology critique. Ideology critique may be conceptualized as involving an awareness of the processes whereby the power of the most dominant classes is legitimated. If ideology is conceptualized as involving both social structures and psychological processes then ideology critique would seem to entail both self consciousness and social consciousness.

At least two difficulties in respect of ideology and ideology critique were discussed. Firstly, ideology critique would seem to involve a binary logic, an either-or mentality. Secondly, ideology critique is based on the assumption that people can be deluded about their 'true' interests, and that it is possible for people to 'find out', to become conscious of what those true interests are. Consideration was given to how it might be possible to fathom such 'true' interests, for example, in terms of "speaking from experience".

In this chapter deconstruction and ideology critique were juxtaposed so that the critique by one practice of the other could provide better insight into each of these practices, including their flaws.

From the point of view of those who would see ideology critique as playing an essential role in social transformation, postmodernism is highly problematic because it seems to amount to an ironic detachment; as such it does not offer an effective antidote to power, nor can real material deprivations and social injustices be addressed by postmodernism and deconstruction. Furthermore, confident criticism is undermined in the face of postmodernism. This charge is closely linked to another, that postmodernism is in effect a slide into relativism. In dealing with the problematic of relativism Lyotard has articulated the idea of judging in the absence of criteria.

From a postmodernist perspective any attempt to structure societal transformation along rational lines is doomed. Lyotard explicates this in elucidating the role of intellectuals. They are involved in conceptualizing the

general subject and make prescriptions as to the 'best' courses of action and solutions pertaining to this general subject. Knowledge thus developed is inevitably repressive. In this sense postmodernists give recognition to the power-knowledge complex.

There are however those who in the wake of postmodernism make renewed efforts to think of ways in which (social) sciences can be self-consciously instrumental in bringing about social change by, for instance, fashioning democratic public spaces.

The possible role of consciousness, which clearly may be regarded as an important sort of knowledge, in societal and self transformation was elucidated in this chapter. As already mentioned, ideology critique involves becoming aware in a double sense.

Whereas this chapter has focused strongly on 'articulating difference', the following chapter is concerned mainly with texts of identity. One of the guiding questions for the next chapter will be how, if at all, the articulation of human subjectivity in the Namibian context can be constitutive of transformation at the individual and social levels.

### Chapter 3: Texts of Identity

In this chapter the following issues will be discussed in respect of 'texts of identity'. To begin with, a 'conversation' will be started between the work of Taylor (1989) who regards identity as commitments and identifications, and that of Lyotard (in Dews, 1987; 1991; 1992). In respect of the latter author, the relationship between his concepts *sensus communis* and "reflective thought", and identity will be explicated.

Following this, 'affirmation' will be discussed. Although it would seem to be important for people to engage in discourses of affirmation in a context such as Namibia where oppression was rife under the previous apartheid system, there are many pitfalls in respect of this discourse and these will be considered.

Subsequently the relationship between 'personal' boundaries and the boundaries which are involved in nationalism will be explored.

The next point of focus will be 'human agency'. Shotter's (1993a) concept of "imaginary entities", that is "imaginary objects" which partially structure social life, but which also entail openness to further articulations will be advanced as an alternative to a conceptualization of human agency in terms of formulating specific goals and plans of action. It will be shown how 'human agency' in the sense of choice and responsibility is suffused with the discourses of control and power.

Subsequent to the discussion of 'human agency', an attempt will be made to elucidate how 'the' past might become imprisoning. Specifically, this may happen when people are called upon to pay allegiance to the past. On the other hand, the multiple telling of the past can allow for the assimilation and transcendence of the past. This is particularly important in a context such as Namibia with its very difficult, strife-torn past.

Following on this 'self-awareness' will be discussed as part of 'ideology critique' and 'emancipation'. The question, whether 'self-awareness' amounts to 'subjectification' as set out by Foucault (in Rabinow, 1986) will be considered.

Next, an attempt will be made to articulate that which human beings are or may be 'outside' and apart from their enfoldedness in language. In this regard Rorty's 'strong poet' who refuses to accept others' descriptions of himself and who avoids writing elegant variations of previously written poems - this being anathema to 'true' self creation - seems to provide one conceptualization of what active participation in the articulation of the discourses that shape one might entail. There are, however problems with Rorty's position; specifically, he seems to adopt a highly individualistic approach. An exploration of different ideas regarding subjectivity provides a more satisfactory conceptualization of 'outside language'.

As a next major point of focus different notions of the interpersonal will be explicated in an attempt to articulate identity as process. As part of this discussion an attempt will be made to render national reconciliation concrete in terms of how human beings relate to each other. Furthermore, Arendt's (in Bernstein, 1983; 1990) ideas regarding justice will be set out and possible implications of her ideas for identity will be contemplated. Arendt's work introduces the final theme to be discussed in this chapter namely the private and the public.

### **3.1. 'Who I am': commitments and identifications**

According to Taylor (1989), the question 'who am I' is adequately answered in terms of 'where I stand'. For him identity is defined in terms of commitments and identifications. Commitments and identifications are that which we believe in and that which is important to us. We are therefore concerned with the way human beings are invested or invest themselves in objects, people, tasks, projects.

Commitments and identifications would conceivably involve both a cognitive and an emotional element in the sense that human beings would be emotionally invested in that which they are committed to and identified with. Furthermore, identity in Taylor's sense would appear to be embodied in the sense that commitments and identifications have something to do with our orientation, with our position in space. A further observation: to conceive identity as our commitments and identifications renders it as a relational phenomenon. In this sense identity is not a bounded and self-contained phenomenon. Identity as a relational phenomenon very often 'happens' outside self-awareness in the sense that we often cannot know before the

fact how and what we will be in relation to others. Thus, identity is substantially 'unconscious', not in the sense that it is hidden in the deep recesses of our being, but in the sense that 'it', to a significant degree takes form as we partake in situations. It seems apt to speak, in this connection, of 'texts of identity'; in speaking of texts it is possible to avoid a conceptualization of identity as some -"thing" inside us, a type of private, self-contained core.

### **3.2. Commitments and identifications, and the integrity of our being**

Commitments and identifications, according to Taylor (1989), provide the frameworks which we can draw on to guide our actions and live our lives. Frameworks in this sense provide structure; they provide or entail a sense of ongoingness, of continuity amidst the flux of life; they provide a stable horizon against which we might judge and justify our individual actions; they provide, or rather, they help to constitute 'texts of identity'. In this view an inability to orientate ourselves in terms of strongly qualified horizons means that we have lost the sense of integrity of our being. Radical uncertainty about oneself, about where one stands is, for Taylor a characteristic of damaged personhood. From this perspective, if human beings could not rely on such frameworks they would be lost, paralysed. Both Taylor (1989) and du Preez (1991) argue that, at least in the western world, the terror human beings experience is no longer related to their expectations of damnation and condemnation on account of being outside a framework, but that this terror stems from an absence of frameworks.

### **3.3. Identity as concept: obliterating heterogeneities**

Lyotard's (in Dews, 1987) ideas in respect of identity would seem to be in contrast to the views expounded by Taylor (1989). For Lyotard the 'ideal' identity fashioned by concepts requires that disparities be obliterated and that heterogeneities be amalgamated into a singularity. For him the articulation of difference is thus rendered impossible by the forging of identity. Identity for him connotes stuckness and fixity.

An explanation of Lyotard's (in Dews, 1987) ideas regarding concepts will help to further elucidate the problems he has with identity. In Lyotard's view concepts are instrumental, and the use of concepts necessitates the sacrifice of the moment for the future. Concepts always entail imprisonment in that the singularity of the event is subsumed under, and in a sense obliterated by, the



concept. What Lyotard seems to be after is the non-calculable and the unpredictable, 'pure' spontaneity.

### 3.4. Frameworks and the suspicion of the immediate

From Lyotard's (in Dews, 1987) viewpoint the importance being attached to frameworks by Taylor (1989) and du Preez (1991) seems to arise, at least in part, from a suspicion regarding the immediate. The suspicion of the immediate is expressed in the pressure to have the immediate validated in terms of something else, something outside itself. Thus, the immediate can never be significant, meaningful on its own terms. Lyotard's (1992) ideas regarding judgement and *sensus communis* provide a differentiated notion of the immediate. The *sensus communis* is never mediated by a concept; the manifold, the pure diversity of sense data is gathered together without the 'benefit' of a concept and consequently the *sensus communis* has nothing to do with reason or with the intellect.

Reflective thought plays a vital role in the *sensus communis*. This thought relies strongly on perceptual experiences. The input of data does not happen in accordance with already established codes in terms of which the data is read. Thus, ambiguous data is allowed as such, as ambiguous. Reflective thought is indeterminate and changing. The *sensus communis* is spontaneous activity in the sense that it happens in the absence of rules, outside the directions of the intellect and a channelling in terms of established goals. Rules for doing, for action, are formulated after the fact, for "what will have been done". Such doing may be experienced as extremely risky, but it has the potential to make good the promise of being human.

For Lyotard (1991) we are truly human when we are floundering, i.e. when we are uncertain, when we do not know. Thus the child who does not know, who hovers uncertainly outside the bounds of reason, embodies the potential of humanity. Adults persistently flee from that potential into knowing, into the containment and constraints of reason and thereby foreclose on humanity. The promise of childhood, which might be fulfilled in a world openness is thus lost out on. What Lyotard (1991) seems to be arguing is that, in trying to take control through reason, in avoiding contingency, we bring about closure, we eliminate so much that is possible.

Why should doing in the absence of goals and outside predetermined rules be seen to be risky? This notion appears to be based on the assumption that the world is inherently chaotic and that human beings are obliged to impose order on it, usually through the action of the will. If they do not do this they will be swamped by the world. Thus the idea of the human subject standing as a bounded centre of awareness over and against the world and against other subjects.

### **3.5. Commitments and identifications: foreclosing on human possibility?**

Returning to Taylor's (1989) notion of identity as our commitments and identifications, the question arises whether action in accordance with such commitments and identifications would entail the sort of foreclosing on human possibility that Lyotard is sceptical of. It might be argued that this is not necessarily the case in the sense that commitments and identifications could be sufficiently broad to allow for openness. On the other hand, if that which we believe in and value would serve as a framework in terms of which individual actions might be judged and channelled, is this not a case of pre-established rules confining our actions?

### **3.6. Judgement in the absence of criteria: an invitation to solipsism?**

Lyotard (1992) certainly acknowledges the importance of making judgements, but he sees this process as happening in the absence of criteria. This conceptualization of judgement has led to the charge that Lyotard is an advocate of rampant relativism and that his position is politically irresponsible (Eagleton, 1991). The difficulties which authors like Eagleton have with Lyotard's ideas regarding judgement and the *sensus communis* can be summarized as follows. If judgement happens without recourse to (explicit) criteria then how shall we avoid solipsism? If human beings cannot provide reasons for their actions, if they cannot even be called upon to provide such reasons then how can we even denote certain practices as being objectionable and, worse still, how can we hope to change those practices? Lyotard's notions seem to make debate, argumentation about human values impossible. Does Lyotard's (1992) assertion, that the *sensus communis* entails universality, albeit without concept really solve the problem? Are human beings simply to place their trust in the universality of the *sensus communis* and to stop trying to take charge in this domain? Or would this simply amount to fatalism and to political irresponsibility?

Beardsworth (1992) explicates how Lyotard's judgement is all but irresponsible in the sense that the philosopher, as practitioner of a 'discipline' that cannot provide an ethics, a politics or any definitive framework needs to be always critical, constantly on the look-out for cases and rules. Thus "the necessity of judgement is absolute because there is no absolute judge (necessity)" (Beardsworth, p 48). In a sense then each new situation would have to be assessed on its own terms. Furthermore, it would not be possible to apply already existent, general principles to a situation 'from the outside'. The situation itself has to inform the rules. This raises a question as to who would be involved in formulating the rules. The question is related to a further concern: even if this reply to the charge that Lyotard's position entails fatalism and political irresponsibility be adequate in respect of philosophy and philosophers then what about other domains such as politics, and can the everyday lives of human beings other than philosophers be thought of thus?

### **3.7. Controversies of affirmation**

It would appear that the question 'Who am I' and the possible answers to this are rendered particularly problematic in the context of domination and oppression. It may well be argued that those who have been the other for a dominant group need to engage in discourses which are affirmative and constructive. The discourse of black consciousness may be regarded as an example of this. Yet Fanon (1986) shows how 'the' black person, in the attempt to 'find' characteristics/qualities which would serve as proof of his unique contribution to humanity, is defeated again and again. All his attempts to escape objectification and to redeem himself end in failure while 'the' white man remains unscathed in a world defined by him. The white man's existence is 'selbstverstandlich' / taken for granted and he remains unshaken in his certitude.

Another difficulty with affirmation is that it seems inevitably to entail exclusion. Affirmation is often a process whereby a person takes shape, not on her own terms (a problematic idea) but in setting herself up against a not-I who often comes to serve as a background against which one's form can emerge.

Appiah's (1992) "In my father's house" may be regarded as an affirmation of being black in accordance with an 'own' set of terms. He insists that the large

majority of Africans living under colonial rule in Africa continued to experience the enduring powers of their own cognitive and moral traditions as these were manifested in dance, music, religion and in the funeral. His contention is that the extent of cultural invasion that was brought to bear by the colonizers on the colonized tends to be over-estimated. In his view alienation was much less common than has been assumed and the people under colonial rule maintained a substantial degree of cultural autonomy. Appiah's thesis links with Eagleton's (1991) assertion that ideologies are never monolithic or hegemonic. Those who do not benefit by the ruling ideology resist overtly or covertly and, in a sense, go on 'doing their own thing'.

Rorty (1989) may well regard the failure of Fanon's black man to affirm himself as vindication for his own view that, as long as we try to affirm, to maintain with certainty anything about ourselves, we remain trapped. Freedom, on the other hand consists in the recognition of contingency. For Rorty it is the ironist who has a possibility for escape and an ironist is someone who is radically doubtful about the terms she uses to describe herself. Since the ironist is constantly aware how frail and contingent her final vocabulary is, she is also perpetually aware of the frailty of her self.

Fanon's (1986) protagonist may be doomed because he is speaking from the position of the one who is the other for the peculiarly western identity that defines itself on the basis of exclusion of the other. Littlewood & Lipsedge (1989) explicate how discourses of identity require the other as a sort of backdrop. In this sense discourses of identity would seem to be inherently combative, and to entail antagonism. From this point of view discourses of identity seem always to necessitate the other. The assertion 'I am' seems always to damn to non-existence the not-I. The other is not simply an abstraction, but takes concrete shape as other people. If we read the struggle of Fanon's protagonist in this light, then the demise of the western self, the scattering of that identity can only be greeted with a sigh of relief. From this perspective it would appear, at least at a first glance, as though persistent efforts to assert identity have become outmoded.

Does this mean that the discourse of black consciousness is to be regarded as an unfortunate and peculiarly paradoxical adoption of an essentially western discourse by those trying to resist their status as other? Should the

fact that the black consciousness discourse, as a discourse of identity, begot so much violence serve simply as another confirmation that humanity would be better off with the demise of discourses of identity? Furthermore, how are we to think of the work of feminist authors such as Cixous (1976, in Frosh (1989, p 27) and as epitomized in the following passage

"I don't want a penis to decorate my body with. But I do desire the other for the other, whole and entire, male or female; because living means wanting everything that is, everything that lives and wanting it alive. Castration? Let others toy with it. What's a desire originating from a lack? A pretty meagre desire." (p 262)

Is it simply a somewhat romantically tinged denial of and defense against loss? Furthermore, do the many theoretical difficulties contained in this passage, for instance, that the statement reverts to a simplified articulation of womanhood in terms of biology (Flax, 1987) illustrate how one-sided and limiting discourses of affirmation tend to be? These questions may be summarized as follows: does the constitution of (a) self, of identity, necessarily entail an aggressive and destructive act or is there a place for the 'positive' construction of identity?

### **3.8. Implications of identity dissolved**

Kristeva (1993) seems to imply that there is value in such a 'positive' construction of identity when she expresses concern over the values crisis and the "fragmentation" of individuals which has led human beings to try and maintain a semblance of personality by attempting to find shelter under, and be someone in terms of, the most encompassing and monolithic common denominators possible, namely "national origins and the faith of our forebears" (p 2). In other words, human beings, instead of articulating stories/narratives other than those that are readily available and familiar, instead of engaging in the struggle, pain and risk of articulating new narratives, simply absorb, or rather, are absorbed into narratives that are ready-made. Thus, it may be argued that 'own' texts of identity have been lost.

The problematic identified by Kristeva seems to be of particular importance in the African context which has been racked by the vagaries of countless nationalisms. Kristeva regards these attempts at restoring an appearance of personality as being regressive in that they entail a withdrawal into a primal, primitive group. The discourses of father- and motherland are formative and

perpetuating of such withdrawal. They represent a concern with biology, with what is 'natural', with 'blood-ties'. That which is 'natural' need not be justified; it is outside culture and, as such, seems beyond question, beyond doubt and beyond remaking. Ironically, culture and tradition may be portrayed as if these were biology. This becomes manifest in the justification of practices and prejudices in terms of culture and tradition, with these being posited as unchanging and as being beyond question.

Returning now to the values crisis as identified by Kristeva, this may be interpreted as people no longer having anything to stand for and as no longer believing in anything. Instead the whole of life becomes one big irony. Self reflexivity and a critical consciousness may well have as a concomitant a profound inability to believe in something and to take a position for or against.

As discussed above under the heading 3.2.: *Commitments and identifications, and the integrity of our being*, Taylor (1989) regards a radical uncertainty about where one stands as an instance of damaged personhood, while Kristeva (1993) proposes that the dangerous tendency to constitute personhood in terms of ethnic group identity and nationalism derives, at least in part, from individuals being disintegrated. According to Flax (1990), a fluid and scattered self as conceptualized by postmodernists amounts to being disintegrated, and this is both terrifying and incapacitating. Not to have a sense of one's own boundaries and those of others interferes severely with effective human functioning.

If these notions of damaged personhood are accepted for the moment, then what would be involved in that sense of rootedness and affirmation of self which keeps human beings from regressing, from fleeing into the folds of the family? What would make it possible for human beings to remain in dialogue with what is strange and different? More specifically to the present project: what would make it possible for large sections of the Namibian population who have withdrawn into the safety and the pettiness of their private worlds to venture forth into the unknown, the strange, the uncomfortable? How is it possible for human beings to face the risks which are part of the confrontation with strangeness thereby avoiding the fundamentalism (where nationalism as well as the search for origins could be identified as forms of fundamentalism) which would neutralize the risk? These are also questions regarding how it might be possible to articulate a sense of rootedness and community which

avoids a prescriptiveness and restrictiveness, not only with respect to those considered to be 'one of us' but also those considered to be 'outside the fold', that is, as 'not belonging to us'.

In one sense we are here concerned with the issue of boundaries. Becoming one with the nation or the primal group entails a loss of personal boundaries while paradoxically implying the rigidification of other boundaries. As Kristeva (1993) argues, "the cult of origins" is a hate reaction in the sense that it involves, amongst other things, a setting apart from the other, from the stranger. "The cult of origins" would furthermore entail a concern with and/or a search for the ultimate basic certainty, the irreducible, that which is beyond question. That which is beyond question simply has to be accepted. Furthermore, the cult of origins evolves around the search for certain knowledge.

The return to the womb of one's primal group, often the family or the ethnic group, arises, according to Kristeva, out of a sense of having been injured, wounded, disadvantaged or deprived. Berlin (1990) points out that nationalism appears in most instances to be caused by wounds, by a form of collective humiliation. The discourse of nationalism entails, at least in part, an exaggerated assertion of one's real or imaginary virtues. These virtues would be seen to be absolute. At the same time the discourse is fuelled by resentment and hostility felt in relation to those who are successful. It seems then that the discourse of nationalism is, paradoxically, one of extreme assertion while at the same time it is one of neediness or lack. Discourses of disadvantage perpetuate inequalities. Those who articulate themselves as being victims have no existence except as the object of another's designs and cruelty. The discourse of blame is, at the same time, one of hatred, hatred of the self and others.

### **3.9. 'Human agency'**

The problematics of assertion and affirmation, and all the pitfalls related to these inform what might be referred to as 'human agency'. Within the context of the western world, human agency tends to be perceived in terms of people formulating specific goals and plans which then serve as a framework to guide their actions. Our goals and plans prevent us from straying or at least enable us to get back on track if we have been diverted. The model of human being implied in this conceptualization is of a creature that is split

between thought and action, with thinking being regarded as the driving force. It is a conceptualization of 'human nature' which has been at the basis of much research in social psychology, including the work done in respect of attitudes and motivation.

Shotter (1993a) has attempted to integrate action and thinking in developing the notion of social constructions. In trying to understand this notion it seems necessary to consciously try to avoid rendering this a cognitive entity. Our everyday social life is, according to Shotter, best understood as being only partially structured and as being, at least to some extent, open to further development. This further development consists in the shaping and reshaping of this everyday social life by those who are involved in it. Thus, while the activities which constitute our everyday social lives are the condition for our shaping and reshaping, these latter activities in a sense and within limits make these very conditions what they are. People create organized settings between themselves and these give rise to "felt tendencies" which Shotter describes as "imaginary entities". These imaginary objects not only serve to partially structure social life; they also entail an openness to further articulations. Thus the imaginary should not be regarded as specific defined entities.

Human agency may be conceptualized in terms of making choices and decisions. If human beings are unable to do so, they are likely to experience a sense of being torn, of being tossed about. In terms of this reading of human agency it may be argued that, at some point we need to close our eyes to all the possibilities of what we might do/be and 'just go on'. Relating this more directly to the issue of identity, it may be argued that the radical doubt which appears to be part of the contingency that Rorty (1989) seems to advocate, may render life not liveable.

There is however a trap in making decisions, in committing ourselves to one in a range of possibilities, and that is that we forget the openness of the situation out of which we originally made our commitment. Consequently, our decisions and commitments come to constrain us and imprison us. We may in fact become blinkered and stubborn in our 'going on'. We may become fanatic in the sense of clinging to one truth. Self-doubt becomes intolerable and any event/situation which questions the unity of the self is perceived as a threat to the self, a threat which has to be warded off at all costs (Dreyfuss,



1993). Our 'going on' may well preclude the letting go which would precipitate or be part of the ontological disorientation that we would suffer if we were to allow ourselves to see how we have become subjugated to our own accounts of ourselves. The images and models which we construct of ourselves as human beings, images and models which are also propagated by psychology, give us a sense that we are complete and, perhaps more perniciously, make us live as though we are complete.

However, as Shotter (1993a) reminds us, the image we hold of ourselves as complete, while it carries legitimacy by virtue of having been "afforded" us by our daily social lives, is only one amongst a multitude of what we might be.

### **3.10. 'Choice', willing and judgement**

That the language of choice and responsibility is in several ways repressive, despite - and because of - the claims to the contrary, has been pointed out by Foucault (in Rabinow, 1986) amongst others. Furthermore, the ordering of our actions in terms of our plans not only refers to the arranging of our actions, but also to the way in which we give orders to ourselves and subjugate ourselves. Thus, human agency conceived in this sense is suffused with the discourses of control and power. We are dealing here with a willing that is directed towards an end. It would seem that for Lyotard (in Dews, 1987) volition is part of the package of the subject as 'typically' conceived by people in the western world namely as a bounded, more or less unique and autonomous centre of awareness. Lyotard (1992) develops the notion of judgement as opposed to that of willing. Judgement is an integral part of the *sensus communis*. Judgement may be distinguished from willing in the sense that the latter is future directed and goal directed. Judgement on the other hand has no knowledge of its end. Willing would entail the evaluation of experiences in terms of a standard namely goals. Judging, on the other hand, would not involve a subordination of experiences and events to such goals, nor would actions be ordered and directed in accordance with these. Returning now to Taylor's (1989) conceptualization of identity in terms of commitments and identifications and Kristeva's (1993) championing of (personal) values, it would seem that these two authors advocate that very willing which Lyotard (1992) is critical of. This issue will be returned to at the end of this chapter under the heading 3.39.: *Concluding comments*.

### 3.11. When 'the' past becomes imprisoning

The previous discussion of identity in terms of commitments and identifications has touched on the formulation of goals and plans, that is, on future orientation. At least since the advent of psychoanalysis 'the past' has figured prominently in discourses of identity. Discourses of the past and of rootedness are closely intertwined; Lasch (1985) maintains that rootless men and women take no more interest in the past than they do in the future. The 'search for' or affirmation of roots often entails an exploration of 'the past'. This can very easily become a morbid pre-occupation with the past where the journey in the past is then no longer capable of nourishing an open future, but becomes a stuckness. This preoccupation often is articulated in discourses of blame where the subject continues to regard herself as being the victim of the past.

One way in which the past might become a prison for human beings consists in the double move of constantly reminding them how the past has made their present thinking and acting possible and to (often very subtly) impress on them that, as a consequence, they owe allegiance to that past which has made them. Thus the rejection of that past becomes, not only a sign of disloyalty, but is painted as a dangerous game which could lead to the loss of that which has made the present questioning, the present identity possible. Benhabib's (1992) makes a charge against postmodernists which may be read in this light. Specifically she maintains that the diversity, heterogeneity and eccentricity that postmodernists so value is made possible by the very norms of "the autonomy of the subject" and "the rationality of democratic procedures", which they readily reject, may be read in this light (1992, p 16).

In the attempt to justify a present stance or to legitimate our arguments, human beings (must) draw on what has been (said). We search for examples in the past in order to bolster present positions. However, these attempts may come to restrict and to curtail us. The joy of discovery, the excitement of venturing into new territory can be destroyed by the continuous concern with legitimation, with finding corroborative evidence, past examples. In this way a harking back to the past can readily become a holding back from the future.

The double move as described above, whereby human beings can become imprisoned in the past is parasitic on, and induces, fear. In response to this 'respect your past' argument the following question may be raised, namely

why human beings should not abandon those ladders by means of which they have reached a (temporary) destination?

When 'the past' is pictured in terms of a 'search' metaphor, the concern with the past readily becomes a quest for 'origins'. Nationalist language tends to be saturated with such metaphors. Such a quest for origins is often a search for security and for confirmation. The quest becomes a search for a beginning point, for how 'it' all started. It is often the search for the answer that will end all further questions, the still point (the dead point?). It is the final answer beyond which no further questions are permitted. When asked about those roots we can only say: "It has always been like that". However, these 'origins' may in fact be quite arbitrary and we may be driven back ad infinitum in asking about our 'roots'.

### **3.12. Multiple pasts as a way to transcend 'the' past**

The ideal would be for those who are concerned with the past to have that concern become the means for transcending the past. Thus, according to Appiah (1992), the decolonized mind neither despises nor ignores the past. Rather the decolonized mind has learnt to assimilate and to transcend the past. This can only be possible if 'the' past can be rendered as multiple pasts; if 'the' past is no longer articulated as being definitive.

If the past can and should be rendered as multiple pasts, does this mean that any account will do? Are some accounts better than others and how could this be decided? Would accounts be better because they are more true? Relating this to personal/individual (stories of) the pasts, will any story do and are there no limitations to the stories we might tell? These questions would be answered in the affirmative if human lives were to be regarded as texts and if it were accepted that there are no lives apart from the endless play of language.

### **3.13. Not any account (of 'the' past) will do**

What has been articulated above is one of the major issues in psychoanalysis namely whether what is recovered in the process of analysis is what empirically 'really' happened or whether it is a construction (Flax 1990; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). The question, whether that which is narrated empirically, 'really' happened is probably not a good question to ask, at least not if one is a psychologist. There are better questions to be

formulated, for instance, about the effects of a narration. Rosenwald & Ochberg help to elucidate this matter. They point out that new narratives are not necessarily empowering. Wiersma (1992, p 195) gives some clues as to what an empowering narrative might involve: she quotes Warren (1962, 156) who maintains: "If fiction begins in daydream, if it springs from the cramp of the world, if it relieves us from the burden of being ourselves, it ends, if it is good fiction, and we are good readers, by returning us to the world and to ourselves." This returning us to the world entails, amongst other things, taking into consideration the political and social realities in which one's story unfolds. The attempt to force a new narrative without any regard being had for these realities may turn out not to be empowering.

If human beings could simply tell the past in whichever way they pleased, to suit their present purposes, this would render nonsensical demands for justice made by those people whose life stories are saturated with suffering and whose present struggles arise from, and make sense in terms of the wounds of the past.

Furthermore, as Rorty (1989) reminds us, even if we reject the notion that languages are media of representation and expression, we cannot escape the fact that languages are still media for communicating, for relating ourselves to other human beings. In other words, even if we reject a realist account according to which it is the truth of a story, its adherence to empirical facts which matters, then we are still faced with the 'truism' that our social embeddedness affords certain stories and not others. It should be noted here that this is not the same as saying that each personal story is simply a matter of culture "speak[ing] itself" (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p 7).

The extent to which attempts at obliterating 'the past' can be destructive has been explicated by Rittenberg & Shaw (1991) who explore fantasies of self-creation contained in the literature and in the lives of their clients. In recreating themselves, the literary characters focused on by Rittenberg & Shaw annihilate their pasts. For instance, Pirandello, an Italian playwright and novelist, creates a character who, through a strange confluence of events manages to recreate himself as Mattia Pascal because his alias, Adriano Meiss, has been declared dead, a case of mistaken identity. As Mattia Pascal, Adriano Meiss is initially exuberant as he realizes that he has been rid of the burden of the past, that he is free now of all ties and

obligations. However, his being cut off from the past - which is necessitated by his desire to live as a newly invented man - leads to profound alienation from the world of relationships and finally to mental collapse.

Thus, the failure to integrate the past leads inevitably to emotional impoverishment, to an alienation so profound that the protagonists are unable even to survive, let alone live satisfying lives.

### **3.14. 'Emancipation': an overview**

As indicated above, the obliteration or, less radically, the retelling of the past may be experienced as liberating or may be regarded as an aspect of liberation. The elucidation of the concept of emancipation is of significance in a project that is concerned with identity within the context of a country that has only recently gained independence. As indicated in the introduction, such gaining of independence may be constituted in terms of discourses of liberation. In the pilot study that was conducted for this project independence was situated in terms of a number of discourses, including that of liberation, that is, political and social liberation from oppression and from want, and personal liberation in the sense of renewal and opening up. Thus, liberation may be conceived as gaining access to a wider range of choices and opportunities, as well as resources. Closely related to this is the conceptualization of emancipation in terms of having restrictions on one's doing and thinking removed. With specific reference to identity, the shattering of specifications and demarcations may be regarded as liberating.

At least two questions may be raised in this regard. Firstly, it may be asked how emancipation is possible and what emancipation would entail. Secondly, the extent to which emancipation is a question of increasing awareness must be addressed. This latter issue has already been touched on in the foregoing attempt to elucidate the connections between knowledge and processes of societal and self transformation. Both the questions posed above will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

### **3.15. 'Self-awareness', 'ideology critique', and 'emancipation'**

'Emancipation' may be conceptualized in terms 'ideology critique' and 'self awareness'.

Self awareness would seem to be an important goal of psychoanalysis as developed by Freud. Such self awareness would have liberatory effects in terms of Freud's project (Flax, 1990). The self awareness for which psychoanalysis strives is not so much a matter of becoming conscious of a more or less stable, self-contained core; it is more a matter of becoming conscious of how we are with others. Furthermore, to be self aware must be distinguished from knowing oneself; the latter seems to entail having knowledge of one's characteristics and attributes. If the question 'who am I' were to be answered by citing such self knowledge, then identity would assume a thing-like quality. Self awareness, on the other hand, would seem to be more process-like, more momentary and not simply pertaining to a bounded, self-contained entity.

'Self awareness' is used here in the same sense as "reflexivity" is employed by Elliott & Frosh (1995). They maintain that the reflexivity which is integral to psychoanalysis involves an "infinite regress". In other words, the object of analysis can never be encompassed completely. Similarly with respect to self awareness, the object of awareness must always remain partly opaque, hidden, out of sight. Self awareness, like reflexivity is relentlessly deconstructive; in other words, there is no end point to be reached and there is no finality.

Self awareness in this sense involves the 're-cognition' of disparities and contradictions and as such would disallow the fashioning of an 'ideal' identity by concepts, that which Lyotard (in Dews, 1987) is so critical of (see 3.3.: *Identity as concept: obliterating heterogeneities*).

Increasing awareness may be thought of in terms of what Eagleton (1991) and Billig and Simons (1994) have referred to as ideology critique. What is ideology critique? To answer this question it is necessary to elucidate the concept 'ideology'. According to Thompson (1984, p 4), the study of ideology involves the investigation into "the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination." In other words we would be engaging in ideology critique when analysing the ways in which the power of dominant social groups is rendered justifiable.

How is ideology critique related to increasing self awareness? In trying to address this question it is important to keep in mind that domination is not

best thought of in terms of restrictions being imposed from 'outside' on individual human beings. Rather, social control is exercised through the medium of our very 'private' self understandings. The self understandings which we regard as our 'very own', which we value and want to hold on to serve as controls.

This is why Eagleton (1991) maintains that the study of ideology includes, amongst other things, an investigation into how people invest in their own misery. Human beings are 'best' oppressed in ways which also bring them some gains. Thus the process of emancipation would require of people to free themselves from themselves. It might be argued that self awareness would play a crucial part in such practices of liberation. Self-awareness in this sense has little to do with insight into some individual, private core; rather, it has to do with insight into how one is constituted in accordance with available cultural narratives as these are effected in and through discourses.

Increasing awareness in the sense of self reflection, standing back from one's own embeddedness - socially, historically and interpersonally - and looking at this embeddedness from a different vantage point, may be regarded as liberating in the sense that it involves extricating oneself from being embroiled. This would not necessarily entail a radical consideration, from a 'neutral' vantage point, but may (also) involve the distancing that is part of humour and/or irony.

### **3.16. Controversies of self awareness**

However, the role of self awareness in emancipation is controversial. Any discussion of self awareness must touch on the problematics of "subjectification" as elucidated by Foucault (in Rabinow, 1986). In these processes of subjectification, the self becomes an object to be worked on. This involves assessment of oneself by oneself, which entails constant vigilance and self monitoring. In other words, human beings set standards for themselves and then constantly monitor their own behaviour and performance in accordance with these standards, keeping their own behaviour within a pre-specified range. Thus the modern self which is constructed as having freed itself from the constraints of tradition (Fromm, 1991) is in fact imprisoned by its own demands for perfection.

Can subjectification be equated with self awareness? Not necessarily, because self awareness need not include assessment; it need not amount to self-monitoring.

Another difficulty which arises in respect of self awareness and emancipation is the following: if our private self understandings are so thoroughly shaped in accordance with culturally available narratives which are inevitably repressive then how is it possible to extricate ourselves from these in a process of becoming self aware? This issue will be taken up again in later sections, specifically 3.19.: *Enfoldedness and origination: not necessarily excluding each other*, 3.20.: *'Outside' language* and 3.21.: *Refashioning of discourses and others*.

### **3.17. Self awareness in the wake of postmodernism**

The project of self awareness is problematized by postmodernism. Freud initiated the decentering of the subject by displacing the centre from the conscious to the unconscious. Lacan, in continuing Freud's project made the subject dependent on the Other (Marta, 1987). For Lacan "the subject is subject to language" (Marta, p 53) and language is necessarily Other. Furthermore, awareness of self is always mediated; it is not something we develop autonomously, but it is given to us from the outside. What is autonomous is language. Thus, human beings do not use language to express themselves but language "fits the subject to itself" (Smith & Kerrigan, 1983, p 10). We are spoken by language. In these terms the self, rather than being the originator of meaning is in fact enmeshed in meaning (Freeman, 1993). For Lacan (Marta, 1987) not even the unconscious - as desire - provides a way out of entrapment. This is because the unconscious is language and our very desire is structured through language.

Is there no possibility for standing at a remove from language? In other words, is human being nothing outside the "time-bound local forms that culture offers it?" (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p 7). How might these forms change, in other words, how can cultural and social transformation happen? What is the place of 'the individual' in such change? These are central questions in the context of the present project which is situated in a country that has gained its independence recently, and as such is faced with the challenges of change and transformation.



### 3.18. 'Speaking differently' and irony: a radicalization of individualism?

Rorty's thoughts regarding self-creation provide some ideas as to how active participation in and reformulation of the narratives in terms of which people are constituted might be conceptualized. He regards the most important instrument of cultural change as being the capacity to 'speak differently'. This entails the creation of increasingly 'useful' metaphors. However, this does not mean that there are any definite standards against which the usefulness might be judged. 'Speaking differently' must be further elucidated: Rorty (1989, p 28) cites Nietzsche, according to whom failure as a human being would consist in an acceptance of other people's descriptions of oneself and in "writ[ing] ... elegant variations of previously written poems". The "strong poet", on the other hand is one who invents new metaphors, metaphors in terms of which he also re-invents himself. It may be argued that such a person is actively engaged in transforming available cultural narratives which also give form to him. Rorty does however concede that wholly Nietzschean lives, that is, lives unadulterated by reaction and consisting only of action are not possible. Progress for the community and the individual depends, both on the use of a new vocabulary and on the advancement of arguments from premises articulated in old words.

Human beings are 'successful', not only in so far as they can avoid being described by someone else, but also in so far as they can remain radically doubtful about the terms they use to describe themselves. Thus, Rorty seems to regard the 'ideal' human being as an ironist who, being constantly aware of how frail and contingent her final vocabulary is, is also perpetually aware of the frailty of her self. Furthermore, freedom is possible only if human beings recognize contingency, that is, if they acknowledge that nothing is definitive or secure.

Even though Rorty regards the language of self creation as being totally private, he also argues that a person who is indecisive about his own final vocabulary and his own moral identity is forced to keep conversing with others in order to be able to live with those doubts and to ensure that the collection of desires and beliefs remain coherent enough to enable action. Thus, even though Rorty casts the 'ideal' person in a highly individualistic mold, this same person seems to require others to keep going. However, these others seem to serve as a type of supporting frame for essentially autistic creative being. There seem to be many parallels between Rorty's

ironist and the post-modernist scattered self. Significantly this scattered self entails being capable of powerful, unique articulation.

Rorty's assertion, that the vocabulary of self creation is necessarily private and not suited to argument, and his positing of the 'strong poet' as an ideal has prompted authors like Fraser (1990, p 314) to accuse him of rendering legitimate cultural politics impossible in a universe which only makes room for "Oedipal revolts of genius sons against genius fathers". While it may be argued that Rorty (1989) does make an attempt to democratize self-creation by insisting that each of us has access to the unconscious which, in a sense is the storehouse of creativity, his idealization of Humbert, the character in Nabokov's *Lolita* seems to negate this possibility. More specifically, Rorty argues that Humbert's immense capacity for creativity inevitably goes hand in hand with his being insensitive to the plight of others. "Non-obsessed poets", those who have an ear for the fantasies of others, are always second rate. Putting this in more general terms, he maintains that the search for autonomy, which is also the pursuit for "self-creation", is altogether incompatible with feelings of solidarity.

### **3.19. Enfoldedness and origination: not necessarily excluding each other**

In contrast to Rorty's individualistic conceptualization of origination, authors like Freeman (1993) and Shotter (1993b) would argue that enfoldedness does not preclude origination. According to Freeman, human beings must necessarily immerse themselves in what has gone before and in that which is around them in order to go beyond and to originate. Shotter (1993b) maintains that the sensitivity to the barriers which constrain us and the opportunities accorded us by our circumstances amounts to a particular type of knowledge. It is a way of knowing which has, at least in part, been formulated by Gadamer (Bernstein, 1983). This knowing entails the transformation of those involved in the process of knowing and is a "dialogical encounter with what is at once alien to us, makes a claim upon us and has an affinity with what we are..." (Bernstein, pp 128-129). Since this knowledge comes into being in the encounter with the other, it entails an ongoing process which is never complete, but remains always open. This particular form of knowing has relevance only in particular concrete situations, that is, it is local, situational knowledge (Shotter, 1993b; Smith,

1993). This knowledge is by no means permanent, nor can we necessarily draw on it in different contexts or situations, although we might.

The notion that human beings need to immerse themselves in what has gone before them and what is around them so as to be able to originate, entails a conceptualization of history and of the social as equipping us with resources. Thus these are no longer regarded either as impediments or enablements in and of themselves. In a sense our history and institutions provide the clay from which newness may be fashioned. That which human beings are embedded in and constrained by simultaneously provides a ladder with which human beings can escape their embeddedness. The tendency to conceptualize the historical and the social as impediments or enablements is a 'hangover' from the enlightenment framework in terms of which the human subject stands apart from and opposed to the other and the world.

### **3.20. 'Outside' language**

If the human subject does not stand apart from and opposed to the other and to the world could the whole lot not simply be collapsed into one? Is there any value at all in talking about 'individual' and 'society', 'psychology' and 'sociology' or should we stop differentiating in these ways? Conversely, if these tensions are dissolved, are we not left with sameness, with an undifferentiated mass? In trying to address these questions it is helpful to draw on a conceptualization of subjectivity as developed by Rosenwald & Ochberg (1992). They argue that subjectivity is not something prior to and apart from socialization. Available discourses do invite certain perceptions of ourselves and afford certain narratives. Nevertheless, there is a tension between what they refer to as "individual desire" and "social adaptation" (1992, p 7). The overlap between "individual desire" and the cultural frameworks provided is never complete. The coherent and integrated life stories we tell sometimes show inconsistencies and paradoxes, and at times we fall silent. This means that there are stories other than the "official" ones to be told. What Rosenwald & Ochberg seem to be arguing for is to maintain a tension between language and 'world', and between subjectivity and culturally offered narrations. This is different to positing a dichotomy. The tension can be generative, it can make for renewal.

That which human beings are apart from their enfoldedness in language, from those molds provided by culture has, according to Craig (1994), been

variously articulated as our "inwardness". She reminds us furthermore that language is not self-sufficient, that it does not authorize itself.

Shotter (1993b, p 41), too sheds light on the issue of authorization in pointing out that human beings are capable of rendering available ways of speaking their own so that the inter-individual world is given an intonation "that is expressive of one's own very being".

Smith (1993) maintains that there is an actual subject who comes before the subject constituted in and by the text. She argues that the focus on the textual simply ignores the subject as she is active as reader or writer. It is precisely this possibility of an active subject who can rely on her experience to develop a language in terms of which she might identify herself - a language other than the dominant discourse - which opens possibilities for emancipation. The retrieval of lived experience as articulated by Smith (1993) would be predicated on the rejection of the idea of the unitary self: "... the liberation of experience can seem to require that we step outside the circle of the single, unitary identity, and that we open ourselves to the flux which moves beyond the scope of control [of disengaged reason] or [Romanticist] integration of self with nature" (Taylor, 1989, p 462).

### **3.21. Refashioning of discourses and 'others'**

Active involvement in the refashioning of discourses would seem to require engagement with the other whose differentness shocks us into moments of awareness at which moments our sense of self is shaken and we experience the anguish that is associated with difference. It is in the presence of the other that we can become conscious of the narratives in terms of which we have been constituting ourselves. In this sense self-reflexivity becomes a process, not of the Cartesian subject looking in on herself, but becomes a process between people.

### **3.22. The interpersonal: an overview**

An attempt to grapple with the concept and processes of identity is likely to benefit from an analysis of the interpersonal. Interpersonal relationships, communication; these concepts have been problematized by postmodernist writings. At times the problematization has consisted not so much in the active engagement with these concepts, but in ignoring them. For instance, the creative activity of Rorty's "strong poet" seems to exclude decency and

kindness (see 3.18.: *'Speaking differently' and irony: a radicalization of individualism?*). Thus, Rorty's (1989) articulation of the "strong poet" comes to sound like the typical 'male narrative' identified by Gergen (1992). Emotional interdependency is largely absent from these narratives. From a postmodernist perspective the notion of interpersonal relationships is suspect because it seems to imply the possibility of exchange, of communication between people as intending creatures who create meaning when they talk to one another and who can make themselves understood.

In defense of the above-mentioned failure to grapple with the interpersonal, it may be noted that the 'helping', 'caring' and 'personal growth' industry has rendered concepts such as care, interpersonal relating, communication and feelings so banal that it may seem wise to relegate these issues like worn-out clothes to the domain of the mercifully forgotten.

This discussion of interpersonal relating will be developed by exploring the tension between two extremes namely autism, cut-offness and narcissism on the one hand, and involvement, care, nurturance on the other. This is also one of the major sources of tension between traditional psychoanalysis and object relations theory, and is to a large extent expressed in different notions of desire.

To simplify: from the perspective of traditional psychoanalysis, object relations theorists, because they turn desire into a social phenomenon, 'tame' that desire and bring it within the domain of human understanding. Thus, they make a move which seems typical of enlightenment rationality (Foucault, 1971); they allow nothing to be strange, different. From the object relations theorists' point of view a rendering of desire as altogether unsocial leads inexorably to a picture of human nature which excludes the possibility of human relationships as something other than the means for the satisfaction of narcissistic needs. The ensuing discussion will often circle around different constructions of 'the' therapeutic relationship and issues pertaining to it. This is because there is an interesting tension in 'the' therapeutic relationship: 'it' mirrors other sorts of relationship and yet differs profoundly, and should - arguably - differ profoundly for it to be the vehicle of change and transformation in interpersonal relations and texts of identity.

### 3.23. The interpersonal in psychoanalysis

This explication of different notions of interpersonal relatedness will begin with psychoanalytic schools. Flax (1990) shows how in Freud - as in Lacan - the impossibility of human relatedness stems from the denial that there could be any real relationship between the m/other and the infant. In view of the fact that the infant is governed by drives and seeks only for the satisfaction of these drives, the infant can never relate to the primary care-giver as a relatively autonomous other person, but only as the vehicle for the fulfilment of own needs. Thus, the infant cannot grasp anything outside its own needs. Humans are not inherently social in the sense that they cannot experience another person as an independently existing self. This means, as Flax points out, that any investment of energy in another person happens solely for narcissistic purposes.

Furthermore, human beings are constantly manoeuvring one another in accordance with the patterns established in childhood in relation to the parents, that is, in accordance with the ways in which desire and power came to intersect during childhood (du Preez, 1991). Outside the psychoanalytic process human beings simply repeat the scripts they have learnt during the first six years of their lives. There is no possibility for change or for renewal by way of an exchange with others. It is as though we are completely insulated in our own worlds, as if we are unable to hear an other at all. Supposedly, if the other's fixations would make it impossible for us to perpetuate the past, we would leave the association.

From this point of view the possibility of change depends to a large extent on the capacity of the psychoanalyst not to be sucked into the transference, that is, non-involvement is crucial for the success of the therapeutic relationship. This emotional detachment advocated by Freud would seem to echo the enlightenment requirement of objective observer.

As mentioned above, in the classical psychoanalytic tradition desire is a-social, strange. Human relatedness is constituted by the intersection of wayward desire and power. To relate to other human beings means, on the one hand, to gratify own needs. On the other hand it entails submission. As a social being a human being is always a castrated being. To be related to another human being is, on the one hand, a completely narcissistic affair and, on the other, a process whereby one is destroyed. Any vitality in human

relationships seems to stem from the solitary play of narcissistic desire. Human relatedness as in compassion, nurturance, caring are invariably forms of subjugation.

### **3.24. The interpersonal and the humanistic schools**

In exploring the notions of care, nurturance and involvement, the focus will initially be on the humanistic school. Much of humanistic discourse in respect of interpersonal relatedness is based on a particular conception of human beings as unique, self-contained, delimited centres of experiences, emotions and abilities. The concepts of authenticity, warmth and empathy, which constitute the 'stuff' of human relationships, embody these notions.

Rogers' unconditional positive regard as explicated by authors such as Truax & Carkhuff (1967) and Ivey, Ivey & Simek-Morgan (1993) is used as a synonym for warmth and it entails being respectful of the other person. This would encompass letting the other be and not interfering in his/her life even if that which the other does is deemed to be unacceptable or objectionable. Thus, the other is recognized as a separate entity in his/her own right. There is a tension here between involvement and non-involvement. Warmth may be compared to the notion of holding, which may be contrasted with throwing out/away on the one hand and with smothering on the other.

Empathy entails a similar tension in the sense that it is neither sympathy which would amount to melting into one with the other, nor is it akin to emotional disengagement. The whole idea of empathy revolves around a conceptualization of human beings as emotive creatures though not exclusively so. Feelings 'belong' to individual persons who, in a sense, carry these along with themselves. Furthermore, these deep feelings are constitutive of the core of human beings; the 'truth' about human beings is revealed in their feelings. Just as, from the psychoanalytic viewpoint people may be unaware of the deeper meaning of their saying and doing, so from the humanistic perspective people may be ignorant of their 'real' feelings although it is possible for the expert to hear these.

Finally, the concept of authenticity is based on the idea that there is a genuine person. Thus, the ideal of interpersonal honesty is created and it consists in refraining from fooling oneself and others about what one

'actually' is and where one is at, especially in terms of feelings. Furthermore, there is an assumption of unmediated, straight-forward relating.

### 3.25. The interpersonal and postmodernism

Postmodernist writing has brought these notions as outlined above into considerable disrepute. Postmodern conceptualizations of interpersonal relating are in some ways similar to the Freudian notion and very far removed from the humanistic conceptualization. Freud's ideas are based on the recognition that any notion of self/person as 'uncontaminated' by social inscriptions is an illusion. For him people are the products, not of the choices they make - as the humanists would have it - but of the nature of the compromises made between desire and social demands during childhood, by the form the intersection of desire and power took during those fateful initial six years. There would seem to be a parallel between this conceptualization and the postmodern perspective in terms of which human beings are spoken by any number of discourses.

The decentering of the subject as initiated by Freud has been driven to a head by Lacan (Marta, 1987), and Lacan is thoroughly postmodern in this sense. His ideas regarding subjectivity engender a conceptualization of human relationships which is the very antithesis of a humanistic notion of interpersonal relating as couched in the language of authenticity, congruency and personal depths. In Lacan there are no selves which could relate (Flax, 1990). This absence of selves is elucidated by Smith & Kerrigan (1983) who point out that for Lacan the 'me' and, at a later stage, the 'I' are by no means autonomous, but are in a sense second-hand in that they are conferred by the parents.

There is another sense in which the 'me' and the 'I' are certainly not autonomous: although language is necessary for the psychological well-being of the subject, it is arbitrary; that is, the relationship between signifier and signified is by no means clear and direct. The signifier never corresponds to the signified and never 'grasps' it. Thus there is no relatively autonomous subject using language to express herself; rather, language "fits the subject to itself" (Smith & Kerrigan, p 10).

The absence of selves in Lacan's theory serves to undermine the possibilities for human relatedness. The possibilities for human relatedness are further



undermined because, as Flax (1990, p 91) argues, Lacan develops narcissism into "an ontological .... theory of human nature". A failure by the other to anticipate the needs of the infant in advance and to respond to them immediately will lead to a crisis in self esteem and to narcissistic perfection being undermined. To have to ask another person to help fulfil one's needs shatters the integrity of perfect self-containment. Thus, there is no room for reciprocity in this theory.

### **3.26. Limitations of the humanistic and psychoanalytic conceptualizations of the interpersonal**

It would seem that both the humanistic school and the Lacanean psychoanalytic approach are entrapped in notions of a Cartesian subject, but in very different ways. In the humanistic tradition the Cartesian subject is articulated in terms of the autonomous, independent, choosing subject. Lacan's subject is, arguably, Cartesian in the sense of being disembodied and closed in on itself.

Having articulated the severance of human beings from each other and having pandered to highly individualistic notions of personhood, and of subjectivity as the inner-most being of individuals, the humanists develop idealized and impoverished conceptualizations of human relatedness which, amongst others, fail in accounting for power. In the process they draw on and develop notions of interpersonal relatedness which come perilously close to the process of confession: 'tell me what you really feel'. Furthermore, the very notion of a bounded, separate creature, a container of feelings seems to necessitate a rigidification of human being as epitomized in the notion of congruence, of who one 'genuinely' is (and it is not clear that the positing of self actualization as an essentially open process solves this dilemma).

Lacan perpetuates "the myth of a solipsistic disembodied self" (Flax, 1990, p 107) and in this sense seems unable to escape the Cartesian legacy.

While wanting to argue against a psychoanalytic conceptualization of human relatedness as outlined above, that is, as the gratification of narcissistic desire on the one hand and as subjugation on the other, the value of this conceptualization is also acknowledged. Specifically, traditional psychoanalytic conceptualizations articulate the extent to which human relatedness can be entrapping. 'Caring' can serve as an example: it seems almost inevitable that those who take care are as entrapped as those who are

being taken care of. The argument here is that the resignation to the inevitability of entrapment in all forms of human relatedness is not only unnecessary, it is also a cop-out, particularly when it takes the form of a refusal to engage.

### **3.27. The interpersonal in terms of Gadamer's 'understanding' and 'dialogue'**

Here it will be argued that it is indeed possible for human beings to relate to others as if they are other people, that it is possible for human beings to recognize other human beings as separate beings. Furthermore, the contention is that this does not necessitate an adoption of a conceptualization of human beings as bounded, discrete entities which are self-contained. In developing this argument two important traditions of thought will be drawn on, namely that of object relations theory and the work of Gadamer, specifically his notions of understanding and dialogue.

Gadamer (in Bernstein, 1983) maintains that dialogue and play are structurally related. The nature and the direction of the dialogue is not determined by the will of each individual person involved in the dialogue. Rather, the participants are carried along by the dialogue as people get carried away by a game. "The law of the subject matter [die Sache]" (p 122) makes possible statement and counterstatement. The notion of the subject as participant in the dialogue conceived as play is very far removed from a conceptualization of a Cartesian subject trying to grasp the nature of, or exerting will in relation to, a separate object. To think in terms of the attitudes of subjects in relation to what is objective, "out there" is to miss Gadamer's point.

Shotter's (1993a) work may serve to further elucidate this sense of the subject as constituted in and through the dialogue. He argues for a special kind of human action/activity which, rather than being intended by an agent, arises out of the circumstances. Thus, the activity is called forth by the context and yet this is not a matter of fate. Shotter's explication of this form of activity appears to allow for an escape from the freedom-determinism dichotomy. He posits a conceptualization of human agency which, while avoiding wilfulness, nevertheless takes account of the directed 'nature' of human action.

The conceptualization of subjectivity as explicated above allows for a perception of understanding, not as a process whereby the subjective intentions of agents are grasped, but as the process of meaning making. Thus, understanding in an interpersonal context would not be the process whereby one person climbs into the shoes of another to glimpse the inner experience of the other person. To grasp the nature of understanding as set out by Gadamer, it will be necessary to clarify a number of other concepts including 'horizons' and 'prejudices'.

For Gadamer our ability to experience is contingent on prejudices. Prejudices are not inevitably erroneous and unjustified, but rather make it possible for that which we encounter to say something to us. What prejudices are can be clarified by unraveling the idea of 'horizons'. According to Gadamer (in Bernstein, 1983, p 143), "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point." This means that our possibility of vision is limited in accordance with the standpoint we take. However, a horizon is also essentially open and fluid. In view of the fact that we are always ontologically grounded in our own horizon, it would not be possible to escape our own standpoint and to leap into another's standpoint. To put this in other words: we always approach another horizon 'full' of prejudices. In fact, this is the condition for our being able to understand at all.

It is possible for human beings to test their prejudices in the dialogical encounter. Whereas Gadamer conceives this encounter as taking place with texts, works of art and with what becomes available to us as tradition, the contention here is that the encounter could also take place with other human beings. As we meet with that which "is at once alien to us, makes a claim upon us, and has an affinity with what we are..." (Bernstein, p 128-129) we can subject our prejudices to scrutiny. What this process might entail can be elucidated by once more considering Gadamer's conceptualization of understanding. While it is acknowledged that understanding demands effort and imagination, it does not amount to an "activity of the subject" (Bernstein, p 137), but involves becoming open to that which we are trying to comprehend. Thus, understanding seems to involve a paradoxical process: even as we are required to let "the things themselves" "speak to us", this cannot be achieved by pushing aside our prejudices, by bracketing these

(p 138). Transformation is made possible in the dialogical encounter because it involves a thorough examination of our prejudices.

From the above explication it is clear that for Gadamer human beings are not 'by nature' self-contained solipsists. What is most characteristic about human being-in-the-world is that we are dialogical creatures.

This dialogical 'nature' can be further elucidated by an explication of the concept 'praxis'. According to Gadamer (1976), praxis is not a matter of simply putting individual plans into action, of devising means, any means, to arrive at an end. Rather, the means themselves inform and transform the end. Furthermore, praxis involves acting in concert with others ("man ... hat es miteinander zu tun", p 70), and shared concerns ("Angelegenheiten") are shaped and intended ("bestimmt") through one's actions. Presumably, such praxis would be regarded by Gadamer as preferable to the sort of 'caring' elucidated earlier on, in which both the 'carer' and the 'cared for' are entrapped.

One difficulty with Gadamer's explication of dialogue is that it assumes the equality of those involved in the dialogue and fails to address issues of power. He does not address the characteristics of contemporary society which restrict and distort dialogue. Furthermore, he does not pay attention to the way power is ingrained into our very fibres, distorting the ways in which we might encounter that which is at once alien and makes a claim on us.

### **3.28. The interpersonal in terms of Gadamer's 'understanding' and 'dialogue', and texts of identity**

How is the previous exposition of the interpersonal related to the major concern of this chapter, namely texts of identity? Earlier in this chapter, under the heading 3.1.: *'Who am I' : commitments and identifications* it was pointed out that, to conceive identity as our commitments and identifications renders it as a relational phenomenon. Furthermore, it was stated that identity to a significant degree takes form as we partake in situations. Gadamer's work allows for an elaboration of these ideas. Identity as commitments and identifications can be thought of in terms of Gadamer's conceptualization of the dialogue. The nature and direction of the dialogue are not determined by the will of each individual person involved. Similarly, it is not as though a person, as a self-contained, separate entity is committed to

and identified with another separate, self-contained entity. In the dialogue it is not a matter of already formed entities standing opposite each other and exerting their will in relation to one another. Similarly, in identity as commitments and identifications it is not as though the subject as an already formed entity imposes preconceived commitments and identifications on the world as one would impose Christmas cookie moulds on the passive dough. Rather, identity as commitments and identifications takes form and transforms as we act (as in praxis).

Before developing an explication of human relationality in terms of object relations theory, Gadamer's work, as well as that of Arendt (1990; in Bernstein, 1983) will be used as a departure point for discussing some aspects of, or metaphors for, human relationality which are particularly pertinent in the post-independence Namibian context. One such aspect or metaphor is 'reconciliation' which will be elucidated by drawing on concepts such as 'judging', 'action', 'plurality' and 'fusion of horizons'. Whether and how reconciliation is a private or public phenomenon will also be debated.

### **3.29. Reconciliation, and the private and public spheres: an overview.**

In the introductory chapter it was noted that what seems to be required in post-independence Namibia are articulations of human relationality; this would appear to be important in a context where for many years groups of people have been separated from one another on the basis of race and ethnicity and where such separations were made law. In an effort to overcome these divisions the post-independence government has advocated a policy of national reconciliation. There seems to be a need to render national reconciliation concrete or specific, and one way to so is to conceptualize human relationality. Gadamer's ideas as elucidated above provide such a conceptualization. One author whose work is closely related to that of Gadamer is Arendt (1990). Arendt's articulations of 'judging', 'action' and 'plurality' would seem to provide fruitful avenues for conceptualizing reconciliation. Furthermore, her thoughts on the private and the public, especially when juxtaposed with Rorty's (1989) ideas regarding the private and the public, and transformation can help to elucidate an important issue raised in the introductory chapter. There it was stated that one motivation for initiating the present project was the author's perception that Namibia seems (also) to be characterized by the progressive withdrawal

of people into ever smaller private spheres and that this would seem to have an impoverishing influence on people.

In what follows Bernstein's (1983) elucidations of Arendt's ideas in respect of 'judging', 'opinions', 'action' and 'plurality' will be outlined and an attempt will be made to show how these ideas may be relevant in post-independence Namibia with specific reference to national reconciliation. This will include an elucidation of the shortcomings of Arendt's ideas with regard to the Namibian context. Subsequently the relationship between justice and creativity as conceptualized by Rorty (1989) will be explicated. Finally, the possible problematics of the private sphere will be discussed.

### **3.30. 'Action', 'opinion', 'judging', 'freedom': possibilities for conceptualizing reconciliation.**

What is perhaps most salient about 'action', 'opinion', 'judging' and 'freedom' as articulated by Arendt (in Bernstein, 1983) is the extent to which all of these are public, intersubjective processes and/or phenomena. Arendt maintains that action always provides answers to the question "Who are you?". Already in this sense action is intersubjective. Action, which is always and necessarily accompanied by speech, needs a public space in between persons. What is 'action'? To begin with action is differentiated from two other categories of human activity namely labour and work. The basis for labour is biological namely the need to support and to reproduce life. To work is to fabricate products and artificial objects. To act is to begin something, to start something, to initiate. What seems to be implied in Arendt's ideas regarding action is a notion of human agency.

The moment human beings act they realize plurality. Plurality refers to the unique distinctiveness of each person but it is not a permanent state. Thus, it would seem that the unique distinctiveness of each human being does not inhere in the person, for instance, in the sense of character traits, but that it is manifested in the person's acting and speaking. As Bernstein (1983) points out, Arendt, in her earlier work speaks about the manner in which 'who the person is' is revealed in the public space where people encounter each other. This would seem to indicate that there is some essence which is disclosed in action. In her later works she did however move away from this implied notion of essence to concentrate more on processes such as exchange of opinions and debate. In the context of this project her later articulations of

action will be accepted. Thus, action is here taken to be, not a matter of revealing who one is, but rather a matter of becoming in the act of doing and speaking in a public space.

Debate, argumentation, the development of opinions and persuasion are all characteristic of action. Once again, forming an opinion is not a private, solitary activity. Instead it requires that the one developing the opinion make present to herself the standpoints of others. The validity of the opinion formed will depend on the capacity of a person to consider the matter from a number of different viewpoints. A prerequisite for the examination and enlargement of opinions is the encounter with other, different opinions. Only by submitting an opinion to public scrutiny is it possible to assess the adequacy of that opinion. This also means that there are no pre-existing standards of truth in terms of which an opinion might be judged.

In the process of formulating an opinion human beings rely on judgement. This is a mode of thinking which must be distinguished from the expression of private feelings on the one hand, and cognitive reason which is concerned with universality on the other. Judging involves a form of thinking which deals with specifics as specifics and yet asserts communal validity. In other words: what is involved in this process is the judging of particulars which does not bring these particulars under general rules. Rather, there is a move 'upwards' from the particular to the universal. Judging is never carried out by an individual as individual. It is an intersubjective process, even if a person is on her own when judging. According to Arendt (in Bernstein, 1983, p 216), "[it] is one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-of-the-world-with-others comes to pass." In judging we can and must let go of our private opinions. Judging is a public process, not least because it can only happen in the presence of others in whose place we might think.

It may be argued that national reconciliation can be fruitfully conceptualized in terms of such processes as judgement and the forming of opinions. The intersubjective nature of these processes provides a basis for reconciliation. Furthermore, in terms of this conceptualization, reconciliation is not some standard procedure and thus clichés can be avoided.

There is one more way in which Arendt's (1990) ideas are helpful in a context where for years the rhetoric and practice of apartheid and of the liberation

struggle have served to rigidify boundaries between groups of people. She distinguishes between liberation and freedom. The former always implies a liberation from, whether this be social want or fear or "unjustified restraint" (1990, p 32). She maintains, furthermore that "the notion of liberty implied in liberation can only be negative" (1990, p 29). Freedom, on the other hand, is 'positive' and is realized in participation in public affairs. Bernstein (1983) points out that it is the product of human action. It requires, and is created in, a public space. This distinction between liberation and freedom opens a realm of possibilities. To be more specific, in a context such as Namibia the discourse of liberation often intersects with discourses such as that of 'affirmative action' to reinforce a victim mentality in that they become the avenue for an endless enumeration of the wrongs and injustices of the past. It would seem that the practice of freedom and that 'action' as envisioned by Arendt, provide avenues for remembering which, at the same time allow for the articulation of new futures.

At this point a number of questions may be raised about the place of Arendt's work in the context of this project. Firstly, she regards judging as the mode of thinking that is characteristic of politics. Furthermore, the arguing and formation of opinions which are constitutive of action are, as Bernstein (1983) points out, the "stuff" of politics. What is the place of her work in a project which stands within the field of psychology? Furthermore, judging, the formation of opinions, and action as envisaged by Arendt would appear to require a high level of education. Surely this renders politics an elitist exercise open only to the few? Surely if politics in her sense is to be widely practised then attention must be paid to liberation 'from', which is a social question? To relate the difficulties regarding Arendt's ideas more specifically to Namibia: what is problematic in this context is that people often seem not to be able even to articulate opinions, let alone subject these to public scrutiny. Nevertheless, Arendt's ideas are helpful, even if in a utopian sense, and here 'utopian' is read in the Gadamerian (in Bernstein, 1983, p 212) sense, "not [as] primarily a project of action, but a critique of the present".

### **3.31. Justice and creativity: mutually exclusive spheres?**

As was pointed out previously, reconciliation is an important metaphor for transformation in the Namibian context. In this project transformation has been conceptualized in terms of Rorty's ideas, amongst others. Specifically, as was elucidated under the heading 3.18.: *'Speaking differently' and irony: a*



*radicalization of individualism?*, he regards the most important instrument of cultural transformation as being the capacity to 'speak differently'. This involves the creation of increasingly "useful" metaphors. Rorty refers to that person who invents new metaphors and who re-invents himself in terms of these new metaphors a "strong poet". "Speaking differently" is an entirely private affair. Rorty situates creativity, which presumably would play a major role in transformation, in the private sphere. As elucidated in the previous paragraph, reconciliation as conceptualized in Arendt's terms would be a thoroughly public activity. If Rorty's 'placement' of self creation and transformation as entirely private processes is accepted, then reconciliation as constituted in accordance with Arendt's ideas would have little to do with transformation. In the following paragraphs Rorty's distinction between the private and the public spheres will be elucidated. From this explication it will become clear how his ideas are in some ways in conflict with those of Gadamer and Arendt as discussed above. His conceptualization of the private sphere will then be critically discussed by drawing on the work Benhabib (1992) and of Rittenberg & Shaw (1991).

Rorty (1989) seems to equate the public sphere with the notions of decency and social responsibility and restricts the possibility of radical theorizing and individual self-fashioning to the private sphere. He appears to be arguing that the individual committed to self-creation will of necessity be cruel and inconsiderate towards his fellow human beings. At the same time the public spirited can only ever live mediocre lives. Their kindness and tenderness renders their creative efforts second rate and dooms them to being boring. The "strong poet" who Rorty appears to posit as the ideal human being is constructed as being self possessed and frequently oblivious to the plight of his fellow human beings. It seems that the strong poet doggedly and courageously pursues his own vision, even if in the process he injures and alienates his fellows. The speaking differently which is the mark of the "strong poet" is a severance from what has gone before. Speaking differently is a tearing away from tradition. It is a venturing into uncharted territory without the crutches and the comforts afforded by convention or even consensus. To speak differently is to go solo.

The above explication raises a number of questions. Does the concern with the public always militate against newness, against creativity? Does the same concern always presuppose the notion of duty which seems almost

automatically to constrain us? Furthermore, does the interest in the public good always necessitate a levelling-off and fitting in? Can the public domain be conceived in such a way that it does not involve a levelling of everybody involved, that it does not amount to the celebration of mediocrity? A similar question from a different angle would be whether creativity always involves alienation.

It may be argued that the Rortean notion of self creation involves a romanticization of processes of transformation. The story he expounds seems to be that of the lonely and eccentric hero 'doing his own thing', misunderstood and despised by others though perhaps secretly admired and exerting a deep influence on some. Here transformation takes shape in accordance with what le Rider (1992, p 74) has referred to as the "radicalization of individualism".

### **3.32. The 'private' as the invisible and inaudible**

Benhabib (1992) explicates how feminist authors have shown that the designation of a private domain as distinct from a public domain is a highly problematic move. The private domain has in several ways been the domain of the invisible, the backdrop, the 'behind-the-scenes' of that which is publicly recognized and valued. Furthermore, at least in western society this domain has been inhabited by specific people namely women. Women's experiences, as experiences in the private domain have often been devalued and regarded as second rate, not to be taken seriously. Furthermore, women have experienced this domain as one which disallows claims to legitimacy and justice. For those who have been unable to participate in the public sphere, the private domain is by no means a safe place to which one can retreat to take a rest from the battles of the 'real' world, nor is it a space in which, released from the pressures to conform, the individual could be creative. Whereas the private sphere has often been constituted as a domain of freedom as in: 'my private thoughts are my own and I can choose to be silent about these', women have tended to experience the silence of the private sphere as enforced.

### **3.33. More thoughts on the private sphere as imprisoning**

The concern with the private sphere, rather than being conducive of creativity may be seen to be regressive. Arendt (1990) makes a distinction between public freedom, and liberty which may be attained as the individual retreats

into an "inward domain of consciousness". She regards public freedom as having been created by human beings; it is a freedom which is only possible within a "tangible, worldly reality" (1990, p 124). Thus, public freedom entails engagement with the practical world; it does not entail the escape to an inner realm in the face of the pressures of the world. Arendt is critical of individual liberty as exercised in the withdrawal into a private sphere, associating such individual liberty with the sense of being beleaguered and threatened, and with an unhealthy dichotomization of and opposition between the individual and society.

Thus, whereas Rorty (1989) regards the private sphere as the domain where human beings can operate creatively without being encumbered by the constraints of justice as called for in the public sphere, Arendt (1990) sees participation in the private sphere as arising from defeat and as being disabling. Concretely, if it appears to be impossible to have one's voice heard in a larger sphere, one might try to speak into a smaller space, for example, a smaller circle of colleagues. This amounts to an exit from the larger public sphere and is associated with a sense of alienation. While such an exit may in the short run be affirming, it does come dangerously close to the withdrawal into the primal group as referred to by Kristeva (1993). The withdrawal into the ever smaller and ever more private sphere is akin to the sour grapes phenomenon whereby one rejects what one desires to be part of, and which one requires for continued survival. Such withdrawal may ultimately be suffocating in the sense that the individual is no longer challenged and his ideas may become self-perpetuating. Thus, it would appear that articulation in the private domain, if not fed into and informed by engagement in the public domain would remain at the level of a defensive process.

The manner in which the restriction to the private sphere can be regressive may be further elucidated by considering the work of Rittenberg & Shaw (1991). These authors explore self-creation fantasies as contained in some well-known fiction including F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Pirandello's The late Mattia Pascal, and in the lives of some of their (male) clients. These self-creation fantasies are strictly private, firstly in the sense that they are altogether out of touch with reality, with the "tangible, worldly reality" of Arendt (1990). Alienation is a major theme in these stories and this introduces the second sense in which these fantasies are not only private,

but also severely limited in being private. The fictitious characters who Rittenberg & Shaw (1991) refer to are alienated in that they stand outside the law. For them the law, and here I take the law to be a public phenomenon, is not something which they may take part in constructing; rather they can only rebel against it, reject it in its entirety. In each of the works of fiction which Rittenberg & Shaw explore, the self-creation fantasies of the protagonists end in disaster in the sense that identity is destroyed. Fitzgerald's character, Gatsby dies violently and Pirandello's self-creating Adriano Meiss, formerly Mattia Pascal, is racked by despair and suffers mental collapse. From the modernist point of view the fate that befalls Gatsby and Adriano Meiss, the destruction of identity, appears as the ultimate terror, but could this be thought of in any other way? [Perhaps not, because this would be inconceivable, outside the domain of language, outside thought]

The work of Rittenberg & Shaw points to a further difficulty that those who exalt the private sphere run into. If Rorty (1989) were serious about restricting creativity to the private domain, he would seem to be advocating indulgence in fantasies of self-creation. Rittenberg & Shaw (1991) make clear that these fantasies cannot give birth to a more satisfying life to the extent that they are maintained rigidly cut off from 'reality' with which, however they must inevitably collide.

### **3.34. Alienation and transformation**

At this point it is necessary to elaborate on the manner in which alienation could feed transformation. It would seem that full participation and belonging have the potential to make human beings blind. Furthermore, in the history of human kind those who have been marginal, the child, the mad wo/man, have been able to see and to speak to the contradictions within a system. Dews (1987) elaborates a somewhat similar argument when he claims that a system cannot be changed by that which is fully part of the system. Those who are marginal can see the ridiculous, the ludicrous in that which is generally accepted and even regarded as sacred. The snag is - and it is a snag that postmodernisms get caught up in - that the voices from the margins are hardly ever heard, that they tend to be summarily dismissed.

### **3.35. Values, commitments and irony**

A question that is closely related to the argument developed above is whether it would be possible for one person to be committed to something and still be

ironic about the very thing that she is committed to, identified with. Schumpeter (in Berlin, 1969, p 172) seems to answer this question in the affirmative when he maintains that "To realise the relative validity of one's own convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly, is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian." In this connection the metaphor of play seems apt. Human beings can be fully identified with the game they are playing and yet at some level realize that it is a game and be able to extricate themselves from it.

### **3.36. Reconciliation around a 'common good': nothing but repression?**

The 'public sphere' conjures up notions of 'the common good', of 'communication' and of 'coming to an understanding.' It would appear that, especially within an African context, the 'common good' is articulated as part of calls for national reconciliation. In 'the' African context ethnic groups that are in conflict may be called upon to end the conflict and to unite as a nation and for the sake of the nation. That this is a problematic notion has been elucidated at various points in this work. The 'common good', common goals readily lead to the suppression of difference, to the silencing of disparate voices. From a postmodernist perspective anything more enduring and more encompassing than the immediate is regarded with suspicion. The suspicion is built on the fear that anything more enduring and more permanent would, by assuming particulars under itself become repressive.

Taylor (1989) provides a perspective on this matter which has some parallels with Arendt's conceptualization of judging. In brief, from Taylor's point of view it is possible to posit 'something' more enduring and more encompassing than the immediate without in the process falling prey to a suppression of disparate voices. He makes use of the metaphor of poetry to illustrate this. Taylor explains how, even as the poet points to something beyond herself and thus escapes a mere fleeting subjectivity, that something cannot be extracted from what she says and how she says it. It cannot be distilled as some pure essence leaving her own words behind as so much dead wood. The personal impress cannot be separated from the larger 'thing', and the latter cannot 'do' without the poet's words; 'it' is not self-sufficient. This is very different to an articulation of abstract, general principles. The particular case or story points to something beyond it, something more encompassing, but the particular story must be told in order for that 'beyond' to come into view or to become present. In this sense it may be possible to posit a 'good',

a value that does not amount to sheer expediency, but in the absence of the specific story this would be meaningless. Taylor (1989, p 481) speaks of "living on a transpersonal rhythm which is mutually irreducible in relation to the personal". By positing the transpersonal rhythm and the personal as "mutually irreducible" he avoids the trappings of Romanticism. Implied in his position is an acute awareness of the manner in which the most heinous crimes could be committed in the name of a "transpersonal rhythm", if this rhythm were not inextricably linked to the personal.

It would appear that notions of 'the good' have tended to run into trouble because 'something' immutable and non-negotiable is posited. Along the same vein community is often conceived in terms of commonalities, in terms of shared characteristics. Attempts are made to find some over-arching principles, some frame within which difference can become tolerable. The difficulties with establishing shared principles include the following: either the shared principles become so broad and so abstract that they are altogether meaningless, or the so-called shared principles deny the experience, the lives of a section of those whom they are meant to be valid for, this because the search for commonality leaves no room for difference. Benhabib's (1992) notion of procedural justice seems to provide an adequate 'model' in terms of which community may be thought of. Benhabib is critical of a conceptualization of the common good as existing a priori. Rather, the common good is negotiable and is arrived at through conversation.

### **3.37. Reconciliation as the 'fusion of horizons'**

Another issue which needs to be addressed in thinking about the public domain, and which is closely linked to reconciliation, is that of understanding. Here the focus will be on Gadamer's (in Bernstein, 1983) notion of 'fusion of horizons' which encompasses understanding and which seems also to be an adequate model in terms of which reconciliation may be conceived. The question 'What does the process of reconciliation entail?' can be restated in Gadamerian terms as 'What is happening with us as we try to comprehend a horizon which is different to our own?'. Human beings always and inevitably 'see' from a particular perspective and what we can 'see' is limited in terms of the particular vantage point which we occupy. However the horizon, the range of vision that is available to us from our specific viewpoint is also open and fluid. When trying to comprehend a horizon different from our own we cannot leave behind our own vantage

point. Rather, when we are confronted with alien phenomena we need to search in our language and in our experience for those resources which would make it possible for us to comprehend these alien phenomena. In this way the "fusion of horizons" is brought about whereby our own horizon is widened.

How might we think of those who are active in the process called "fusion of horizons", those who are 'doing' the reconciling? In this respect the work of Arendt and Benhabib provides some hints. Judging, according to Arendt (in Bernstein, p 217), is based on the ability to "think in the place of everybody else". There are strong parallels between such thinking in the place of everyone else and what Benhabib (1992) calls "the reversability of perspectives". Both these processes as explicated by Arendt and Benhabib seem to be based on a notion of human beings as intending creatures who have certain positions and take certain standpoints which are relatively consistent and which, in a sense 'belong' to them and mark them as the sort of human beings they are. Thus, Benhabib maintains that reversability of perspectives would be quite meaningless unless a conceptualization of the other as distinct from the self, as a concrete person were preserved.

Their position seems to be the antithesis of the structuralist account in terms of which "the system of language [is] a pattern of differential relations which precedes and makes possible the speech of the individual speaking subject" (Dews, 1987, p 113). In so far as one accepts this structuralist account, any notion of public freedom as having been created by human beings would seem absurd because the public domain is the domain of language, it can only exist on account of language and, as Lacan (Marta, 1987) claims language fits the subject to itself.

### **3.38. The interpersonal and object relations theory**

Having considered human relationality in terms of Gadamer's conceptualizations of dialogue and understanding, object relations theory will now be elucidated as an approach to human relatedness as (potentially) a reciprocal process. Human beings do not inevitably relate to one another as vehicles for the gratification of their own needs, but are capable of recognizing, acknowledging and enjoying the independent existence of others. Relationships with others are (potentially) gratifying in and of themselves, and not simply as a means to lessen drive tension. The pseudo-

relations and mirror games posited by Lacan (in Marta, 1987) are by no means inevitable.

Before going on to explicate how human relatedness is conceptualized in terms of object relations theory, it is worthwhile to consider, once again, why it is important in the context of this project to show that human beings are capable of acknowledging one another as independent beings and of enjoying one another as such. In the introductory chapter it was pointed out that in the Namibian context people on all sides of racial divides have for many years suffered because of an unwillingness and an inability to behold another person as a being in his/her own right. In a context where large numbers of people were relegated to a position of simply being part of the landscape by those in power and where, even after independence, people still tend to live their lives in accordance with the divisions enforced by the policy of apartheid, articulations of relationality would seem to be called for.

The concept of 'transitional space' plays a vital role in the development of an approach to human relatedness which envisages reciprocity. Flax (1990), referring to Winnicott, points out that in the transitional space the object is no longer under the omnipotent control of the child, neither is it simply a projection of the child. The transitional object is at the same time illusory and real. That is, although the child creates the object, it does not create the object out of nothingness and arbitrarily because the object is already there waiting, as it were, to be created. The object becomes part of a shared reality. Thus the child can begin to recognize the object as a thing 'in itself' or a person 'in itself'. This does not mean that there is a 'pure' essence to be grasped or that it would be possible to behold the object in 'pure' form. Rather the child re-cognizes the object, including other persons. However, such re-cognizing is not arbitrary, but is kept within bounds by the object. There is a certain 'substance' to the object which exists independently of the child's needs and which the child can behold and appreciate as being separate from its needs.

There are clear parallels here with Gadamer's already elucidated conceptualizations of subject and object, and the process of understanding which, while it requires an active grasping by the 'subject', also demands an openness by the subject to that which is to be grasped.



Creativity and culture are possible because there is something to make use of, for instance, there is "tradition out there" (Flax, 1990, p 119). Winnicott, so Flax (1990) points out, does not perceive of culture as existing over against the inner self; it is not something imposed on the individual. Human beings can use objects, that is, can creatively transform that which exists independently in shared reality.

### 3.39. Concluding comments

In this chapter the concept 'identity' has been explicated in terms of a number of issues. An answer to the question 'Who am I?' in terms of commitments and identifications would seem to address questions regarding the integrity, stability and continuity over time of the person, the integrated 'nature' and organization of individual human life. Does such a conceptualization allow for the irony and playfulness which would seem to be aspects of creative personhood? In other words, are commitments and identifications inevitably restrictions even as they serve to give direction to life? Is it possible to live in terms of certain commitments and identifications and to still be able to be ironic, and are radical doubt and uncertainty conceivable where life is directed in terms of certain commitments and identifications? Does the presence of the one necessarily exclude the other?

Commitments and identifications would seem to serve as criteria in terms of which events in our lives may be evaluated and future directions planned. Could we possibly do without such criteria as Lyotard (1992) seems to imply with his concept *sensus communis*, which allows for 'world openness' even as it involves judging? It would seem that, if commitments and identifications were to serve as a sort of grid which is imposed on life, if these were to provide the gateway to certainty and if these were to become the ends which inevitably shape the means, then they would indeed be restrictive and we would remain indebted to our humanity. Furthermore, it would appear that the questions posed above are not best approached by trying to build an integrative framework which would neatly contain all of the incompatibilities that would seem to be 'identity'.

The question, whether agency could be possible in the absence of commitments, identifications and goals was raised in this chapter. Are human beings paralysed in the absence of a sense of who they are? It would

seem that this question puts the cart before the horse; the point is that a sense of agency is only achieved in doing.

A country's gaining of independence may be the occasion for a re-articulation of identities. The re-articulation of identities may take place in terms of discourses of liberation. Such re-articulation entails, amongst other things, the re-telling of 'the' past. This process would not entail the negation or even the obliteration of 'what was' and yet would be creative. Such retelling would be inimical to the search for origins, a search which has all the potential to lead to final, certain answers and to the exclusion of others. Becoming aware would be an aspect of retelling the past and of re-articulating identity. However, to become aware is not the same as coming to know 'the' truth that has been buried; new awarenesses would seem to be as much in need of deconstruction as old ones.

To retell 'the' past is to be engaged in refashioning the discourses that constitute us. In this connection it would be futile to posit a 'thing', some kind of essence which escapes the "time-bound local forms that culture offers ... " (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p 7) and which would stand in opposition to these forms. These authors explicate that subjectivity is not something which comes before and is apart from socialization. Our perceptions of ourselves and the life stories we relate are afforded by available discourses. Nevertheless, what Rosenwald & Ochberg (1992, p 7) refer to as "individual desire" and "social adaptation" cannot be collapsed into one phenomenon. The overlap between "individual desire" and the cultural frameworks provided is never complete. Desire is inevitably suffused with cultural narratives, and yet these narratives are not simply determinative.

In short, this chapter takes seriously the turn to language in the social sciences and the possible implications of this for identity, yet it is also critical of an exclusive focus on the text and of notions that the subject is spoken by language.

An important question arises from this conceptualization, namely whether 'we' can do without the notion of a fairly complex and separate individual in trying to conceive of a just society.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to render identity and subjectivity as interpersonal processes. Two major explications of the interpersonal, namely the classical psychoanalytic as developed initially by Freud and 're-read' by Lacan, and the humanistic were discussed. The humanistic conception of human beings as self-contained, autonomous and conscious fails to account for the interpersonal 'nature' of identity and subjectivity. From the humanistic perspective the question 'Who am I?' would be answered in terms of a number of characteristics, attributes and feelings which 'belong to' the individual and which the individual 'carries around' with him/herself. The humanistic perspective also fails in the sense that the inscriptions and effects of power are not systematically woven into the nature and quality of interpersonal relating. The relatively powerful parents impose conditions of worth and thus the range of experience potentially available to the individual is restricted, but the fundamental distortions that this introduces in interpersonal relations are not addressed. Such distortions are much more effectively explicated and accounted for in terms of the transference concept of the psychoanalytic school. The psychoanalytic school renders the individual, the person thoroughly interpersonal. This is particularly evident in Lacan's theory in terms of which the 'me' and, at a later stage the 'I' are conferred by the parents. What is problematic in the psychoanalytic school, particularly as explicated by Lacan is that human beings are constituted in terms of and relate to one another only in terms of the satisfaction of narcissistic desire. Although such relating might bring (momentary) satisfaction, it is also dreadful in that the child's narcissistic self containment is thereby shattered.

The work of Gadamer (1976; in Bernstein, 1983) and that of Shotter (1993a; 1993b) as well as object relations theory were drawn on to theorize the interpersonal constitution of identity as a reciprocal process in which it is possible for human beings to recognize other human beings as separate creatures 'in their own right'. These theories enable a conceptualization of personhood as constituted in and through the dialogue. Thus, as object relations theory explicates, objects are not simply the more or less arbitrary creations or projections of the infant, nor does the child amount to a slate on which these objects are inscribed. In these senses then the human subject is not a carrier of attributes and container of feelings, but is in process. For Gadamer understanding is not the willful act of the subject separate from the object, but entails receptiveness. Furthermore, understanding in an

interpersonal context does not involve trying to get a glimpse of the personal world of another human being. Understanding must necessarily happen from our own vantage point, our own horizon. Human beings cannot leave this horizon, but they can test their prejudices in the dialogical encounter.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

Bateson (1972) points out that any researcher moves within a framework of ontological and epistemological presuppositions and that these become, at least in part, self-validating. Beliefs about ontology, epistemology and methodology are very closely intertwined and are usually organized in an interpretive paradigm. In this chapter questions pertaining to the nature of reality and of human beings, to the relationship between the 'subject' and 'object' of knowledge, and to how it is possible to gain knowledge about the world will be addressed, specifically as these questions pertain to the present project. Furthermore, the research design for this project will be explicated. The procedures followed in the generation of data will be outlined and the methods of data analysis, specifically Parker's (1992) criteria for recognizing discourses and the concomitant 'steps' in the analysis of discourse dynamics will be described.

### 4.1. The turn to language and discourse analysis

As will have emerged from the afore-going chapters, this project takes seriously the structuring effects of language, how language produces and confines meaning. In this sense the project is heir to the hermeneutic tradition as developed by thinkers like Gadamer who argues that human beings always exist within the horizon of language; thus, all human experience is made possible by language (Gadamer, 1979 in van Veuren, 1993). Burman & Parker (1993) point out that approaches which acknowledge the significance of language tend to be connected to interpretive and reflexive methods of analysis.

Specifically Parker (1992) says of discourse analysis that it radicalizes the turn to language of the discipline of psychology. Discourses are prominent in the reproduction and transformation of meaning; they permit and constrain what can be said. Not only do discourses delimit what can be said; they also delimit who may say it in what situations and at which times.

### 4.2. Relationship between inquirer and known: creation of a social reality

As far as the relationship between the inquirer and the known (the question of epistemology) is concerned Denzin and Lincoln (1994) write that, in the wake of poststructuralism and postmodernism the 'standard' conceptualization of

this relationship by qualitative researchers has come under attack. This 'standard' conceptualization involves two parts, and the first part would certainly also be valid for quantitatively inclined researchers. Firstly the received view has been that it is possible for qualified researchers to make precise and objective observations of the social world, including the experiences of others, and to subsequently provide accurate reports. This is in line with a conceptualization of knowledge as representation (Shotter, 1993b). Secondly, researchers have assumed that there is a 'real' individual who is able to report his/her own experiences.

From a postmodern and poststructuralist point of view observation always happens from a specific position which includes the class and gender of the observer. This is different to saying that class and gender 'influence' the nature of the observations. Rather, observations are always "socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p 12). Thus 'non-participant observation' is an illusion. There is no 'detached' observer who, provided that she employs the 'correct' method has direct access to the research material and can observe it unmediated. Instead, the observer is involved in creating what she observes. An aspect of this creating is that the researcher must make choices in terms of where to look and what to look for. Furthermore, even if the researcher is fully committed to understanding and describing the way in which the research participants construct the world, the very process of describing serves to construct a world through devices such as typification (Smith, 1993).

Thus the relationship between the inquirer and the known can be regarded as the creation of a social reality as explicated by Smith (1993). The participants in this process create for one another a structure which is informed by what has gone before and by the tools the participants have at their disposal. Shotter (1993b) makes a similar point when he maintains that coming to know is not a matter of discovering actualities individually. For Shotter (1993a, 1993b) the process of investigation does not amount to the meaning making activity of the individual (inquirer's) mind, but entails the processes by which meaning is collectively made through conventions of language and other social processes.

Burman & Parker (1993), in discussing discourse analytic research, also postulate that it is not as though discourses are 'there' in the text, ready to be

found. Instead, discourses emerge, they develop as much from the analyst's reading as from the text.

#### **4.3. The process of inquiry as "Bildung" of the inquirer**

In the above discussion the inquirer and the known have been named as separate entities. A possible difficulty with positing this dichotomy - although it is one that the above-mentioned authors avoid - is that it appears to render the inquirer active and the known as passive, as the subject of knowledge subjected to the questions and probes of the inquirer. This conceptualization is firmly situated within a framework which posits the inquirer as the objective 'finder' of already existing facts who, in finding and discovering remains untouched by that which is found. For those who work within the hermeneutical tradition, as for the constructionists, there can be no strict differentiation between the 'subject' and 'object' of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

For both Gadamer and Ricoeur hermeneutics necessarily and by definition must include a moment of transformation of the inquirer in the process of inquiry. Gadamer's concept "Bildung" (edification) and Ricoeur's "imaginative variations of the ego" (van Veuren, 1993, p 141) attest to this inevitability. Thus the blurring of the differentiation between the inquirer and the known within the hermeneutic tradition may be summarized in the idea that the text or the actions being interpreted ask questions of the inquirer. This seems to me to be perhaps the most notable contribution of hermeneutics as articulated by these two thinkers.

#### **4.4. What knowledge is 'about'**

The above discussion of the relationship between the inquirer and the known raises questions regarding what the knowledge derived from the process of research is 'about'. The answer which would have been generally accepted during what Denzin & Lincoln (1994) refer to as the traditional (1900-1950), the modernist (1950-1970) and the blurred genres (1970-1986) periods, that research enables human beings to know about 'the world', about how 'the world' works, is no longer unproblematic. If the research process is one in which the participants create for one another a structure which is informed by what has gone before and by the tools the participants have at their disposal, does this mean that the research process is entirely a matter of constructing

a self-contained world or does that which emerges from the process have 'reference' to anything, another reality outside itself?

In this regard Smith (1993) maintains that "there is a world" which evolves and gives form to itself independently of the research process. She argues, furthermore that an account is valid to the extent that it remains faithful to that which it purports to speak of.

Parker (1992), too holds that "there is a world", and that the research process is meant to reveal something about this world. Although he concedes that all knowledge, including scientific knowledge is historically produced, he also maintains that scientific knowledge is meant to represent the world outside. Scientific knowledge is historically bounded in the sense that it is developed in specific cultures and in accordance with specific rational criteria. Yet, scientific knowledge is also practical, true. It is precisely this tension, this inevitable gap between the world and what can be said about 'it' which makes the production of knowledge possible.

Parker's exposition raises a number of questions. Firstly, his position seems to imply that it would be possible, indeed necessary to develop criteria for rationality in terms of which it would be possible to adjudicate between different historically and culturally bounded versions of rationality. However, this raises the spectre of knowledge and repression because the criteria used for adjudication would inevitably be someone's, some group's. If Parker's position does entail the development of one set of criteria for rationality and processes of adjudication in accordance with such a set, then there would seem to be no more room for a plurality of voices. Secondly, it may well be argued that the production of knowledge need not be predicated on the gap, the tension that Parker posits.

#### **4.5. The vicissitudes of 'experience'**

Under the heading 4.2.: *Relationship between inquirer and known*: ... it was noted that, according to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), the 'standard' conceptualization of this relationship by qualitatively inclined researchers has been subject to criticism in the wake of poststructuralism and postmodernism. One of the assumptions that has been rendered problematic is that there is a



'real' individual who is able to report his/her experiences. This warrants further discussion.

This assumption of the 'real' individual who is able to report his/her experiences may be seen as an attempt to reconceptualize and to restructure an undemocratic research process in which the researcher was the active, probing party and the research subject was the passive, observed and investigated party. In terms of this reconceptualization, research subjects would be enabled to speak for themselves.

While the emphasis on the experiences of the subjects in the research process was particularly emphasized by early qualitative research as a reaction to a positivist approach which largely erased the research subject as thinking, meaning-giving creature, the conceptualization of experience as individualized subjectivity in fact perpetuated positivist ideas by positing an independent and self-contained subject and object of knowledge. Any conceptualization of experience as some-thing absolute and already there would seem to be counterproductive.

Is there any value in talking as if there is an experiencing subject? In this project Schwandt's (1994) position, that the deconstruction of distinctions such as subject/object, knower/known does not necessitate the dissolution of the lived experience of the inquirer or the research 'subjects' into all encompassing and nameless discourse is accepted. In accordance with his view Schwandt makes specific suggestions regarding the research process. What is required is the active discussion and exchange of viewpoints between the inquirer and informants. In this particular research project Phase II and Phase III of the data generation process which will be described below will be enabling of such an exchange and debate.

#### **4.6. What knowledge is about: making and finding**

Shotter's (1993b) work is helpful in elucidating the 'aboutness' of knowledge. He maintains that processes of investigation include both 'making' and 'finding'. Our ways of talking are enabled or 'allowed for' by the world. Thus, they are rooted in the 'nature' of the world. To the extent that this is so, the process of investigating is one of 'uncovering'. At the same time, and in accordance with hermeneutical views, it is also true to say that what is accepted as the nature of the world depends on the way human beings talk

about 'it'. To the extent that this is so, investigatory processes are about making. Shotter makes the strong claim that investigatory processes must involve both finding and making; he draws on Derrida (1976) to argue that finding and making can have distinct existences because of their interdependency.

Thus, it would appear that in adopting a "(social) constructivist" position Shotter is not necessarily being an anti-realist. In other words, he seems to adopt a position that concepts and ideas are invented/'made up' while also affirming that these 'fabrications' correspond to something in the real world.

#### **4.7. Parker's critical realist position**

What can be said about the nature of the world in which, according to Shotter (1993b), ways of talking are grounded? Parker's (1992) ideas can elucidate this question. As has already been mentioned he rejects idealism and insists that there is a world which exists independently of experience. (Returning to Shotter (1993b) it is this world existing independently of experience which would presumably be 'found' in the investigative process.) More specifically, Parker (1992) argues that there are certain systems of relationships and positions in existence, which enable certain accounts and render other accounts impossible. Furthermore, he points out that the appropriation of alternative, different or new discourses does not inevitably or necessarily lead to a change in social forms. In other words, Parker seems to posit at least two 'levels' of 'reality', namely social forms including systems of relationships and positions on the one hand, and discourses on the other. He is interested in what happens at the interface of these levels. More specifically, he wants to develop a critical realist position which would also make room for investigating the way in which discourses reproduce and change the material world.

To understand Parker's critical realist position better, the three object statuses which he identifies will be elucidated. Firstly, there is the sphere in which objects have an ontological status; there are, for instance, material requirements for the production of thought. However, Parker is careful not to revert to a simplistic empiricism, and he warns against any biological reductionism. This immediately introduces the second sphere. Ontological object status alone does not enable human beings to know something. Human beings must necessarily rely on a pre-existing assemblage of

knowledge and techniques in order to obtain knowledge about something. This is the sphere in which things have epistemological object status and "here objects are on the edge of or have entered discourse ..." (p 29). In the third sphere things have a moral/political status. Things in this realm tend to be advanced for strategic reasons; for instance, a great deal of talk about psychological phenomena such as 'development' is ideological talk.

#### **4.8. Human 'natures': a review**

In the introduction to this chapter it was stated that any researcher operates within an interpretive paradigm and that this paradigm is constituted in terms of, amongst others, ideas pertaining to the 'nature(s)' of human beings. The very concept 'nature' is problematic in the sense that its use seems to presuppose that there is an essence in or about human beings which can be found.

In the preceding chapters, particularly Chapter 3 *Texts of Identity*, human beings were talked of or constituted in several different ways. Human beings were talked about as creatures who make commitments and hold certain values. However human beings were also talked about as - at least potentially - playful and capable of irony. Furthermore, self awareness as process and as momentary was implicitly posited as 'characteristic' of 'human nature'.

In talking of 'texts of identity' the way in which human beings are constituted in terms of available narratives is acknowledged. This is a social constructionist conceptualization of 'what human beings are'. However, human beings were also talked about as engaged in refashioning the discourses that constitute them, thus as active creatures. In other words the talk about human beings in this project is constituted in accordance with the turn to language in the social sciences and the possible implications of this for identity; yet it is also critical of an exclusive focus on the text and of notions that the subject is spoken by language.

Finally, human beings were spoken of as creatures who are interpersonally constituted and who are also capable of recognizing other human beings as separate creatures 'in their own right'. Thus, 'human nature' was conceptualized as constituted in and through the dialogue.

How these conceptualizations are built into the investigative procedures which form a part of this project will be discussed later in this chapter under the headings of 4.16.: *Research procedures and research design*.

#### **4.9. A 'critical instance' in research**

Concerns have been raised that under the influence of postmodernism and poststructuralism an attitude of 'anything goes' might be adopted in respect of the research process. In order to avoid this attitude and a slide into relativism a 'critical instance' in the research process has been called for. This critical instance may be differently conceptualized depending on the approach or tradition in terms of which it is being formulated.

#### **4.10. The dialogue as a way to transcend subjective opinion**

With respect to the hermeneutic tradition Schwandt (1994), in discussing the work of Taylor and Gadamer, explains that in terms of the hermeneutic circle, those who inquire cannot occupy some transcendental or 'outside' position from which to reflect on a process which they are inextricably part of. According to Gadamer (in van Veuren, 1993), the self-consciousness and self-understanding of the inquirer is determined by a particular historical tradition. In other words, the investigator cannot be thought of as an independent reasoning faculty that selects methods with which to investigate an "object", an "object" which is separate from himself and his historical context. The objectification of our experience of reality by means of the insertion of (the scientific) method is not possible.

If the observer is always in the observed, how is it possible to avoid a vicious circle of confirming initial hunches and ideas? Furthermore, does the hermeneutic approach as advocated by Gadamer not simply amount to the insertion of culturally determined prejudices into texts and data? Gadamer (in van Veuren, 1993) offers the concept of dialogue as a partial solution to this problem. In an authentic dialogue each of the participants is prepared to question her own opinions and to revise them. The partners in a dialogue are not concerned with whose ideas and conceptions shall prevail, but strive to attain consensus regarding the matter under discussion. Thus, in the to and fro which is the dialogue, a common language emerges which transcends the subjective opinion of the interpreter or the one who initially posed the

question. Standards for what are acceptable arguments and for judging the truth of opinions must be developed from within the conversation. This means that no 'absolute' standards are imposed from outside the conversation.

#### **4.11. The failure of dialogue to create a 'critical instance'**

A major shortcoming of Gadamer's solution is that it does not take account of the manner in which the positions of participants in a dialogue may be structurally different and how such inequality would render the sort of dialogue which he envisages impossible. Schwandt (1994) notes that it is precisely this difficulty which has given rise to the charge that interpretivist approaches such as those developed by Gadamer are not sufficiently radical, that they implicitly accept the status quo. To be more specific, Ricoeur (in van Veuren, 1993, p 137) argues that Gadamer's rejection of any form of distanciation and his foregrounding of "belongingness" (Zugehoerigkeit) renders a critical instance in hermeneutics very difficult if not impossible. His emphasis on the authority of tradition seems to exclude the possibility of the "critical judgement of reason" (van Veuren, 1993, p 140). In this sense the hermeneutics developed by Gadamer seems to be the very opposite of ideology critique.

#### **4.12. Parker's 'critical instance': grounding discourse**

Parker's (1992) criteria for recognizing discourses and the concomitant 'steps' for the analysis of discourse dynamics take cognizance of these very difficulties which seem to inhere in a hermeneutic approach as developed by the likes of Gadamer and Taylor.

Parker, in his explication of discourse dynamics, notes that discourse theory can readily encourage a "slide into relativism". This slide into relativism is connected with the mistaken idea entertained by some that discourses create everything we know and can ever know. The idea of these individuals is that, once things become objects of discourse their existence is then confined to the text. No existence outside the text is allowed for. Parker develops the position of critical realism as a counterforce to this trend. In line with this approach he advocates that research on discourse should address the following three issues namely that:

- a) discourses serve to support and to undermine institutions,
- b) power relations are reproduced through discourse,

c) discourses have ideological effects.

Thus, the critical instance in research may be conceptualized differently. Firstly, it may be regarded in terms of the researcher distancing herself from the process of investigation of which she is a part. From a postmodernist perspective this would be absurd: we cannot be at once in language and gain a critical distance from language as Parker (1992) would suggest. Secondly, the critical instance may also be conceptualized in terms of adjudication and this would be dependent on distancing. More specifically, adjudication would involve weighing up multiple interpretations.

#### **4.13. Politics and ethics of research**

The final issue to be discussed prior to elucidating the research design for this particular project is the values of research. This is a question pertaining to the politics and the ethics of research which, as Denzin & Lincoln (1994) show, are pervasive at every moment in the research process. In discussing this issue some of the other points which have already been considered in this chapter will be revisited.

#### **4.14. Social science research, and societal - and self transformation**

Certain approaches to the social sciences and to research in particular are explicitly aimed at societal and self transformation. The Marxist and feminist interpretive paradigms are examples of this. Parker's (1992) work is another example. He seems to have political change and an emancipatory goal in mind when he argues that the criteria and the 'steps' he has developed for the recognition and analysis of discourse are aimed at being more than an academic exercise. This does, however bring to the fore possible difficulties as will be discussed below, specifically in the explication of Lyotard's work.

Billig & Simons (1994), too seem to regard societal change as a goal for the social sciences. They are concerned to recover the central role of social science in constituting a "democratic public space". This "democratic public space" would presumably be opened in the sense that issues which were never recognized as issues would be raised, thus engendering debate. In other words, the role of social science would be to ask new questions, to redefine the parameters of "old" arguments. This notion presupposes or implies a conceptualization of knowledge, not in terms of a body or system of accumulated, definitive certainties and answers, but rather brings knowledge

into the domain of rhetoric. This also means that knowledge becomes decentralized and the generation of knowledge becomes the development of new possibilities for thinking.

What are the possible implications of the social sciences being conceived as agents in (local) processes of social and self transformation? Two rather different perspectives may help to speak to this dilemma. The first is that developed by Lyotard.

#### **4.15.1. Lyotard's position: activities of intellectuals and experts as restrictive**

Lyotard's (in Bennington, 1988) conceptualization of the activities of intellectuals has already been discussed in Chapter 2. Very briefly, Lyotard regards the activities of intellectuals as constituting and carrying forth the modernist project. Specifically, they are engaged in the delineation of a general subject and the assessment of situations in accordance with this general subject, with the aim to prescribe what ought to be done. The potential for repression looms large in this endeavour.

Like intellectuals, Lyotard's second category of people involved in the production - or rather application - of knowledge namely the experts are also responsible and thus beholden to a public. Experts have very specific social, economic and cultural responsibilities and could conceivably be called upon to propose solutions to particular problems that arise. It is their responsibility to produce the greatest possible output in the shortest possible time, that is, to be as efficient as possible. It would seem that the thinking of experts is often linear: a specific problem is identified and delineated, and particular goals are articulated, the reaching of which would constitute the solution to the problem. Often a cumulative logic is involved: the problem is addressed in a step-by-step fashion. The sort of thinking involved in the attempt to solve everyday problems may well become restricted and restrictive on two accounts. Firstly, the experts' role does not include the questioning of the parameters of their field. Secondly, accountability tends to take the form of responding to people's existing needs and wants and of attempting to satisfy these. In this way the experts prostitute themselves.

The third category of people engaged in the production of knowledge includes writers, artists and philosophers. According to Lyotard, the primary

aim of these people is not to solve problems in the 'real' world. Thus, they tend to have nothing to say to the problems of the 'real' world. These people are experimenting, writing and creating 'for its own sake'. What they do is not in the service of any other end. Their experimenting, writing and creating is an end in itself. This also means that they cannot be called upon to make themselves intelligible to the public at large and that they are not obliged to make themselves understood.

#### **4.15.2. Questions in respect of Lyotard's position**

A number of questions may be raised in respect of this exposition of Lyotard's. Firstly, need the division between these different categories of people involved in the production and application of knowledge be so strict? More specifically, is it not conceivable that a psychologist, for instance, could concern herself with everyday practical problems, not as an expert who is concerned with the greatest output/the best results in the shortest possible time, and neither as an intellectual who posits a universal subject? Keeney (1982), in developing and debating the concepts and practices of "pragmatics" and "aesthetics" has managed to articulate for practising psychologists a role which seems to escape Lyotard's tripartite division. More specifically, in terms of the approach he advocates psychologists can step back from an interventionist role. His approach creates a space for psychologists to simply appreciate and enjoy the ingenuity of relational patterns in which clients are engaged, and to be playful and even irreverent in engaging with clients.

Secondly, does being held responsible by a public necessarily put breaks on creativity and force the practitioner of knowledge to become a production machine? Lyotard seems to make a similar assumption to that made by Rorty (1989) who maintains that the public sphere is the sphere in which creativity is curtailed by the necessity of accommodating and compromising. What is disconcerting about Lyotard's division is that it leaves room for only a very small number of people to act outside the constraints and pressures of a system driven by the imperative of production and outside a certain enslavement to the needs and wishes of others.

Thirdly, could not the positing of a notion of co-responsibility help to address some of the dilemmas that Lyotard raises for the intellectual and for the expert? His delineation of the relationship between the public on the one



hand, and the experts and intellectuals on the other is a highly skewed one in which the public is quite passive and mindless, waiting on the experts and intellectuals to come up with solutions.

#### **4.15.3. Alternatives to Lyotard's position: Gadamer and Shotter**

The second perspective to be developed here draws on the work of Shotter (1993b) and of Gadamer (in Bernstein, 1983). Shotter's (1993b) "knowing of a third kind" and Gadamer's development of understanding will serve as the focus for the ensuing discussion.

#### **4.15.4. Phronesis: when the universal and particular are co-determined**

A delineation of the process of phronesis as developed by Gadamer provides indicators for a way of knowing and doing which may help to shed new light on some of the questions posed in respect of Lyotard's explication as outlined above. Understanding is regarded by Gadamer to be a form of phronesis. It is a model of reasoning and knowledge which entails a specific manner of interaction between the universal and the particular. In this type of reasoning and knowledge the universal and the particular are co-determined. In other words, it is not as though some pre-existing universal rules are applied as such to any particular case with the specific case being judged in accordance with those rules. Furthermore, phronesis avoids a means-ends rationality because each new situation requires that the means by which an end may be achieved be weighed anew. Also, the means to achieve an end cannot be known beforehand because "the end itself is only concretely specified in deliberating about the means appropriate to a particular situation" (Bernstein, 1983, p147). Those engaged in phronesis clearly are doing something quite different from the activities engaged in by Lyotard's intellectuals and experts. Furthermore, it is also conceivable that this way of knowing and doing would entail accountability to a public.

#### **4.15.5. Phronesis as understanding**

A further important characteristic of phronesis is that it entails understanding of other human beings. That knowing and judging which are part of understanding require that we, in a sense, undergo the situation with the other person; that is, our position is not one of neutral observer. This does not mean that the one who is understanding partakes of the subjective, psychological processes of another person. Understanding is not about

climbing into the shoes of another because the nature of those shoes is, as it were, brought into being in the process of understanding. This means that understanding is an essentially open process.

Furthermore, understanding happens in the between; it is not 'something' that a subject has of an object from which she stands apart. Shotter's (1993b) "knowing of a third kind" helps to further elucidate Gadamer's conceptualization of understanding. Rather than coming to grasp an already existing state of affairs as it is, knowing of a third kind involves realizing between ourselves the possibilities that are available to us. To realize these possibilities is to become aware of them, and it means to fill them in, to develop them, to bring them to fruition.

#### **4.15.6. Production of "multi-voiced texts" as value**

The explication of Lyotard's position above shows that, from a postmodernist perspective, to posit societal or self transformation as a goal for the social sciences is highly suspect. Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p 5) note that in accordance with postmodernist sensibilities the values of the research process include the production of "multi-voiced texts" and dialogues with subjects.

However, Flax (1990) has pointed out the proliferation of voices which is postmodernity does not necessarily make for a change in relations of power.

#### **4.16. Research procedures and research design**

The title of this project is "Articulating difference: Texts of identity in post-independence Namibia". If this title is considered in association with the first major research objective, namely to examine how people appropriate as their own already spoken words and situate themselves within socially offered/shared narrations, the question arises how it would be possible to elicit texts of identity and how it would be possible to draw out socially offered/shared narrations.

As far as the socially offered/shared narrations are concerned the following research question provides additional clarity: 'What socially offered narrations are prevalent in the Namibian context and, more specifically, what symbols, signs and norms are generally available for appropriation into individual texts of identity?' In order to answer this question the following

method for generating data was developed: a sample of students (the nature of this sample, how it was recruited and the motivation for relying on this sample for data generation will be discussed below) was shown a video of the independence celebrations of Namibia of 21 March 1990 and they were asked to 'free-associate', in writing, in response to the video.

This phase of data generation is in line with the recognition, extensively discussed in the previous chapters, that human beings always exist within the horizon of language, that psychological phenomena have a public and collective reality, and that even the most private is suffused with, and constructed in terms of publicly and socially available narratives.

The second phase of data generation was aimed at enabling the articulation of texts of identity. Here Taylor's (1989) conceptualization of identity in terms of commitments and identifications was drawn on. In practice a group of norm originators (the nature and constitution of this sample together with reasons for relying on the responses of this particular group of people will be discussed below) was asked to draw on the symbols, signs, norms and histories elicited during the first phase of data generation to answer questions - in writing - pertaining to their values, commitments and identifications. More specifically, they were asked to individually read a summary of the results obtained from an analysis of the first set of data and to individually answer questions pertaining to this material. The norm originators were then involved in a group discussion pertaining to these questions and their answers to these. In other words, the values, commitments and identifications of these norm originators were discussed in a group setting.

The discussion was left fairly unstructured, but the researcher kept in mind a number of specific research questions and probed, asked questions and challenged in accordance with these whenever the situation presented itself. These research questions are as follows:

- a) are there limitations in terms of the narrations which can legitimately be appropriated and how are these limitations build into the formulations of self,
- b) how do people struggle to articulate, to let their voices be heard in the public domain and how do such voices come to be given warrant,
- c) how is difference articulated and how is engagement or its lack informed by the articulation of difference,

d) how does the appropriation of the narratives of national reconciliation and unity, amongst others, serve to stifle genuine engagement and how is the potential for renewal affected thereby?

These specific questions inform the second research objective of this project, namely to investigate how people come into being by acting into situations and by speaking into discourses in their attempts to gain and maintain voice; this includes an examination of how already constituted situations and discourses are drawn upon for validation and how these are contested in the public domain.

This second phase of data generation, specifically the group discussion, provided a 'living instance' of how people are interpersonally constituted in their moment to moment interactions with one another. Furthermore, it allowed for an active discussion and exchange of viewpoints between the inquirer and informants, and this - as Schwandt (1994) argues - breaks away from a construction of research 'subjects' as passive. Rather, the active role of all research participants in constructing knowledge is acknowledged and build into the research procedures.

For this second phase norm originators were selected because such people would be most likely to actively restructure the discourses in terms of which they are constituted.

The third phase of data generation was developed with the following research objective in mind, namely to elucidate how life stories might be refashioned and narrated events retold in ways which would be enabling of or, alternatively, a foreclosing on the capacity to venture into the unknown future, and to use this as a basis to theorize the possibilities for deliberate attempts at transformation.

As already pointed out above, in this project human beings are regarded as actively engaged in the refashioning of the discourses which shape them and in terms of which they articulate their own texts of identity. Accordingly, in this phase of data generation the same group of norm originators as participated in the second phase were provided with a summary analysis of the data generated during the second phase and were asked to answer a number of questions in respect of this summary analysis, at first individually

and then in the context of a group discussion. In a sense the norm originators were thus confronted with the researcher's interpretation of their ways of speaking.

In short, the research design was as follows:

\* Phase I: audio-visual material, shown in a group context, to elicit immediate, spontaneous responses ('free associations') in written form.

\* Phase II: presentation of analysis of responses to audio-visual material, in written form, to elicit written responses to specific questions included in questionnaire, answered individually;

audio recording of group discussion pertaining to written responses

\* Phase III: presentation of analysis of group discussion, Phase II in written form to elicit written responses to specific questions included in questionnaire, answered individually;

audio recording of group discussion pertaining to written responses

Phases II and III of the research design made it possible to elicit texts of identity, not as fixed products but as ongoing process.

The data analysis in all three phases was conducted in accordance with the criteria developed by Parker (1992) for recognizing discourse and his 'steps' for analysing discourse. Discourse analysis forms part of the move away from empiricism and towards social constructionism (Burman & Parker, 1993). As such it is an appropriate method in the context of this project.

However, there would seem to be a potential difficulty in making use of this method. Parker's approach and method would seem to entail dissolving the experiences of individuals into the anonymity of discourse (Schwandt, 1994) at the point of analysis. In other words, his approach and method, at first glance would seem not to leave room for the lived experience of individual persons. In practice the said and done of individual persons is treated as one encompassing text in terms of Parker's approach. Nevertheless, his approach is appropriate because it is in line with a conceptualization of human beings, not simply as discreet, bounded, individually initiating creatures, but as creatures who are (also) constituted in their ongoing interactions with others in particular contexts.

In response to the concern raised above it may be argued that the data generation process, particularly Phases II and III allows for the experiences of individual human beings, not in terms of subjective, 'inner' states, but in terms of moment to moment intersubjectivity.

As was already noted above, Parker (in Burman & Parker, 1993) does not regard discourse analysis as the 'finding' of discourses which are already there; rather, discourses emanate as much from the process of reading as they do from the text. At the same time Parker (1992) also maintains that discourse analysis is enabling of a critical distance from language. Such a critical distance was effected in Phase II and Phase III of the analysis, and the analysis during these phases could be seen as allowing the 'rescue' of what was not said from what was said. Does this mean that the voice of analysis is better, more accurate than the said of the group discussion? Or is the analysis to be regarded as simply another voice within a plurivocality, with no more claim to accuracy or even truth than all the other voices?

#### **4.17. Selection of samples**

Two different samples were selected, one for Phase I of the data generation process and one for Phases II-III (these phases will be discussed shortly). The sample for Phase I were students in the two most senior classes of senior secondary school (in the case of one school which offers a thirteenth school year, students were drawn from the three most senior classes), and first year students at the University of Namibia. The participants were drawn from four schools in Windhoek, one being a German medium private school and the other three being English medium government schools. All of these schools and the university have boarding facilities and consequently the participants were drawn from different regions in Namibia. In age these participants ranged from 16 to 23.

The participants were recruited as follows. In the case of the schools the first contact person was the principal who then either spoke directly to the students or requested that another teacher, usually the guidance teacher (school counsellor) do so. These teachers informed the senior students that volunteers were required for a research project concerned with identity. They were also told that their role in the research process would consist in viewing a video and that they would be required to respond to this video. It was explained to them that the whole process would last for approximately an

hour. In the case of the university students the same information was given, but in this instance the researcher and a research assistant who was also a tutor in the psychology department at the University of Namibia made the contact with the students. In this manner participants, both female and male and from different home language groups became involved.

In order to explicate the rationale for choosing research participants from this particular age group, it is necessary to briefly explain the goal of the first phase of data generation. This phase of data generation was aimed at getting access to a range of the socially offered narrations which are prevalent in the Namibian context, and which are generally available for appropriation into individual texts of identity. More specifically, this phase was meant to provide answers to the question: 'what symbols, signs, norms and histories are readily accessible for the construction of individual texts of identity?'. The decision to make use of the responses of senior school pupils and students to provide some answers to this question was based on the idea that people in this age range are likely to be 'trying on'/drawing on a whole range of generally available narratives as they articulate and that, at the same time, the narratives they draw on would be quite stereotyped.

One discourse that is highly prominent at this 'point' in young people's lives is that of opportunity and choice (the actual availability of such opportunities and choices seems to make rather little difference). Many available narratives are structured around the discourse of choice and opportunity. This discourse is elaborated in the need to make subject choices at school, and is carried forward by the institution of career counselling. However, the choice of what to do with one's future and who to be is not restricted to the domain of jobs or careers. The story of adolescence, particularly this phase of adolescence, tends to have the following basic format: 'Up until now my parents and teachers tried to tell me who to be and what to do, but I am now no longer obliged to listen to them. From now on I will be free!'. If this time in young people's lives is so prominently constituted in terms of the language of choice and opportunity, then they are also likely to become increasingly aware of a wide variety of possible narratives which they can draw on in 'deciding' who to be and what to do. Such awareness is fostered by, amongst other things, tertiary education institutions and businesses engaging in 'recruitment drives' at schools, political and religious institutions wooing young people, magazines telling the stories of movie and music stars, and

up-and-coming models, together with advice on how to apply make-up or 'dress for success' (and leisure).

In order to argue the case that the responses of such young people in particular, that is, not those of older people, should provide a good indication of some of the symbols, signs, norms and histories that are typically available for appropriation into individual texts of identity in the Namibian context, the following question needs to be grappled with: 'Could it be possible that the responses of the young people in fact offer a glimpse of unique, idiosyncratic themes and stories?' The question could be put differently, namely whether people, on account of their age, on account of their being 'in' a particular period of their lives, would be more or less likely to be 'inside' available narratives and consequently less able to forge 'singular' stories, even if these 'singular' stories be based on available cultural narratives. In other words, are people more likely at particular periods in their lives to be able to 'digest' or rework stereotyped narratives so that the integration of these into individual texts of identity would make for more or less unique configurations? It may be postulated that people in the age range included in the sample have not yet had the opportunity to live in terms of a number of available narratives and therefore are less able to reflect on these narratives 'from the outside' or rather, from the vantage point of a different narrative. Furthermore, it may be argued that most young people are in an apprenticeship phase as far as the generally available norms, signs and narratives are concerned, that they are so busy learning what things are or might be that they are not able to be critical. This argument is based on the idea that, in order to be able to move away from the stereotyped it is necessary to have had a fairly thorough exposure to the stereotyped.

On the other hand, it may also be possible to reason that older people, because they have invested so much time and energy in living in accordance with particular narratives are less likely to take the risk of reflecting on these critically. Thus, older people would arguably have too much to lose if they reflected critically on the narratives in terms of which they live their lives. Consequently, their responses may be hypothesized to reveal rather stereotyped norms and signs.

To conclude, it would appear that the responses of the young people included in the sample can provide access to an adequate range of the



culturally available norms, signs and symbols that are available for appropriation into individual texts of identity. However, it cannot be maintained that only people from this particular age group could have provided with their responses access to the (stereo)typical symbols, norms and signs.

A further issue which needs to be addressed is whether it was appropriate to elicit the responses to the video of young people who, at the time of Namibia's independence on 21 March 1990 were between eleven and sixteen years old. Can independence be regarded as a significant event for and by these young people? It could be argued that persons in this age range occupy an interesting point of tension: their lives are significantly shaped by the post-independence era, yet their parents and elders have been molded by the pre-independence era. As such, the responses of these participants are likely to be shaped by the tensions that are part of the changes following in the wake of independence while their parents and elders are probably more likely to perpetuate the old narratives.

A final point to be made in respect of this sample is that no attempt was made to constitute a random sample which is representative of Namibians. In this project no attempts are made to generalize the results to the Namibian population as a whole.

For the second phase of data generation the sample size was eight people; of these, seven may be regarded as norm originators in the Namibian context. Following Suter (1989) norm originators are defined as people who are involved in attempts at purposeful transformation of the practices, as well as the form and/or content of ideas, beliefs and desires of others. In constituting this sample the researcher relied on the following criteria; these should be people who

- a) are 'different',
- b) are self reflective
- c) make other people think,
- d) tend to see 'old' things in new and sometimes surprising ways.
- e) might at times shock people
- f) serve as an example to others.

In order to locate such people the researcher considered occupations and positions in which they might be active and developed the following list

- 1) people in the media
- 2) authors
- 3) artists
- 4) 'alternative' movements, specifically women's organizations, human rights movements, organizations with an ecological focus.

Specific individuals were then identified in those occupations and positions and matched against the criteria.

A number of individuals were selected in this manner and these were then requested to each select another person on the basis of these criteria and making use of the occupations and positions mentioned above. This latter aspect of sample selection was introduced in an attempt to provide access to a larger range of potential participants than the researcher herself would otherwise have had access to. In practice three members of the group were 'directly' recruited by the researcher; the other five were recruited by people who are themselves norm originators. It proved to be very difficult to select an adequate number of women; although a substantial number of women were asked to participate, it was only with considerable difficulty that four could be involved.

#### **4.18. Data Generation: Phase I**

The research participants included in this phase watched a video of the Namibian independence celebrations of 21 March 1990. The 'original' video which was obtained from the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation was edited considerably. This editing was necessary to reduce the length of the video. In a pilot study University of Namibia students, mainly those who took psychology as one of their subjects, watched the original video on a voluntary basis, with the instruction that they could comment at any time they wished. The video was then stopped. The students' comments and the discussions that these sometimes elicited were audio recorded. The video machine was then re-started, until all of the video had been shown. The majority of the students complained that the video was far too long or showed obvious signs of boredom, frustration and fatigue at watching the entire video. In an attempt to shorten the video those sections to which the students showed very little response and which elicited neither comments nor discussions were edited out. The final edited version was 50 minutes long.

In short, the video depicts three 'phases' of the Namibian independence celebrations of 21 March 1990 namely:

- 1) the arrival of international guests, mainly politicians at the Windhoek International Airport and how they were welcomed by Namibians, including various 'cultural' groups performing different, mainly 'traditional', dances to the accompaniment of 'traditional' music,
- 2) the evening celebrations at the Independence stadium in Windhoek which were open to all members of the public and consisted of, amongst other activities, the singing of the African 'national' anthem by young Namibians; an inspection of the Guard of Honour by the Namibian President; speeches by various political figures including the Secretary General of the United Nations, the then State President of South Africa, mr F. W. de Klerk and the Namibian President, mr S. Nujoma; the lowering of the South African and hoisting of the Namibian flag; the lighting of the flame of independence by one of Namibia's athletes and the swearing in of the President and Prime Minister of the newly independent country,
- 3) the "march" by Namibian citizens through the main street of the capital city on the 22 March 1990 and the swearing in of the Namibian cabinet on that same day.

This video was shown at the respective schools from which the participants in Phase I had been recruited, either in the media room of the school or in a classroom. At two of these schools the researcher was present during the showing of the video. Research assistants showed the video in the case of the other two schools and the University, and remained in the room for the duration of the video. In the case of each of the schools the video was shown in the afternoon so as not to interfere with normal school activities.

Prior to the start of the video the students were provided with three blank and unlined A3 sheets of paper as well as a very soft pencil. Some pencil sharpeners were made available. They were then asked to write down anything and everything that came to their mind while they were watching the video recording. The recording was then shown 'in a piece'. At the end of the video the sheets of paper and the pencils were collected by the researcher or the assistants respectively.

What was the rationale for this phase of data generation? As explained above, the aim for this phase of data generation was to gain access to a

range of the cultural narratives which are available in the Namibian context for incorporation into individual texts of identity. There is a recognition in this project that people's articulation of even their most 'private', 'inner' being is in a sense a public process, that human beings are suffused 'to the core' with socially and culturally shared signs, norms and symbols. Individual texts of identity are always woven from the cloth of already existing stories and 'collectively owned' discourses.

Presumably the narratives in terms of which identity may be constituted in any society can be discerned everywhere, in the magazines and newspapers and in television programmes, in the way the physical environment is structured and in the accounts of the lives of role models. Why then were the responses of the research participants to the independence celebrations video chosen to provide the researcher with a sample of some of the cultural narratives that are available in the Namibian context? Why should the responses be seen to provide answers to this specific question. The responses to the independence celebrations video were used because independence, perhaps more than any other event in the country's history, raises questions in respect of 'identity'; what it means to be black or white, European or African. Furthermore, it raises questions pertaining to alienation, commitments, values and relationships. That which made independence imperative, or more neutrally, that which went before independence and build up to it has shaped the life of every single Namibian and has provided a rich and varied set of narratives in terms of which Namibians may tell their individual stories.

It might have been possible to generate the desired data in a much more direct manner. For instance, a standard interview might have been conducted with the participants in which they might have been asked questions such as 'What is important to you about your life in this country?'; 'What to you is typically Namibian?'. The difficulty with such a method would have been that, as postmodernist writings have convincingly argued, people tend not to be aware of the symbols, signs and norms in terms of which they fashion the stories of their lives. In a sense the responses to the independence celebrations video could provide much more 'direct' access to the required data, which should not be read as an argument in favour of the notion that research is about uncovering data which is lying there in a pure form, waiting

to be found 'as it is'. The method of data generation developed for this phase could elicit available cultural narratives 'in vivo'.

A final point to be made in respect of this phase of data generation is that certain limitations are inevitably imposed on the range of potential responses by the nature of the material calling forth the responses. However, it is necessary to provide a focus for data generation and, as has been argued above, the focus for this phase does have the potential to elicit the desired data.

#### **4.19. Data Analysis: Phase I**

This phase of data analysis consisted of two stages.

##### **4.19.1. Data Analysis: Phase I: Stage 1**

Parker (1992, p 6) developed a number of "'steps' in an analysis of discourse dynamics" and these were used, although selectively, as a method for data analysis at this stage. These steps allow the analyst to re-cognize discourses, which are realized in the texts, from different vantage points, and to do this in a systematic way. While each of the steps represents a different angle on the discourse there inevitably is some overlap. Even as the analyst focuses on the text, she has to keep moving outside the 'actual' text in the analysis.

The full analysis consists of twenty steps which are arranged in terms of a number of criteria as follows:

Seven criteria for identifying/recognizing discourses, encompassing fourteen steps,

Three auxiliary criteria encompassing six steps.

Each of the criteria is concerned with a different level of analysis and each step entails gaining a critical distance from language, that is, stepping back from statements which are the focus for analysis. The seven 'main' criteria are, according to Parker, both necessary and sufficient for recognizing specific discourses. The three auxiliary criteria are concerned with the embeddedness of discourses in terms of institutions, power relations and ideology.

Prior to a clarification of the 'steps', it is necessary to explain the concepts 'discourse' and 'text'. A text is the realization of discourse. This requires further elucidation. No one discourse is ever fully realized in any one text. Rather, texts contain fragments of discourses. Discourse is analogous to the atmosphere that pervades a city. Everyone can sense the atmosphere, but any attempt to make it concrete, to capture it is only ever partial.

## CRITERION 1: DISCOURSES ARE REALIZED IN TEXTS

### Objects of study as texts (Step 1)

Parker (1992, p 7) notes that his basic approach consists in "Treating our objects of study as texts which are described, put into words...". In the analysis that follows the general approach or attitude which will be adopted in relation to the data will be one of treating the object of study as a text. This means firstly, that what the speaker 'actually' meant when she wrote something is of no concern in the analysis. This is because it is assumed that it is not possible to make a judgement on the truthfulness of the interpretation from some neutral point outside the text. Secondly, in describing the text the researcher inevitably goes beyond individual intentions. The text exists on its own beyond the individual authors who are no longer seen to own what they said since even that which they said arose as part of a larger text. Furthermore, the written is not the property of the individual author because she cannot ever determine how the written will be taken up.

When Parker refers to "texts which are described" he is pointing to the constitutive role of the researcher who is no longer seen to be the discoverer of meanings. Thus, it is not the texts per se that constitute the objects of study, but texts as these are described. The text is living, dynamic.

### Exploring connotations through free association (Step 2)

The first step in the analysis of the text consists in the exploration of connotations through free association. When the research material is first read it is in a sense flat. This is analogous to looking at one of those three dimensional pictures which have of late surely lead to increased sales of some popular magazines. The first step in re-cognizing such a picture would be to let the eyes drift without aim or focus. The first stage of analysis is one

of generating thoughts freely without the limitations of critical and rigorous analysis being imposed.

All of the response sets obtained from the sixty students were subjected to this step in the analysis. Subsequently, eighteen of the response sets were selected for further analysis. These response sets, together with their analyses are included in *Appendix A: Data Generation and Analysis: Phase I: Responses of students*. These eighteen response sets included the four different schools and the university, covered the age range of 16-23 as well as four different language groups. By the time the eighteenth response set was analysed it had become clear that the same themes were being repeated again and again and that no new information was emerging. From a careful reconsideration of the 'free associations' which had come up in respect of the rest of the response sets it also became clear that no new information was likely to be gleaned from these.

## CRITERION 2: DISCOURSES ARE ABOUT OBJECTS

### Describing the objects in the text (Step 3)

Asking what objects are presented and describing them constitutes a further procedure in discourse analysis. The analysis happens in response to the question: 'what is the discourse about?' A number of comments can be made to explicate this step in the analysis. The use of a noun, the act of referring to something brings that thing into being. This thing, however is not a thing in the naive realist sense of the world where a word corresponds to an object. Rather, objects are constituted by sets of meaning, that is, by discourses. Furthermore, it is never possible to conceive of the 'essence' of any object. Also, the referential view of language in terms of which a word could correspond to an object is rejected. Parker refers to discourse as a representational practice. This means that the object is made present again as former uses of the discourse and related discourses are alluded to.

### Talking about the talk (Step 4)

This procedure in analysis is closely related to that delineated above and involves talking about the talk as though it were an object, a discourse. To put it somewhat crudely, Parker appears to be concerned here with the 'aboutness' of the 'aboutness'; how that which is being talked about is talked about.

### CRITERION 3: DISCOURSES CONTAIN SUBJECTS

#### Specifying the subjects (Step 5)

Analysis entails the specification of the types of person that are talked about in the discourse. According to Parker, a discourse opens up a space for specific types of self to step into. At the same time the discourse delimits the types of self which may legitimately be articulated.

#### Speaking for the subjects (Step 6)

Having described the types of self that are present in the discourse, the analyst then attempts to stand in the shoes of the subjects that are talked about in the text and to imagine what they would say and could say in the discourse.

### CRITERION 4: DISCOURSES AS COHERENT SYSTEMS OF MEANINGS

#### Picture of the world as presented by discourse (Step 7)

This part of the analysis consists in "Mapping a picture of the world this discourse presents" (Parker, 1992, p 12). Here the concern is with how the statements which refer to the same topic or theme can be grouped together and rendered coherent. Put differently, this step in the analysis involves looking for systems of terms that are regularly used for characterizing and evaluating actions, happenings and other phenomena. These terms are organized around particular metaphors and figures of speech. As an example the world may be regarded as operating in terms of the laws of evolution.

#### Handling objections to the terminology (Step 8)

In order to recognize a specific topic or theme the analyst has to rely on culturally available understandings of what makes up a theme. Themes and topics will appear/look somewhat different depending on the cultural vantage point from which the topic or theme is regarded. For instance, a discourse benefits certain cultures and disadvantages others and this affords different readings of the same theme or topic. From these considerations arises the next 'step' in the analysis, namely figuring out how a text that is build around this discourse would handle criticisms of the terminology.



## CRITERION 5: ANY DISCOURSE POINTS TO OTHER DISCOURSES

### Juxtaposing ways of speaking (Step 9)

As people articulate their reflections on a discourse they inevitably make use of other discourses. While any discourse delimits what can be said, it also, in that it entails and embeds other discourses, opens up possibilities for making new statements within any specific discourse. This procedure in the analysis is concerned with reflecting on the interrelationships between discourses. The first part of this process consists in juxtaposing contrasting ways of speaking and considering the different phenomena they constitute.

### Describing 'same' objects (Step 10)

Following on from juxtaposing different ways of speaking, points where these discourses overlap, where they constitute what appears to be the 'same' object, are described.

## CRITERION 6: "A DISCOURSE REFLECTS ON ITS OWN WAY OF SPEAKING"

### Elaborating the discourse (Step 11)

When analysing a text, instances where the discourse is self-reflexive need to be discerned. This may include reflection on the terms chosen, denials of a position adopted and articulations regarding the moral implications of a world-view. This step in the analysis is concerned with the implicit meanings contained in a discourse. In practice the discourse analyst is required to step into the discourse, to rely on intuition so as to sense the discourse as a coherent whole; this includes imagining how contradictions in the discourse would be referred to. Implicit meanings may be elicited by elaborating the discourse as it occurs; this is achieved by referring to other texts which may well be directed to different audiences.

### Reflection on how discourse is described (Step 12)

The analyst inevitably makes moral/political choices in describing the discourse she is dealing with. This step involves self-reflexivity on the part of the analyst, that is, the analyst has to reflect on the way s/he speaks and writes.

## CRITERION 7: DISCOURSES ARE HISTORICALLY SITUATED

How and where a discourse has emerged (Step 13)

Discourses are situated in time and as such they are not static. The form and force of a discourse can only be understood if the way it has come about can be explained. This part of the analysis is concerned with how and where discourses came about.

How the discourse has changed (Step 14)

This step has been developed in recognition of the fact that discourses are transformed over time. Although a discourse is likely to sound as if 'things have always been like this', thus lending them a natural status, these things will have evolved over the course of time.

## AUXILIARY CRITERION 8: "DISCOURSES SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS"

Institutions that are supported by the discourse (Step 15)

In explicating how institutions are supported by discourse, it is useful to expand on Parker and to draw a distinction between how institutions are reproduced and how they are sustained. Human beings reproduce institutions by their actions. Thus, the institution of the university is reproduced by activities such as lecturing, attending class, writing and marking assignments. On the other hand human beings sustain institutions because we do not become critical of the way we talk. We are in this sense unconscious.

Institutions that are subverted by the discourse (Step 16)

An institution may be subverted on account of an antagonistic institution being supported by the discourse or in the sense that the institution is ignored by the discourse when it could very well have been mentioned, that is, when the context created by the discourse might have warranted talk of that institution.

## AUXILIARY CRITERION 9: DISCOURSES PERPETUATE POWER RELATIONS

Discourses tend to reproduce power relations in that very few discourses can be participated in equally by all human beings. Effective participation, and this includes effective critical participation, requires a degree of familiarity. In the absence of a degree of expertise and knowledge the prospective participant can only be silent.

Categories of people likely to benefit or lose from the use of the discourse (Step 17)

Persons who would wish to further and who would want to eliminate the discourse (Step 18)

#### AUXILIARY CRITERION 10: IDEOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE DISCOURSE

Parker makes out an argument for the continued use of the category 'ideology' and points to the deleterious effect of conflating this category with that of discourse. His argument hinges on the realization that the use of the term has had progressive political effects. Nevertheless, he is careful to point out that the retention of the concept should not seduce the theorist into drawing a distinction between discourses which tell the truth and those that are ideological. Presumably, in terms of this distinction ideological discourses would be those used by groups in power to achieve certain results, specifically the consolidation and perpetuation of their position of power while non-ideological discourses would be constituted as purely and dispassionately factual. To avoid this theoretical trap as well as that of maintaining that all discourses are ideological Parker suggests that we perceive of ideology as a description of relationships and effects. The following two steps have been developed in order to ensure that these considerations will be heeded in the analysis of discourse dynamics.

Connection with other discourses that sanction oppression (Step 19)

In respect of this step it needs to be noted that discourses as such should not be seen as legitimating oppression, in other words, the employment of a particular discourse may serve a repressive function in one context, but may well be empowering in another place and/or another time.

How discourses enable dominant groups to tell their narratives of the past (Step 20)

Histories are often told as if there were only one authoritative version of what 'really happened.' However, there are inevitably alternative versions which are silenced by the telling of the authoritative account. For instance, in a newly independent country the discourse of liberation may be used by those groups which have become dominant since that independence to silence other narratives.

In the analysis of the response sets constituting the data for the first phase of the research process using Parker's method as outlined and explained above, two of the steps namely *10: Specifying points where ways of speaking overlap*; and *14: Describing how discourses have changed* were left out. Furthermore, instead of carrying out *17: Categories of people likely to benefit or lose from the use of the discourse* and *18: Persons who would wish to further and who would want to eliminate the discourse* separately the data was analysed in terms of *Criterion 9: Power relations reproduced by the discourse*.

While it is recognized that the steps as developed by Parker form a coherent whole, the omission of the two steps 10, 14, and the amalgamation of steps 17 and 18 was felt to be legitimate for the following reasons.

Firstly, as has already been mentioned, the aim of this phase of data generation and analysis is to gain access to a range of the norms, signs and symbols which are typically available in the Namibian context for assimilation into individual texts of identity. The inclusion of steps 10 and 14, and the separate treatment of steps 17 and 18 would not have yielded any more or better information than could be gleaned by way of carrying out the other steps of the analysis. That this should be so makes sense in terms of the way Parker has ordered the steps of the analysis under seven criteria and three auxiliary criteria for distinguishing discourses. It will be noted that the two steps which were omitted in the analysis are included under two different criteria, namely *5: Any discourse points to other discourses*, and *7: Discourses are historically situated*. This means in effect that although criteria 5 and 7 are covered only in terms of one step instead of the usual two, they are still dealt with in the analysis. As mentioned above there is

some overlap in the steps developed by Parker with the result that the product of the analysis will inevitably contain many redundancies.

Secondly, in terms of the research design the results gleaned from the first phase of data generation and analysis would serve as a basis for the second phase of data generation. In order to serve this purpose the very rich information gained from the analysis in Phase I had to be reduced and made manageable (this will be explained in more detail in a discussion of Stage 2 below). With this necessity in mind it was felt that some elimination of redundancies was in order during this stage of the data analysis of Phase I.

In view of the fact that step 1 entails an attitude in respect of the data or a way of viewing the data, this part of the analysis is not reflected in the relevant appendix.

#### **4.19.2. Data Analysis: Phase I: Stage 2**

The full analysis of each individual student's response set is included in *Appendix A: Data Generation and Analysis: Phase I: Responses of students* under the heading *Response sets of students and Stage 1 of analysis (of individual response sets)*. By using the method as clarified above, a large amount of material was produced. The practical problem faced in this project was that the results of Stage 1 of the data analysis had to serve as a basis for data generation in Phase II in the sense that the results would be read individually by the research participants involved in Phase II of the project and then discussed by them. The complexity and sheer volume of the results of analysis in Stage 1 had to be reduced and presented in a way to enable research participants in Phase II to gain a clear understanding in a relatively short period of time.

The reduction proceeded as follows. Firstly, only steps 2<sup>4</sup> - 7 and step 11 of the analysis according to Parker were considered for inclusion into the final presentation. As Parker explains each criterion is representative of a different level of analysis. In attempting to scrutinize the steps beyond 7 (except 11) for common themes it soon became clear that it was not possible to disconnect the results of this part of the analysis from the results obtained in the previous steps. In other words, as far as the steps 8 and upwards were concerned, it made no sense to read each individual step across all the response sets. For instance, it made no sense to try to read all of the

eighteen steps 8 as a whole. Secondly, each of these six steps as recorded on the analysis sheets for each of the response sets was scrutinized individually for common themes. For instance, step 2 for all the response sets was read as a whole and common themes were extracted from this reading. These common themes are included in *Appendix A* under the heading *Stage 2 of analysis of student responses: Common themes*.

Thirdly, the common themes were scrutinized across the steps in order to discern similar meanings. These similar meanings were then grouped together and the number of times such similar meanings occurred was noted down. This part of the analysis is included in *Appendix A* under the heading *Stage 2 of analysis of student responses: First reduction*.

Fourthly, the first reduction was scrutinized and reduced once more as well as organized into a summary. This material is included in *Appendix A* under the heading *Stage 2 of analysis of student responses: Second reduction*. The themes of the final reduction include both content, as analysed by the author, and the manner in which the content was related, how the narrating was done. The themes include subjects (different categories of people), place, time, event (independence) and "weltbild". An indication is also given of the number of times a theme occurred whereby the same theme might have emerged a number of times in the same response set.

#### **4.20. Data Generation : Phase II**

The second phase of data generation was carried out with the following aims in mind: to investigate

- a) how people, in relating their life- stories and in narrating publicly shared events, situate themselves within socially offered narrations,
- b) how people draw on already constituted situations and discourses to validate what they say, and how these situations and discourses are contested in the public domain,
- c) whether there are limitations in terms of the narrations which can legitimately be appropriated and how these limitations are build into the formulations of self,
- d) how difference is articulated,
- e) the discourses in terms of which past, present and future are constituted.

In order to address these questions a sample of eight norm originators was constituted as described under 4.17.: *Selection of Samples* above and they were involved in a group discussion. The discussion was audio recorded; the participants had been asked permission to record prior to the interview.

The biographical data of these participants is included in *Appendix B: Data Generation: Phase II* under the heading *Biographic detail*.

This second phase of data generation took place in Windhoek on 11 February 1997 in a room of the Polytech of Namibia, and lasted three hours.

The material constituting *Stage 2 of analysis of student responses: Second reduction* as mentioned under 4.19.2.: *Data Analysis: Phase I: Stage 2* above, together with a set of questions pertaining to this material and to the values, commitments and identifications of the participants served as a focus for the group discussion. The questions were organized in a questionnaire with specific spaces provided for answers. Participants required an hour prior to the start of the group interview to fill in the biographical questionnaire, read through the material provided them, and to answer the questions. The biographical questionnaire is included together with the biographical information of the participants in *Appendix B: Data Generation: Phase II*. The questions are included in *Appendix B* under the heading *Questionnaire for first norm originator discussion*. (This heading was not used in the material provided to the norm originators.)

In constructing the questions referred to above, Taylor's (1989) conceptualization of identity as people's commitments and identifications was taken as a guideline. Furthermore, an attempt was made in constructing the questions to use 'strong' language; for instance, instead of asking "what is important to you", the questions "what touches a raw nerve for you?" and "what moves you?" were asked.

Why did the norm originators first answer questions individually in written form and then discuss their responses in the context of the group? This approach was adopted, firstly to give the participants a chance to familiarize themselves with the material so that the group discussion could proceed more smoothly. Secondly, this approach allowed the participants to move

more gently and gradually into an unfamiliar situation than would have been the case if they had been launched into a group discussion immediately.

The actual meeting was structured as follows.

- 1) The researcher welcomed the participants and briefly explained to them the purpose of the meeting, namely that she was interested in hearing their ideas in connection with her research topic "Texts of identity in post-independence Namibia".
- 2) The group members were asked to briefly introduce themselves.
- 3) The researcher explained that they had been drawn into the research process because, by the nature of their activities and work, they are involved in formulating new ideas and viewpoints on issues, and that they influence others in this.
- 4) It was pointed out that the meeting would go on for three hours, and that everybody involved would decide, after this period of time, whether it was necessary to carry on.
- 5) The structure of the meeting was outlined and the participants were reminded that the group discussion would be audio recorded. They were assured that the information thus obtained would be treated confidentially. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 6) The biographical questionnaires were handed out, completed and collected.
- 7) *Stage 2 of analysis of student responses: Second reduction* (this heading was not used) was handed out to the participants and they were encouraged to take their time reading through the material. The participants asked a number of questions while they were reading and these were answered by the researcher.
- 8) The *Questionnaire for first norm originator discussion* was handed out with the request that the participants should answer the questions in respect of the material they had just read. They were informed that these questionnaires would not be collected and that their answers would serve as a basis for the group discussion that was to follow.
- 9) Once the questionnaires had been filled in the discussion was started as follows: the researcher noted that she would appreciate the participants sharing their responses to the questions.

The researcher developed an interview guideline in an effort to ensure that the aims for data generation at this stage would be achieved. However, this



does not mean that specific questions which had been worked out before the interview were necessarily asked. Instead, a number of themes were developed into a guideline and when appropriate moments offered themselves during the flow of the interview, questions pertaining to these themes were asked. Furthermore, the researcher acted as facilitator rather than as interviewer. Thus, she encouraged participants to speak directly to one another and not to speak through her. Responsibility for articulating ideas, asking questions and posing challenges was shared by everyone involved.

#### **4.21. Data Analysis: Phase II**

The audio recording of the group interview was transcribed and is included in *Appendix B* under the heading *Transcription of first norm originator discussion*. The transcription was then analysed. Although Parker's (1992) method as outlined and clarified under 4.19.: *Data Analysis: Phase I* was used as a basis in this case as well, the researcher approached the analysis differently based on experience gained in the previous phase. Parker's first step "free associations" was considerably elaborated on. In practice, the transcribed interview was carefully scrutinized to discern discourses. The transcribed interview was treated as a 'single' text in the sense that no attempt was made to separate out 'who said what'. The results of this analysis appear in *Appendix C: Data Analysis: Phase II: First norm originator discussion* under the heading *Full analysis of first norm originator discussion*.

The material generated on the basis of this analysis was reduced in a similar manner as described above under 4.19.: *Data Analysis: Phase I*. The difference was that the bulk of the reduction was gleaned from the extended "free association" step. The reduction appears in *Appendix C* under the heading *Analysis of first norm originator discussion: Reduction*.

#### **4.22. Data Generation: Phase III**

The research question which guided the generation of data during this phase is as follows:

How do people reject or incorporate into their articulations of self attempts by 'another' to redescribe their own accounts of themselves and of publicly shared events?

A second group discussion was arranged with the same group of participants as in the previous phase of data generation. Unfortunately, one of the participants had to cancel at the last minute. It was decided to continue the discussion without her. The focus point for the interview was the researcher's analysis - specifically the reduction - of the previous interview. This material is included in *Appendix C* under the heading *Analysis of first norm originator discussion: Reduction*. In this case, too the group members were presented with a questionnaire, contained in *Appendix D: Data Generation: Phase III* under the heading *Questionnaire for second norm originator discussion*, and were asked to use the summary analysis as a basis for answering the questions individually and in written form.

The researcher's analysis, that is, the attempt by 'another' to redescribe the research participants' own accounts of themselves and of publicly shared events, was discussed and debated with the research participants. The audio recording of the group discussion was transcribed and is contained in *Appendix D* under the heading *Transcription of second norm originator discussion*.

#### **4.23. Data Analysis: Phase III**

The transcribed interview was then analysed in accordance with Parker's (1992) method as outlined and clarified under 4.19.: *Data Analysis: Phase I*. The analysis is included in *Appendix E: Data Analysis: Phase III: Second norm originator discussion* under the heading *Full analysis of second norm originator discussion*.

#### **4.24. Data Analysis: Phase IV**

The analyses of Phases I, II and III were compared with a view to 'seeing' how these differ and so as to get a sense of texts of identity in the making. The results of this comparison will be presented in *Chapter 7: Interpretation of data*.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis of student responses and discussions of norm originators.**

In this chapter the final products of the four phases of data analysis discussed in the previous chapter will be presented. The full analyses are included in the respective appendices, this material being too bulky and detailed to include here. More specifically the following appendices may be consulted:

- Appendix A: Data Generation and Analysis: Phase I: Responses of students
- Appendix B: Data Generation: Phase II (contains biographical questionnaire for norm originators, their biographical detail, transcription of first norm originator discussion)
- Appendix C: Data Analysis: Phase II: First norm originator discussion
- Appendix D: Data Generation: Phase III (contains transcription of second norm originator discussion)
- Appendix E: Data Analysis: Phase III: Second norm originator discussion

In order to illustrate the different aspects of the analysis, extracts are drawn from the students' responses and from the norm originator discussions. These extracts are in each case boxed. In respect of the norm originator discussions the content has at times been reduced because not all that was said by every contributor needs to be included to illustrate a point. In cases like these the material that has been excluded is indicated as follows: '....' where each '....' stands for the words of a different speaker. In view of the fact that it would be impractical to indicate each excluded contribution, the maximum number of excluded contributions indicated is four. At times a contribution begins with or ends with "....". This means that the start or the end of that particular contribution has been excluded. In such cases these parts of the contribution are not needed to illustrate a point or they could even lead to confusion if included.

Whatever appears in square brackets in the boxes are comments of the author which are necessary to clarify an argument or statement.

In view of the fact that some of the extracts from the norm originator discussions are rather long, certain sections that are of particular relevance to the argument being made are underlined.

With respect to the extracts from the students' responses it should be noted that these are given as the respondents wrote them, including spelling and grammatical errors. The extracts from the norm originator discussions are also not grammatically correct.

### **5.1. Summary analysis of responses of students to the viewing of the Independence video.**

During the first quarter of 1995 senior students (final two classes) at four secondary schools in Namibia and students at the University of Namibia were requested to write down everything that came to mind while viewing a video recording of the Namibian independence celebrations of 21 March 1990. Sixty students participated, all on a voluntary basis. The responses of eighteen students were analysed qualitatively in accordance with Parker's (1992) criteria for recognizing and analysing discourse. The results of the analysis are presented in terms of a number of themes. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of times a sub-theme occurred in the response sets.

#### **5.1.1. How Namibia's independence is conceptualized**

Firstly, independence is posited as marking a break from the past (2). This break is positively constituted (3), for instance, as the end of violence. However, the past is also regarded with nostalgia (2).

21st March 1990 has marked the starting of the new era in Namibia.

The speech of Mr de Klerk announced that the violence for Namibia was over ....

What all went down with this flag? [drawing of South African flag]  
Freedom?! And what about the flag being hoisted? [the Namibian flag]

Secondly, independence is depicted as ushering in a new future (3). On the one hand, this future is constituted negatively (4), for instance, as threatening, as well as uncertain (1).

De Klerk's facial expression: Another country down the drain!

On the other hand, independence is also seen as opening the future (3) which can then be regarded hopefully.

.... reflections of hope, promise and sense of achievement [in speech of Secretary General]

Thirdly, independence is evaluated as desirable/good (8), for instance, as victory or as the "return of the land to its rightful owners" or "empowerment of the people". Accordingly, the celebrations are described as joyful (3) and as a dignified occasion (1).

Among the guests from Africa were President Kenneth Kaunda .... who came to confirm the returning of the land to the right ful owners.

- happy people, celebrating, singing, dancing

....  
....  
....  
....

- Excitement all over, cheering, chanting, ululating, quite jubilant mood

Fourthly, independence is regarded as marking a change in relations between Namibia and South Africa (2). It is seen to constitute the orderly take-over of power by Namibia from South Africa (3).

The colonial era was finally put to an end with the South African president Mr de Klerk making the finally speech before the lowering of South African flag and the hoisting of the new national flag of the Republic of Namibia

To summarize: independence is posited as a watershed, and this watershed is evaluated differently.

### **5.1.2. How time is dealt with in the accounts**

In several of the accounts no attempts are made to render an event of the past (independence) significant in the present. For instance, independence is described as no longer topical/relevant. Furthermore, no attempt is made to re-evaluate this event 'of the past' in accordance with experience gained since (8). For instance, whether and how the gaining of independence has entailed "the return of the land to the rightful owners" and/or "the empowerment of the people" is not reflected on.

Thus, independence is regarded as an end-point or clean start (2) with no conceptualization of efforts required to realize the promises of independence (1). For instance, the respondents do not consider the socio-economic or psychological changes required to actualise these promises.

There is, however, one response set where the student makes connections between the present (of respondent), past (as represented by independence) and future. (see DHPS-6 in Appendix A)

### **5.1.3. Pictures of the world 'painted' by the responses: the worlds ("weltbilder") which emerge.**

One sort of "weltbild" that can be gleaned from the response sets is of the world suffused with a sense that it is possible to do and to achieve things (3), for instance, people are depicted as taking their future into their own hands. In one of the response sets this agency is constituted in terms of solidarity.

he [President Nujoma] gave the message to all his people which stated that Namibia is now in our hands and we are the owners of Namibia and we have the make our Namibia is our land for ever.

Another picture is that of the world constricted by trifling detail and regulations (1), and behaviour is circumscribed by many prescriptions and roles (3).

The traditional group must be well organizer eg. one group is here and another one is there. - It must not be mixed together. - The journalists must give the honourable guests to walk. - They must not surrounding them, they must stay at least 10m away from them.

Furthermore, the world is constructed in terms of appearances; what things look like is important (6), for example, the clothes people wear and their hairstyles.

- all are dressed formally for welcoming.

....  
....  
....  
....

- Red hair (orange), black dress

- Zambian people wear green, the others blue/black

The world is constituted as being in transition (2). Transition includes people gaining equal rights which may lead to chaos (1).

- his [the President's] words remind of hard times/ from the past. despite this: just how must it go on?? What does Namibia's future look like?

What can also be gleaned from the data are pictures of the world lacking in complex differentiations, for example, a single perspective world (1), or a dichotomized (divided into two extremes eg. good-evil) world (1). (see DHPS-4 in Appendix A)

The student responses provide a picture of the world as harmonious in the sense that Namibians are constituted as united in a common cause; difference is not acknowledged (1). Furthermore, the world is posited as running smoothly and according to plan (1).

The spirit of tolerance was swivering among the whole crowd and everybody seems eager to witness the long awaited self rule of Namibia

Thousands and thousands of Namibians witnessed the removal of the South African Colonial flag. The national flag was hoisted with the remarkable trumpet sound. Namibians were existed. The Namibian nation was born.

Intolerance and conflict are constructed as being something of the past, and yet these are still 'near', close to consciousness (2).

A picture of the world as being made up of the activities, the words and actions of important people (3) emerges: this is a world in which title and position are very important (1). The activities and emotions of people are depicted as being directed towards dignitaries, especially the Namibian President (4).

-All the people should stand up and clap before the honourable speaker/guest start addressing his/her speech

- anxious people, to protect the President ie Dr Sam  
- the president attracting a lot of attention, both the general attending public and the press, ....

In another picture constructed of the world much importance is given to whether and how things - for instance, the independence celebrations - are done 'right', 'properly', 'in an orderly manner' (5).

S Nujoma knows that you have to close your button when you stand up/walk. People do not know that they have to remain silent and stand attentively during the hymn.



#### 5.1.4. Place (space)

Namibia's position in the world is posited as having been changed by independence. For example, independence lends the country significance in a regional and global context (4). Furthermore, the country is thrown into a harsh world as a result of independence(1).

Namibia was therefore accepted as the 160th member of the United Nations.

He [De Quellar] noted the declaration of Namibia as not only for Namibia but for all Southern Africa

Namibia is constituted as a new, developing country (2), and as shaky and vulnerable (1).

With the fire: the race against the "bad world" may start! (Namibia as a new sprinter)

The country is seen to be not quite ready for independence (1).

Namibia is also depicted as a precious possession (1).

President Sam Nujoma's speech stated that he was very happy to have Namibia independent after so many years. .... he gave the message to all his people which stated that Namibia is now in our hands and we are the owners of Namibia and we have the make our Namibia is our land forever.

#### 5.1.5. How the accounts/stories are 'told'. (How students write about that which they viewed).

A number of accounts are evaluative, constructed of personal opinions, likes and dislikes (9).

I think the arrival of the presidents was alright. The traditional songs and everything was I think a warm welcome to to the

visitors. Don't like the way that the Ministers gathers at end of stairs it is very disordered. Don't think the photographers should walk on the red carpet.

There are also evaluative accounts pertaining to the quality and technical detail of the video-recording (3).

- the shooting [camera work] is unprofessional, you either see only trousers or the faces are not recognizable

In several of the response sets there is nothing personal or subjective (5). For instance, the account amounts to a run-down of the detail of the celebrations as viewed, that is, the account is simply a description of what is seen in the video and no attempt is made to reflect on the significance of the event.

I saw a map of Namibia and two presenters. A lot of soldiers standing in a row in front of the big Aeroplane. Mr Theo Ben Gurirab and other people coming out of the aeroplane. The people coming out of the aeroplane is welcomed by Dr Sam Nujoma and other citizens of Namibia.

Possible meanings of Independence 'then' and 'now' are not articulated (4).  
(see UNI-3, JAN-1 in Appendix A)

There are a number of engaged accounts (4), for example, where links are made between the respondent's life and independence.

I also experienced the procession life (during the procession)

....  
....  
....  
....

I also experienced the procession live (during the procession)

Two of the narrations are spontaneous and expressive (2).

I love Nkosi Sikeli, during that concert I sung in the choir; just before it was raining and we got soaking wet. But it was a lot of fun.

There are two questioning accounts in which the meanings of independence are articulated as questions or possibilities.

Why are only some presidents and representatives invited?

....  
....  
....  
....

Even the churches collected funds for arms for Swapo's freedom fight. is that justifiable or not? A church?

In two instances the responses are marked by impotent rage; for instance, they are deprecating, hypercritical (3) or cynical (2).

Just a load of crap! What else is new? What a pity there was no power failure! You have to be either naive, blind or absolutely patriotic to be able to enjoy such a thing.

There is one example of a silent narration: in other words, practically nothing is said about an event which presumably is very significant and about which much could have been said (1).

#### 5.1.6. Subjects (Identity)

[Note that the respondents referred to 'Namibians' or 'blacks' in general, that is, reference is not only made to how these categories of people appear on the video]

Namibians are regarded as chaotic and incompetent (3).

Namibians are hoisting the flag like absolute idiots!

Furthermore, they are constituted as 'ingroup' or 'us', united at one level, but differentiated at another (2). One of these two accounts differentiated Namibians in terms of those who fought for independence and suffered under apartheid, and those who did not.

Namibians are described as not knowing how to deal with one another in the light of political change (1).

'We' are constituted as Africans (dominated) in relation to Americans (dominators) (1) and as Africans who want to 'do our own thing', but are also scared (1).

- obviously the Americans have to speak first of all. Always the big Americans! His speech gets on my nerves. "Poor Africa, we will help you -= poor Africa, just remain as you are!"

Furthermore, 'we' are constructed as whites (1).

Well, somehow I cannot help myself, whenever I see so many blacks in a group I have to wonder whether they are intelligent or not, and whether the bad education they received was really our fault.

'The' self is posited as in some ways identified with Namibia, but not in others (1).

In various situations I can identify with this country! But not always!

'The' self is also positioned as being highly conscious of race (1).

I ask myself whether the woman is racist .....

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

Wow, de Klerk, a white man. Who knows what he is thinking now!

There are two response sets in which 'the' self is constructed as critical, for instance, in respect of what politicians say.

Official crap! Big political speeches - empty and without statements

One account is marked by self-sanctioning in respect of criticisms articulated regarding the Namibian President (1).

Black people are constituted in a variety of ways, for instance, as incompetent (2).

Well, somehow I cannot help myself, whenever I see so many blacks in a group I have to wonder whether they are intelligent or not, ....

In one response set black people are depicted as the legitimate heirs of independence (1).

He [the President] noted how difficult the struggle has been. He pointed out the sufferings of black people in Namibia.

Must have been a great moment for the black citizens. What a pity that all those who have died already, well, all those of an earlier generation cannot participate in this.

Black people are also described as not knowing how to handle their freedom (1).

Namibian people are not used to such celebrations where all have equal rights and blacks can go where they like, ....

In one response set black persons are constituted as possible victims of white racism (1).

Whites are spoken of as highly ambivalent in respect of blacks (2).  
(see DHPS-3)

White people are also depicted as hypocrites (1).

May God be with you, and that from the mouth of a South African white; most of them only read in the Bible that blacks are not equal to whites, you can't compare .....

There is one response set in which white people are constituted as having become marginalized in public roles (1).

I admire the few white people amongst all the black ministers

President Nujoma is depicted in a number of different ways: He is presented as someone who is revered (4).

Well-wishers, admirers, (joyous moment indeed, it was) if the President, Dr Sam Nujoma just going crazy, wishing to touch him, even touching the car in which he travels,

He is also constituted as being the voice of the Namibian people (4).

President F.W. de Klerk's speech is short and understandable and also to the point.

He is also described as having mixed feelings regarding Namibian independence (1).

In the speech of the S.A. President, Mr De Klerk, reflections, of hope, sense of determination to put the ugly past behind, sense of sadness for something lost ...

There is a concern with which group and whose culture are representative of Namibia (1).

Only certain cultures and traditional dancers are invited to perform at the arrival of the visitors

#### **5.1.7. Freedom and sovereignty**

Freedom is closely associated with national sovereignty (1).

The freedom light was lit which empower the new born nation Namibia

### **5.2. Analysis of first discussion with norm originators**

For the second phase of data generation eight norm originators were engaged in a group discussion. The foci for discussion were the researcher's analysis of the students' responses, and the commitments and identifications of the norm originators as elicited individually and in the context of the group. The discussion was recorded on tape. The recording was transcribed and analysed in accordance with Parker's (1992) criteria for recognizing and analysing discourse. What follows is a summary of the full analysis.

#### **5.2.1. Articulating the past**

What emerges, on the one hand, from this discussion is that there are specific legitimate ways of constituting the past, namely in terms of the themes of apartheid, oppression, suffering and the war of liberation. There

There are two protocols which render him as the guarantor of the future (2).

He [the President] concluded by assuring the masses that Namibia is forever free and sovereign

Namibian President Sam Nujoma swears that he will do anything that Namibian people will ask him to do.

The President emerges from one of the response sets as 'simply' human (1).

- I find it OK that our President does not speak a super perfect English but that he is "normal". In that regard he does not appear as being supernatural but one of us.

He is also rendered as an object of criticism (3) and derogation (3).

Sam Nujoma's facial expression: And what now!? He either needs his glasses or he really does not know where to repeat reading or speaking what De Quella said.

In two of the response sets the President is rendered as someone to be wary of (2).

Don't tell me, show me Sam Nujoma, that I will strive to the best of my ability, to uphold, protect and defend the supreme law, the constitution of Namibia!!! [these are the words from the President's speech]

The former South African President, de Klerk, is constituted as being effective (2).



are at least three aspects which form part of this sort of construction. Firstly, the past is constituted as burden, but to carry that burden, that is, to remember, serves to legitimate one's voice.

In the following two illustrative extracts the researcher's analysis of the responses of the students is being discussed. The norm originators regard the responses as unexpected and in need of explanation. In trying to explain these unexpected responses the norm originators articulate how the past should be constituted.

V.07 Ah, I was coming to that the thing is I think the children who watched that movie were fundamentally from around here because if you had a child say from northern Namibia that child will think of independence as the end of the war or the end of violence because as little they were some of the children they watched how the South African Caspirs would come and flatten! the mahango field and even destroy the houses and then they have to move to an uncle's house or so on so. These were some of the things that were, not experiences in parts of the country like in Windhoek for instance so they give you a different picture not only children from the north but any children from various parts of the country you know to view that you will get different answers but if it's just a bunch of kids within the urban area you know you don't - know now whether there was anything that touched a raw nerve. I mean to me I've been so hardened by events I've seen, talked to people like those that survived Cassinga and so on that and explain or tell other people what happened at Cassinga and many other events during the war so - I've answered that in my paper but hmm there is not much, there is not a single question that I would say really touched a raw nerve but touched me different ways you know .

G.05 And what about the others?

A.01 Yes, I would just add to that issue of what he mentioned because what touches me is that people some of the people hmm regard the past as you know with nostalgia whereas really when you

look at the people in the north, no-one will have nostalgia for the situation which was there or what they have experienced ]

V.08 hmm ]

A.02 so that really touches me and one can also see that these are most central people who were watching this video people in other areas wouldn't see it you know.

V.16 ja, that's right other people would say they can only feel superior when they are in the company of some other people when they are alone of course they don't feel superior and you are talking here about the students in the north will were generally under oppression and some of them probably completed their secondary education without having seen the practice of apartheid in reality without having been direct victims of apartheid. Some have never carried the past. They only read about this past system because they were so far away and there were very few whites there that they came into contact ... they didn't suffer the direct physical contact of apartheid.

K.01 I tend to disagree with that, I think people around the country felt oppression in different ways, even though they were not whites in certain villages like in the east people still suffered

V.17 no I ...

G.11 Sorry, I'm going to interrupt you. In what sense?

K.02 For example, it's not that the only people who suffered were in the north. For instance I remember the Banderu and the Herero... .. it's another way of oppression. Not directly but ...

V.18 But I'm not saying that. I said that physical for those that felt apartheid

K.03 oh physically oh okay

V.19 they had generally but the entire country was under apartheid regime but there are people went to school in the north and the little contact that they had with a priest or this principal (interruption)

Secondly, the past - constructed in terms of the themes of apartheid, oppression, suffering and the war of liberation - is articulated as having left very deep emotional scars and, as such, it persists in the fears of people; thus, people are even now victims of the past.

M.87 But don't you think. At times I think people don't want to deal with the traumas because they don't know how they going to react if they like relive the situation and they find a different way of dealing with the... And I think that is why maybe we have this high rate of alcohol abuse, hardly, in this country because if you see certain people drinking

V.106 Friday, and Saturday.

M.88 When you know their past too and the kind of things that they come up with when they really drunk you could like see them reliving the situation but at a conscious level they don't want to deal but when they like a bit tipsy that is when you start talking about so maybe it's like their survival.

J.101 Post traumatic denial. I don't know I just on a national scale.

Thirdly, the past as constituted in terms of struggle and war is evoked as a reason and as an excuse for apathy and for selfishness in the present.

K.10 People are more concerned about their own wealth because if we speak. ]

J.51 I think there is also a reaction to this. I saw it often, a reaction to this whole struggle and war and apartheid and all that. When all this was over, people sort of said "shoo".

M.51 I don't want to.

J.52 No more fights, arguments and people then and now they also, they had a rough time whether in exile or here and now they think it's time to reward themselves. I was in the struggle. This was a terrible time now I want a house, I want a car

M.52 Hmm Hmm

J.53 then I am not going to criticize my boss. I got a nice salary and pension. I got to pay off the car. I got to pay off the house.

On the other hand, a nuanced and differentiated version of the past is articulated, including the 'struggle'; specifically the history of resistance against oppression is constituted in terms of a plurality of voices.

J.96 Look the people one thing that struck me I talk when exiles tell me about the shock they get - me the settler shock they get when they got to Katutura [a part of Windhoek where mainly black people live] and find all these people they fighting for in exile twenty years ago. When they Katutura these guys are highly critical and they do not take shit from exiles. To their disgust, because in fact the people in Katutura were used to thinking more critically than a lot of the people in the camps because they were exposed to all kinds of SWANU, NPF, [different political parties] and everything. All these years, you know I covered all these meetings you know everybody except for the HNP were holding meetings, in Katutura and people were discussing. There was TV. warra! warra! This was a hotbed of political dissention and discussion and I mean their were fifty-seven parties, fifty-eight parties.

In the second illustrative extract the pre-independence system is depicted in terms of its more positive aspects. The sections that are particularly relevant are underlined.

V.25 I came when she was just about to finish her introduction ... second paragraph and I looked and I told her that "you are not qualified to write about Katutura". After a while I said look when you left Namibia you have never been south. You went to Tsumeb. To you anything made of bricks is beautiful. There are people in Katutura who have built beautiful houses just like the ones one sees in Klein Windhoek or places like that. But that's not the only story of Katutura and then she has to stop there. A few years later this person was made an ambassador.

S.08 Yeah, we all know who she is now.

M.12 I had a different experience 'cos I was sharing a flat in London with someone who just went straight from the north into exile

V.26 hm hm

M.13 and she had an eight year old girl who was in school there. The British system makes a good very good university level but when it comes to like primary schools. I think they are worse off than here. I mean the kids can't read her eight year old couldn't read

J.18 sjoe in England

M.14 it is bad but, for her she had this fantasy about the education system is very good, I came home one holiday and I found an eight year old here who could read who was just in an ordinary blacks schools here

V.27 ahah ahah (interruption)

M.15 they could read English far much better then her daughter, who was in England going to an English school spending most of the times speaking English and she had these fantasies about how the worst was .... Namibia in so many ways because the only thing she knew she left the north, went to Angola

V.28 saw Luanda. You know this applies to a great percentage of people who were in exile, I have to know the fact that SWAPO for instance was lucky in one aspect that a greater percentage of the people who went abroad were from rural areas where they had discipline, in a traditional African manner, but if we had city slickers like the people of the ANC. had who came from town we would have been having the problems that they had mutinies, strikes, demonstrations but the northerners were easily disciplined because discipline was already instilled in them. That was one advantage we had

Two aspects form part of this sort of construction of the past. Firstly, the past is constituted as 'something' that people want both to remember and to forget, and amnesia is understandable.

J.32 .... I do not know at what age it starts where you can start getting shocked about the fact that people younger than you don't know essential slices of history which were an essential part of your life. It's actually scary. I can tell SWAPO kids that I meet in the street. Sometimes for hours

....  
 ....  
 ....  
 ....  
 ....

J.35 .... And everybody of course one shouldn't get worried about that because that is part of the amnesia of society. Kids grow up and they grow up with a different history. It's like when my mother talks about the second world war.

Secondly, a complex story is told of exile: it included experiences with racism elsewhere and it was also characterized by jealousies, paranoia and narrow-mindedness.

M.18 ... The other thing is maybe partly the culture also does not allow certain people to like criticize elders and Sam Nujoma to most of the black black kids would be like this fantasy figure who is flawless and he cannot do any ... That's the same mentality that a lot of the people who were in exile, not with all of them I found SWAPO members or people went straight from home who were like NANSO members or who studied in South Africa or whatever. Much more critical thinking than the people who were in exile and went straight from Angola and went to the other places you talked to one person it seemed like you talked to all of them. They just had this narrow I don't know whether there was the survival for them or it was fear or whatever it was. I remember once -- like Dr K... wrote this history book. We were in Oxford and all the SWAPO students were told not to read that book because at that time they had problems with Dr. K for whatever reasons and I am telling you, none of those students read that book. If you ask them "Why don't you read the book for yourselves and find out what is in the book? Do you know what is in the book?" "No". "Have you read the book?" "No." "So when are you going to read the book?" "No, he's a puppet." You know what I am saying. You go to everybody the importance is it was working

V.97 Do you know what it was? Do you know? For instance in exile, if you are qualified in a certain field and you occupy a political position. You have got a double and the other guys don't necessary like you, because they know you are appointed. You are a politic appointee but you can function even without that appointment and if you don't salute them at every corner, they were not going to like you very much. Because at least you could you had a future!.

V.102 Well in exile who were the people making statements, only the leaders. Only the leaders were making statements. They come to a camp okay the President is coming and then one political commissar address them and introduces the President. The President talks about the one thing and finish and they go away.

### 5.2.2. Articulating the future

In the first norm originator text politics and history, specifically 'my' history, are constituted as the necessary basis for imagining the future. However, there are also instances where forgetfulness in respect of the past is regarded as 'natural' or as understandable. In the following excerpt both types of instances are reflected.

G.17 But how do people here see themselves as part of the future in the making?

....  
....  
....

J.31 You know the, the I think, well I mean when I see the responses I get quite depressed because

M.23 ja, same ... here

J.32 I think these are the kids sixteen, twenty years or ten years time, these are going to be important or decision makers or they're in jail I do not know, .... I do not know at what age it starts where you can start getting shocked about the fact that people younger than you don't know essential slices of history which were an essential part of your life. It's actually scary. ....

....  
....  
....  
....  
....

J.35 .... of course one shouldn't get worried about that because that is part of the amnesia of society. Kids grow up and they grow up with a different history. It's like when my mother talks about the second world war. I think you know, okay I know something but I



talked to a Zambian who was twenty six years old where I knew more about Zambian history than he did.

V.52 ja

S.23 Did you learn something from that or did he?

J.36 He did not take it very seriously. In a way I was sort of relieved, I thought okay he's not going to rattle on, that's the impression I got.

.....

M.24 But don't you find that certain things were excluded from the Education system,

V.54 Hm Hm

M.25 the history (people all talking at once) for instance and geography that we did in black schools was far removed from ... I mean we went and learnt our history

.....

M.26 when we were abroad more than we did when we were in this country.

J.37 Ja okay that was before. (interrupted). That was deliberately. I would think that as somebody in SWAPO would through living I don't know somewhere in Zambia or Angola absorbed from his environment but we're talking obviously there was a stronger confined history which was being preached. But - what scares the hell out of me is somebody who can look at this video and just comment about the clothes and stuff like that. How people looked, that means there was no understanding about the historical significance of the event but they missed it completely to look and say, look at Winnie Mandela's dresses is to completely misunderstand the event. The dress was totally irrelevant, this was independence. What was relevant was Pik

Botha standing there and de Klerk standing there while their flag after how many years? - say sixty years was being pulled down and were giving away. And Mandela witnessing that. And I watched those three faces. I was very close to them. Pik Botha and De Klerk were close and Mandela was a bit more to the side and I watched those faces because the history was being written not in who shake hands with or some because this was and you would think. I mean it scares the hell out of me is no response or trivial response about dresses or what whether the soldiers marching

S.24 But what do we learn from that?

M.27 Trivial from whose perspective?

S.25 Exactly

K.05 Ja

M.28 Because to them they were only identifying what was important to them, ....

The making of the future is seen to consist in the creation of new role models/heroes, or in the recognition and re-creation of old ones, as something other than political or military heroes. These heroes must be local, 'our own', that is, Namibian. Furthermore, there is an imperative that the old heroes be criticized.

S.27 But why does that happen because there is no Namibian identity which is suitable. We ask about the future. This is my whole profession is about creating heroes that aren't politically or financially -- exalted. They -- poets ... now I find out you're [V] a journalist again! (laughter)

V.56 No

S.28 Because this was a television thing I did not know it was based on that. Very interesting, just in the last couple of weeks there was a television first drama series made by a Namibian. It was so successful that the guys who acted in it had become celebrities and they followed around everywhere and there's a whole new focus on being looking up to a Namibian instead of having to look up to Malcolm X, Spike Lee or whoever it is. We do not have a Namibian identity. You see the war is over and there no heroes left who aren't politically or military based and that is where the future is challenging is to develop a Namibia identity or personality which does not have to make us look to the America's or whatever for that identity.

S.09 I noticed that from the questionnaire that there's this desire to want to have someone to follow to respect the way they revere the President and things like that. It's without any basis and the only way we know him is through TV. How many people of these kids have actually sat down have him speak to you this close just TV.

V.30 no

S.10 That's the desire that the people have for this. It seems like that there's this - whole other thing, this disciplinarian thing that's quite happily followed as you are saying because of the which I actually find quite frightening but anyway.

The following excerpt is an example of the call for the recognition and re-creation of 'old' heroes.

M.31 That is reality. That is our history. That is something we cannot just wipe off our minds. And to a white child a Namibian hero might be someone totally different to a black child who comes from that history. Maharero whoever whoever might be their hero you know what I am saying I mean, I don't think we could say, let's forget about that. Let's not have those heroes and start off

with other heroes. That is a bit tricky because - what criteria do you use to determine who is your hero?

S.30 It does not matter, as long as they are living. Let's get a couple of living ones, that is all I am saying. Let's at least be dynamic ]

J.39 We cannot forget about the history either ]

M.32 We cannot forget about the other too. We cannot forget about the other too. ]

....

....

V.58 for instance a Namibian actor or actress and this person portrays a Namibian hero - now he or she is seen on television portraying another Hosea Kutako and lived as a teacher up to that time when he became a petitioner of the United Nations. You know the child will identify not only with the actor but with the person being portrayed. So I do believe we should not forget about yesteryear our heroes from the past. We can then create our own heroes and not become like America Micky Mouse is an American hero.

The future is also articulated in terms of the psychological changes that all Namibians should go through. Thus, the future is imagined on the basis of levelling the playing field for all Namibians, irrespective of where they stood in the past on the continuum of oppression - resistance to oppression. Psychological changes which will be enabling of a new future are self-respect and dignity, and greater awareness, that is, people must be conscientized. Furthermore, people need to come to accept who they are in racial terms, and this applies especially to whites.

M.83 .... so I think if you really thinking about the future and a positive future for Namibia we have to really make a very conscious effort to start re-training people in so many ways. It's about our identity, dignity I mean stand for the truth and what it would mean and the risk you have to face, I mean its like re-training from scratch like they used to conscientize people mm people to value themselves, I think we really need to that. ]

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 A.12 But also I think everybody needs training, even people who been in exile, with due respect needs training. The survival strategies and disciplines mechanisms that were practically appropriate when in exile seriously are not appropriate in this context anymore. You know what I am saying. The paranoia that was there that forced people to go around and instigate against everybody so you could feel safe. We do not need that today]

V.98 Maybe, it's a

M.85 You know what happens, even those people have to go through some training because I think as a psychologist I look around and I think, some people are still holding onto old survival strategies. That are not appropriate anymore.

This 'psychological' discourse is contested and is criticized on the basis of being "abstractions".

S.82 Our future is people with self-respect dignity where they have the courage to stand up for what they ... like in the struggle, I mean hell the war

J.81 S., those are abstractions. If you put it

The discourse of renewal and transformation which is closely tied up with the articulation of the future presupposes that there is something wrong or lacking as far as Namibia and Namibians are concerned, that there is a problem now. The problem is constituted as people's prejudices, misinformation, and as a lack of dignity and self-respect which includes an inability to recognize and appreciate local qualities.

S.106 The Namibian entire ninety I don't what percentages - vast. I just get the impression that overall that people are not made aware of what the actual basic human rights are. Never ever have been. People thought basic human rights was no-one was supposed to shoot you or treat you differently because of your skin colour. But surely six years later we people should be - given the option to know what exists in the sense of what is dignified.

S.27 But why does that happen because there is no Namibian identity which is suitable. We ask about the future. This is my whole profession is about creating heroes that aren't politically or financially -- exalted. They -- poets ... now I find out you're [V] a journalist again! (laughter)

S.28 .... We do not have a Namibian identity. You see the war is over and there no heroes left who aren't politically or military based and that is where the future is challenging is to develop a Namibian identity or personality which does not have to make us look to the Americans or whatever for that identity.

S.34 .... I think I met an old friend of yours the other day. ]

V.61 telling a story ]

S.35 Ja, ... storyteller think he was with you on the executive with the Polit Bureau M. Nangolo, and all this stuff.

V.62 Yes he's a school mate of mine.

S.36 He now travels around the world telling Namibian folk tales.

V.63 Hm

S.37 He cannot make a living here ]

V.64 He cannot settle here because we haven't got room for him anymore. ]

S.38 It is disgusting, ....

M.33 But partly isn't that the media's fault though, I mean I have never seen so many American sitcoms (laughs) .... Most of them are and that is taking away valuing the Namibian identity that's taking away valuing whatever we have around here, when we have so much to show. ....

The future is articulated as rationally constituted through the attainment of awareness and this becomes a way of escaping from a past that is all pervasive. This attempt is contested as follows: the articulation of a future without taking into account the wounds of the past is posited as not workable.

M.85 You know what happens, even those people have to go through some training because I think as a psychologist I look around and I think, some people are still holding onto old survival strategies. That are not appropriate anymore.

A.13 As a psychologist they need therapy ]

....

....

....

S.102 We just need knowledge. Info. [emphasis added]

.....

.....

.....

.....

M.87 But don't you think. At times I think people don't want to deal with the traumas because they don't know how they going to react if they like relive the situation and they find a different way of dealing with the... And I think that is why maybe we have this high rate of alcohol abuse, hardly, in this country because if you see certain people drinking

V.106 Friday, and Saturday.

M.88 When you know their past too and the kind of things that they come up with when they really drunk you could like see them reliving the situation but at a conscious level they don't want to deal but when they like a bit tipsy that is when you start talking about so maybe it's like their survival.

....

S.106 The Namibian entire ninety I don't what percentages - vast. I just get the impression that overall that people are not made aware of what the actual basic human rights are. Never ever have been. People thought basic human rights was no-one was supposed to shoot you or treat you differently because of your skin colour. But surely six years later we people should be - given the option to know what exists in the sense of what is dignified.

A.15 But we are also talking about highly educated people who went through this, I mean some of them could be lawyers themselves for all I know, you know who just choose, I mean there's this nice thing of you we have done this to you and you ... tricky we will give you that position and then you keep your mouth shut.

### 5.2.3 Independence

One question that arises from the norm originator text pertains to who may legitimately articulate the possible meanings of independence. On the one hand, it would seem that those who suffered (personally and directly) under the previous system can do so while, on the other hand, it is implied that any articulation is valid. These two positions can be inferred especially from the first seven pages of the norm originator discussion. In the following excerpt the two positions can be deduced from what V and S say respectively.

V.01 You know its to an extent a little bit unfair to ask young person about something that's fundamental as independence and



freedom - for instance if they had interviewed me on the 10 December 1959 when the shooting took place here in Hochland Park and so on I would have given a different picture altogether even five years afterwards living say in Katutura. I would give a different picture altogether therefore I feel that maybe those young ones should have been combined with adults, the adult viewpoint as to what independence meant whatever that is to them. For instance, in one aspect independence meant I could go back to the former residential area of my people because my father is buried there, I bought a house there I feel spiritually at home there. That is only one aspect of it and you know it sparks off so many answers and at times questions, too.

S.01 But I think just because it's a different opinion, it doesn't at all, it means it is just another relevant opinion ]

V.02 Amm

S.02 So what if it is younger or older

V.03 Yeah, Yeah

Independence is constituted as making it possible to refuse to be the victim of racism and to be defined by the racist attitudes of another.

K.20 Because I remember when I was in the States and I went to a all white school and it was different, it was like racism you could say it. Now coming here I met somebody at work who was from South Africa a boer from South Africa and when she joined [K's work place] she did not want to talk to everybody like she was like scared of black people. And I don't have to deal with that. I told whoever I don't have to deal with that. I dealt with racism before independence. I dealt with it in the States I don't have to I am sorry, if she is scared of me I'm sorry if she can't deal with it. I don't have to deal with it. I think is most probably what he ]

Independence is constituted as having opened up new ways of being. This can be gleaned from the above extract. Furthermore, it is posited as a goal, as an end-point and with that having been achieved, political activity dissipates and people's lives start revolving around petty, private concerns.

G.21 For me the question is then what happened to that [pre-independence] hotbed of political discussion?

J.97 When people, I noticed this because I covered, you know you could see it, you could see it on Cassinga day and all these days. You could see it in the meetings. I covered political meetings in Katutura from 1978 - 1991 and not just in Katutura in Olympia and everywhere and in the North also and you could see you know towards independence like attendance going up like this and after independence it just sucked, gone. People were sick of hearing, all these political problem struggles, the boere used to chase them around with tear gas. .... but then I also felt after independence hhh, now lets get on.

S.104 There's no war, it's over, it's done. ]

J.98 Let's worry about this and that, fix up the car you know and people have kids and family ....

Independence is constituted in terms of individuals gaining material wealth and the language of entitlement becomes pervasive. The rewards of independence are material, and this displaces other possible values, for example, freedom of expression.

In the following extract the language of entitlement is particularly prominent in the sentence that is underlined.

J.98 ... and then N [a colleague] once said to me. I had a hell of a fight with her. She went to Walvis Bay and covered some events and came back with a seventy-eight dollar bill for a breakfast. And I said "N, no way! What's this". It was like lobster and champaign for breakfast and I said "N no this is unacceptable". "How can you

criticize me?! I was in the struggle and now its time to reward myself".

A.09 I think things have changed since independence because I think it's now the people are more on an individual basis. Before it used to be as group as people like and you go for your own salary or for your own well being is like I don't care.

M.43 People are actually afraid. If I can afford to have M-Net I don't care about NBC. ]

S.49 Terrible. I don't know.

K.06 Can I just add to what you just said because I feel what people are not doing they afraid they just coming out of a war situation so they rather keep peace and not complain to keep the peace because they can complain and then comes another situation which is back to war and they do not want to go back to that square one where will be.

V.69 We ... Angola of a different kind (laughter) ]

J.50 If somebody criticizes then somebody says don't criticize. ]

In the following extract, independence is rendered as a complex issue: both as a circle closing and as opening new questions. It also entails a re-appropriation of space, a homecoming.

V.01 .... For instance, in one aspect independence meant I could go back to the former residential area of my people because my father is buried there, I bought a house there I feel spiritually at home there. That is only one aspect of it and you know it sparks off so many answers and at times questions, too.

#### 5.2.4. Discourse of neo-colonialism

What emerges from the norm originator text is that a form of 'neo-colonialism' becomes manifested in the arena of identity. In other words, Namibian identities are constituted as being 'besieged' by discourses and images which serve to construct specific actors in the global context as international. More specifically, Namibian identities are seen to be constituted in terms of dominant 'outside' discourses. In this sense identity becomes the battleground where influence is sought and exerted.

M.28 Because to them [students] they were only identifying what was important to them, I mean maybe depending on the fantasies about whatever. I mean look at the Namibian kids today. They want to be as Americanized as possible. They're into all these designers stuff Nike and whatever.

J.38 That's scary

S.26 That's not scary

....  
....  
....

S.28 Because this was a television thing I did not know it was based on that. Very interesting, just in the last couple of weeks there was a television first drama series made by a Namibian. It was so successful that the guys who acted in it had become celebrities and they followed around everywhere and there's a whole new focus on being looking up to a Namibian instead of having to look up to Malcolm X, Spike Lee or whoever it is. We do not have a Namibian identity. You see the war is over and there no heroes left who aren't politically or military based and that is where the future is challenging is to develop a Namibia identity or personality which does not have to make us look to the Americans or whatever for that identity.

....  
....  
....  
....

V.58 for instance a Namibian actor or actress and this person portrays a Namibian hero - now he or she is seen on television portraying another Hosea Kutako and lived as a teacher up to that time when he became a petitioner of the United Nations. You know the child will identify not only with the actor but with the person being portrayed. So I do believe we should not forget about yesteryear our heroes from the past. We can then create our own heroes and not become like America Micky Mouse is an American hero.

S.32 We can't even do that ]

V.59 Do we want something like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Spider as our hero. ]

### 5.2.5. Local-global discourse

As can be seen in the above extract self-creation, that is, making one's 'own' stories without emulating those of others or 'going local' is constituted in nationalist terms.

### 5.2.6. Politics in Africa

Politics in Africa is posited by the norm originators as being about the relationship between black and white, about resistance to apartheid, and about charismatic political leaders who have their roots in that black-white relationship.

J.20 [talking to S.] About the past I think you putting in that's a typical, that's a European attitude towards the politician

S.19 Is it wrong though?

J.21 Nujoma like Kenyatta like Mandela like Nyerere is not a politician is not a ... prime minister like in Britain, Germany, Italy or Spain who come and go every four to five years who are pretty boring pretty mediocre people. .... Nujoma like Nyerere is the founding father of the liberation party seeing it now from the kids' point of

view which their parents grew up with who in their home was the leader of the liberation against evil apartheid.

M.21 Hmm

J.22 a totally different figure to a politician. He is not a de Klerk or as John Major or Helmut Kohl. He is about an equivalent if you are a Catholic to the Pope. He is the man who led the struggle to the liberation Namibia and he actually achieved it. Only those close to him saw his imperfections the kids here in the street or in the bush or wherever he was a far distant mythological and charismatic figure. .... ]

V.39 ja, ]

....  
....  
....  
....

J.25 as you were saying that they saw him criticized the fact that they saw him as some great hero figure ... .. they don't seem critical about him. I don't think you can expect that.

....  
....

V.42 Do you know that Seretse Khama, Seretse Khama photos with his wife Ruth which is widely used, used to be sold commercially and they almost were in every house in Windhoek here and in other places in Southern Africa and that was long before independence simply because he was regarded as someone who defy you know white, or white rules and things like that and went and married this white woman and brought her to Africa. You could order his photo from a South African company and actually frame it.

Political action is constituted in terms of exerting one's influence in matters one deems important and making one's voice heard, and ideas are shared on how this might be done in the context of macro forces that seem overriding. This includes refusing to accept the role of being a victim of neo-colonialism.

This latter aspect can be read in the extracts provided above under 5.1.4.: *Discourse of neo-colonialism*. The following discussion develops from a concern about the dearth of local television productions being shown on national television.

S.48 But I actually think it will change. All we have to do is convince society that we need Namibians. ]

V.67 Use Namibian channels like Open Line to complain.

A.05 Ja, but I also think that we viewers should come up very strong because we complain on the National Chat Show but then there is a whole society of people who are more laid back.

M.42 Something like not paying TV licences ]

A.06 Ja, also that ... ]

A new solidarity, different to the solidarity of the struggle is called for, but its attainment is seen to be highly problematic in the absence of an 'outside' oppressive force and the concomitant unifying goal of independence.

P.34 [addressing A.] okay, you said hm somebody referring to Damara ... did you say that? Now you say we as blacks must actually be one. How come are you saying we blacks?. What happened to the whites?.

M.100 (Laughing slightly)

A20 No, what I was saying I was referring to how deep you know we are tribalistic among us.

P.35 Ja, actually, surely...

K.27 I think that it will take some time.

A.21 We should all be one, I agree with you, blacks and whites, but you know the thing is to cross the line to the other one we should start like starting at home and move to another one.

### 5.2.7. Discourse of powerlessness/helplessness

The discourse of helplessness is quite pervasive in the norm originator text. Interestingly, it is not constituted as an effect of the previous system, but in terms of the present system.

M.44 I feel like it's. I wouldn't say people are laid back, but I find Namibians now after independence to have adopted this learned helplessness attitude towards everything. I don't know whether its survival strategy because. I mean you talk especially in the work environment. It is very difficult to survive in this you can't criticize you can't say anything. Once you start criticizing you're isolated and once you isolated it's like instigation and all sorts of things, so I think in the end for your own survival people just decide oh I just have to withdraw. ]

K.07 Ja, exactly what I was talking about like ...

M.45 Unless you identify a few people if you are lucky enough within in some setting or go out and have like-minded people elsewhere. It is like it is this learned helplessness. There's nothing we can do about it I mean I know somebody that he went to Britain and he was telling me that he is in a field he did not even study for. He hasn't read a book that is related to his field there's so much apathy its just dead, nobody questions anything. I mean it's intellectually not stimulating anymore and you can't like confront issues or do whatever then you're labelled and when you are labelled it affects you because it is very difficult to go from one job to another. It is just a phone call away

The discourse of helplessness is fed by talk of survival and of fear. Irony is not possible in this case. In the following extract S seems to make an attempt



to be ironic when he draws a parallel between the Namibian situation and Hitler's regime, but what he says is taken up seriously.

- M.68 Have you been some place where if you open your mouth you, certain things would happen to you when you come back to this situation
- S.75 Sure
- M.69 Where there's so much paranoia and there is a lot of paranoia ]
- V.86 You can have a car accident You can have an unexpected car accident, I mean all sorts of things could happen to you. These are the... ]
- S.76 Wait a minute, you have just given me a clue here. Are we talking about sort of political in Hitler's thing and things like this, and taking care of.
- J.71 Not necessary being shot or anything but you know you lose your life.
- P.08 Psycho terror
- M.70 Ja, I mean
- V.87 People will pick up the phone and say, don't employ him and another will say. (talking together) ]

Now people are oppressed by what they have (in material terms). Furthermore, solidarity is replaced by the pressure to conform and loyalty means keeping quiet.

'Solidarity' becomes material obligation, that is, being obliged to provide material support, and it is constituted along ethnic lines. In the following excerpt J is talking about government employees.

J.62 buy a car, furniture, Weyland, house, car. The whole family from Epukiru to Okakarara everywhere, they come and they say the whole family comes, everybody from Tses, Khorixas cousins, everybody comes, now they are important people, now they have to help the family. Everybody takes their money especially Herero.

M.57 They have to make sure they remain there.

J.63 You cannot say sorry you have not money. They say but now you are a big guy you could help me here. I need a horse and he needs a cattle ... he must pay for the grandfather's funeral. Who's going to pay for the coffin? Within six months they bankrupt.

### 5.2.8. Discourse of agency

There are several ways in which the norm originators engage in discourses of human agency. For instance, they posit freedom of expression as a counter weight to helplessness and powerlessness.

Expressing critical ideas, informing critically is constructed as of value, or even as a moral duty. This includes challenging one another (even though there are definite limitations to this), challenging authority figures and making up one's own mind. In the following excerpt S is responding to a story told by V in which the latter did not publish a newspaper story because it could have led to difficulties with one of the ministers and might have created the perception of a split in the ruling party.

S.60 You mean it wasn't valid.

V.79 It was valid! ]

S.61 So you backed out? ]

M.54 Yeah (laughter)

V.80 I just had to

S.62 loser! (laughter)

S.64 Okay that is the situation [i.e. that government employees need to keep their jobs because family members are expecting assistance and therefore are not prepared to criticize]

....  
 ....  
 ....

S.66 Part of the blame is the newspapers, who is reporting this reality,  
 Who's describing this? ]

M.61 Ja, but I mean newspapers as well. I mean ]

S.67 What is the step ahead, we all know what is happening? ]

M.62 It is sticking your neck out. ]

S.68 Exactly. ]

Information and knowledge is seen as empowering and as freeing people.

### 5.2.9. Discourse of race

In the first norm originator text race and racism are constituted as the overriding characteristics of the societies one has been part of; the discourse of racial segregation plays a central role in the construction of people's experiences.

S.130 We got this terrible racial background to overcome ]

P.23 It's that racial racial thinking people primarily race, race and its  
 just I don't know. ]

M.94 Okay, everything is race? ]

P.24 Ja, look in Germany I have problems I have racial problems, but um I should not say, I grew up into that society and as the way I see Germany. Germans are very liberal people. You can say whatever you want but Germans are ]

....  
 ....  
 ....  
 ....

V.119 Let me tell you, you could say it in the GDR, I studied in the GDR and I know exactly how the GDR was and the place where you had your school in the former Mecklinburg they had a number of racists then I was attacked that I was attacked in Rostock in 1965. Just a few kilometres from their school.

S.137 Because I mean a white black thing in Namibia isn't hardly an issue now any more, is it I mean ]

M.97 Oh. Oh

K.25 It depends where you go.(everybody talking at once)

V.125 A week ago I was in Baines [shopping] Centre. One week ago, on Saturday I was at Baines Centre and we were in a small bar there attached to a restaurant, and we drank, and you know after one hour, one younger Afrikaner he got drunk, and he picking out words, "you black kaffirs you what what", ....

P.32 I think it's the press thing, something which is suppressed in the white minds,

Vi.03 Ja, ja that racism. I mean it still exists but suppressed somehow and it comes out as Mr V said you know maybe if it's alcohol, that it comes out.

J.121 the best way to, I remember from independence I knew quite a lot of guys at UNTAG, a lot of Nigerians,

V.126 hmm, hmm

J.122 Kenyans Ghaneans, we had a press centre ....

V.127 hm

J.123 eventually the parties they said: What is it with this country! Everything is race!.

The racial group of a person is constructed as determining what s/he will think; understanding people requires that their racial group be known.

J.04 If they're whites nostalgia would not be surprising

A.04 Ja.

J.05 One does not I didn't know the response whether it was a white or black person. If it was a white person it would be quite obvious]

M.08 Hm ]

S.03 Do you reckon?

J.06 Ja,

S.04 They'd feel guilt.

J.07 Na, nana

The discourse of race is drawn on in speaking for (on behalf of) another person. This can be stated as follows: 'I can speak for you because I am of the same race group as you'. In the following excerpt V is speaking on behalf of P; both are black men.

P.28 I am sorry for interrupting now. Germany how should I say, its actually funny to categorize. When a German lets say for instance comes to you he regards you as a human being. You know you have got your dignity, okay he would make his remark saying for instance saying "ja Schwartze" or whatever he says now here if I see racism it actually goes down to the dignity of people you' re dehumanizing someone ]

.....

.....

V.120 You know the very things that you are saying didn't happen in Germany happened. You know the problem is that some of you lived most of the time in a hostel, you went to school, came back to the hostel. You went out for a weekend and then you ... back to the hostel. You never lived independently all the years with the family and so on. When I was a student I was twenty years old and I lived on my own with the family. I could remember instances where I went to a night club Saturday and someone would come and say "what's this black thing doing here?" It belongs to the gas chamber that was your GDR!

P.30 Ja, but am not saying it did not exist. ]

V.121 But the question, the answer is you are you can deal with racism in Germany but you do not want to deal with racism here!.

Race is drawn on to stifle disagreement and to negate the discourse of 'common humanity', which is articulated as all people having fears, even as a discourse of common humanity is employed in an effort to move beyond the past and beyond race.

M.64 Listen fear comes especially for those who have experienced it closer, you know some of us have been far removed from this realities, you know what I am saying. Other people have been very close to what could actually happen.

S.72 Fear,

M.65 ja.

S.73 I've got fears.

J.68 ... a different type of fear

M.66 I am trying to talk about. I am talking about this type of fear (laughs) I mean we are talking about (laughs) different types of groups here. Certain people (laughs)

J.69 Say it, white and black you must say it.

### 5.2.10. Discourse of unity

Unity amongst black people is constituted as imperative and in this way the discourse of unity becomes one of exclusion. This is, however challenged. What seems to be articulated in this regard is the following: 'In the name of the discourse of unity I can take it upon myself to speak for everybody else without even thinking about it'.

A.17 Because I find that amongst the blacks themselves, we are more tribalistic, than the white and black thing really if you look at we are supposed to be one but the way we are divided ]

[emphasis added]

....

....

....

....

P.34 okay, you said hm somebody referring to Damara ... did you say that? Now you say we as blacks must actually be one. How come are you saying we blacks?. What happened to the whites?.

M.100 (Laughing slightly)

A20 No, what I was saying I was referring to how deep you know we are tribalistic among us.

P.35 Ja, actually, surely...

K.27 I think that it will take some time.

A.21 We should all be one, I agree with you, blacks and whites, but you know the thing is to cross the line to the other one we should start like starting at home and move to another one.

P.36 Okay there it actually comes where I actually have my difficulties that mm okay maybe I should say I am used to the whites more. I tend to to how should I say

#### 5.2.11. Contestation of what is 'real'

There is considerable contestation in the norm originator text in respect of what is 'real'. The following realities are foregrounded at different times: the new black ruling class and, by implication, influential members of the ruling party; the black working class; film makers and actors, specifically the realities they create have the power to effect change in people. In the next extract all three these 'realities' are disputed. The black working class is foregrounded by V when he asks S whether he has been to Katutura - a predominantly poor neighbourhood where mainly black working class people live - not to Club Thriller, which is a club in Katutura that is frequented by more wealthy people of different races.

S.112 What is step one ]

J.106 Look at that ]

S.113 telling and that. The war is over, step one. Step two, go through to step five hundred you know, we always seem to see the first step as not curing the entire problem so we don't seem to go ahead.



J.107 But I go to a lot of these SWAPO guys. They talk to me, they tell me all the problems of the ministry.

S.114 You're out of touch

J.108 I'm in touch.

S.115 Do you know any German people? (laughter)

J.109 If I tell and I tell SWAPO it's no point in me telling a deputy director and whose just about the problems he's got with the permanent secretary or deputy permanent secretary he's got in his Ministry. If I tell him don't worry. There's the Ombudsman, here's the Constitution. Those are your rights. Screw that permanent secretary take him to the Ombudsman ... he will look at me like I'm mad.

S.116 Why, why, who are you mixing with? The people I know, I more or less are the age of P. Actors, film makers ]

J.110 How significant are they? ]

S.117 They are hundred percent as significant as ]

V.107 How often do you visit Katutura, not ... I mean Katutura? ... Club Thriller.

J.111 How many of the government people, how many of the Benzies. The new ruling class, the black bourgeoisie (interruptions),

S.118 a couple, my actors are permanent secretaries and teachers and ex-presidents of NANSO, or whatever.

J.112 And then comes another question what do they tell you?

S.119 We don't get into issues about disempowerment

J.113 No we talking about ... ]

S.120 Its quite strange when we get together and we talking about where we are dealing with issues that are touching two hundred and fifty thousand people a night who watch television just on ... I am basing because this is something, people watch the television program and relate it to some kind of reality. When you got quarter of a million people watching something and you are step by step chipping away at disinformation, prejudices, all kinds of xenophobias favours and whatever, surely that is a step. You not trying to tell the people not to be white any more.

J.114 You do that with the youth ]

S.121 But the youth is the future.

J.115 Important here

? Ja. But you try to do that with a forty year old member of the ... but they charge ]

The world is manifested differently: there are multiple realities and acknowledgement of these is called for. There are material and 'ideal' realities, psychological and political realities and these are constituted as, at times, conflicting.

### 5.2.12. Identity

Identity is constituted in terms of a discourse of suffering, which includes having been a witness to the suffering of others, and of - experiences with - racism. It may be hypothesized that with identity thus constituted there is a strong emotional investment in the past of oppression and resistance to oppression.

V.07 Ah, I was coming to that the thing is I think the children who watched that movie were fundamentally from around here because if you had a child say from northern Namibia that child

will think of independence as the end of the war or the end of violence because as little they were some of the children they watched how the South African Caspirs would come and flatten! the mahango field and even destroy the houses and then they have to move to an uncle's house or so on so. These were some of the things that were, not experiences in parts of the country like in Windhoek for instance so they give you a different picture not only children from the north but any children from various parts of the country you know to view that you will get different answers but if it's just a bunch of kids within the urban area you know you don't - know now whether there was anything that touched a raw nerve. I mean to me I've been so hardened by events I've seen, talked to people like those that survived Cassinga and so on that and explain or tell other people what happened at Cassinga and many other events during the war so - I've answered that in my paper but hmm there is not much, there is not a single question that I would say really touched a raw nerve but touched me different ways you know .

Identity is constituted in terms of being knowledgeable about history, especially the history of one's region, including that of apartheid and the liberation struggle. Legitimacy is claimed on the basis of having been a witness to political activity and to history being made, specifically Namibian independence.

J.13 For instance women I mean I don't before independence there were practically no Oshiwambo women in the whole country you know. ]

.....  
J.14 They never came out you see under the contract labour system. The only Owambo (interrupted) ]

.....  
J.15 So was Caprivi ninety-five percent of Caprivians never came south of Tsumeb I noticed it now in the street because I grew up

here. I am used to only seeing Oshihero, Damara or Nama women only and I notice and we talk about it that's why specially the Owambo, especially the GDR kids and they're so different

V.23 ja (interruption)

J.16 from the type of women one used to see in Windhoek in the streets for instance Damara, Nama, Coloured, Baster. No Oshiwambo, no Kavangos. Only men came down.

J.37 Ja okay that was before. (interrupted). That was deliberately. I would think that as somebody in SWAPO would through living I don't know somewhere in Zambia or Angola absorbed from his environment but we're talking obviously there was a stronger confined history which was being preached. But - what scares the hell out of me is somebody who can look at this video and just comment about the clothes and stuff like that. How people looked, that means there was no understanding about the historical significance of the event but they missed it completely to look and say, look at Winnie Mandela's dress is to completely misunderstand the event. The dress was totally irrelevant, this was independence. What was relevant was Pik Botha standing there and de Klerk standing there while their flag after how many years? - say sixty years was being pulled down and were giving away. And Mandela witnessing that. And I watched those three faces. I was very close to them. Pik Botha and De Klerk were close and Mandela was a bit more to the side and I watched those faces because the history was being written not in who shake hands with or some because this was and you would think. I mean it scares the hell out of me is no response or trivial response about dresses or what whether the soldiers marching

Identity is constructed in terms of being aware of the thinking and experiencing of the ruling party members, being thus connected with them; legitimacy is claimed on this basis. However, these claims, if pushed too far,

are contested. In the following extract V questions J's attempts at legitimization.

J.32	.... I can tell SWAPO kids that I meet in the street. Sometimes for hours	
V.49	You mean GDR kids	
J.33	They do not know about it	]
V.50	... SWAPO kids or GDR kids?	]
J.34	Well, actually both.	]
V.51	laughs	]

Identity is constituted in terms of holding a complex, differentiated view of events and places (including Namibia before independence). Legitimacy is claimed for what is said by showing that one has access to a diversity of opinions and views, and on the basis of having had the courage to expose oneself to those views and having faced the dangers involved. In the following extract V, who has also situated himself as one who has come face to face with the injustices of the apartheid regime (see extract on Cassinga above), positions himself as one who was and still is critical of aspects of the resistance to apartheid.

V.25	I came when she was just about to finish her introduction ... second paragraph and I looked and I told her that "you are not qualified to write about Katutura". After a while I said look when you left Namibia you have never been south. You went to Tsumeb. To you anything made of bricks is beautiful. There are people in Katutura who have built beautiful houses just like the ones one sees in Klein Windhoek or places like that. But that's not the only story of Katutura and then she has to stop there. A few years later this person was made an ambassador.
------	--

V.102 Well in exile who were the people making statements, only the leaders. Only the leaders were making statements. They come to a camp okay the President is coming and then one political commissar address them and introduces the President. The President talks about the one thing and finish and they go away.

Identity is constructed in terms of being marginal in respect of nationality and of race; there is a refusal to accept group identification as defining. This refusal is articulated by drawing on the discourse of the individual. There is a strong underlying assumption that identity is constituted in terms of being Namibian, of being identified with and committed to Namibia. This becomes clear in the way the one person who constitutes his identity in terms of how he is not Namibian feels it necessary to justify and explain his non-identification with Namibia, and in the way his story is constituted as regrettable. However, not to be a full member of any national grouping and not to be clearly defined in terms of nationality is seen as 'normal' (see M93 in the next excerpt).

P.12 Honestly spoken I myself ahm -- still can't. I have difficulties to identify myself with this country with the culture and ah the mentality of all the how should I say of all the races across the board. I really can't ahm honestly spoken I am not how should I say planning to have a future here. That's a fact.

V.109 It's a very sad story ]

M.92 I've heard that from that ...

V.110 GDR kids

P.13 Look I grew up I grew up somewhere else I -- mm its quite difficult to explain.

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

P.17 It's primarily the culture I should say the culture people live. In Germany I grew up into a certain type of living in a certain, okay I know exactly with my skin colour I can never be a German, that's a fact ja, it's a natural fact, now mm I would I do not intend to to to take over the German citizenship. I really don't, but what I can imagine is that living there where I grew up where I you know]

V.113 Can identify.

P.18 Ja, identify with, but here I can't.

J.116 Actually that group is probably more between ]

V.114 It's a very sad ]

J.117 a rock and

M.93 but its a very common thing

J.118 a half place in a way, inside he's a German.

P.19 No, I'm not a German, no, no, no

V.115 Ja, but my kid is different, maybe because I am allowed in the culture.

Identity is constructed as being 'mixed', as not belonging to a specific ethnic group. Furthermore, it is possible to engage with the discourse of ethnicity ironically.

M.96 I think that's a regional thing. I grew up in Grootfontein which is very different from, it's very very different from here. I mean my grandfather is from the north, my mom is a Herero and when you look around Grootfontein most kids who came from that side their parents were mixed so you have never thought of yourself as a Herero or Owambo or whatever. If you look at ... it's Omaruru,

Otjiwarongo, Gobabis they are more mixed. They were not divided as they were divided in Windhoek..

V.123 It's also a generation thing, you know I think it is a generation thing. I lived in Windhoek from an early age I attended the Herero school. I have got many friends and when there are funerals or weddings I go there and we have these reunions and so on, and when I say this Herero chap, or he says this Owambo chap it is not meant to be racism. (interruptions hmhm) so it depends on how people do it and what generation we are talking about but it does exist, (interruptions) for instance we may say Omutukame, which simply means someone who speaks a language

Identity is posited as being marginal in the sense of not being politically correct.

S.107 .... But the point is that if the people are empowered.

M.89 By who?

S.108 By us.

M.90 Who are us?

S.109 The journalist people who can inform people. Psychologists ]

M.91 We are not marginalized in this country aren't we. I would say so.

Identity is constituted in terms of shaping the future, specifically in terms of creating cultural resources, and there is a strong sense of agency in this (see 5.2.2.: *Articulating the future*, extract marked S 27).



### **5.3. Differences between the student responses and the first discussion with norm originators.**

In view of the fact that a major concern for this research project is the articulation of difference, an attempt was made to discern how the text consisting of the student responses differs from the text consisting of the first norm originator discussion.

#### **5.3.1. Personal engagement/involvement**

The minority of the students - four out of eighteen - are really engaged in the accounts which they provide. Five students do not include anything subjective or personal in their accounts while nine students provide accounts which, even though they are in part constituted of personal likes, dislikes and opinions, are still distanced. In this sense the students tend to remain passive onlookers; they do not engage in and struggle with issues. Usually they simply do not see the issues or ignore them, but sometimes they also overtly refuse to engage with issues.

The norm originators, on the other hand, are fully and personally involved as they participate in the group discussion.

#### **5.3.2. Concrete, specific accounts of independence**

In relating the meanings of independence the norm originators, unlike the students, do not speak in terms of clichés; their articulations are much more personal and concrete in that they relate their own experiences of this public event and the specific consequences that the event has had for them (see 5.2.3.: *Independence* above).

A similar point can be made about relating to the future: the norm originators provide concrete visions. In other words, they articulate specific, detailed hopes for the future.

#### **5.3.3. The gains of independence**

Implicitly the norm originators are critical of the way material entitlement as a reward of independence has threatened to push aside other important gains, specifically freedom of expression. The responses of the students do not include an awareness of how the different gains might be conflictual.

There is no doubt in the norm originator text that independence is 'good', whereas such doubt exists in the responses of the students. Despite the norm originators' general assessment of independence as being 'good', there is also a strong sense that independence is not simply a happy ending, but that it introduces new difficulties and contains its own problematic. Such a differentiated view of independence tends to be absent from the student responses.

#### **5.3.4. Appearances and 'beyond'**

The students focus on what is evident, on the surface, 'before the eyes'. The norm originators, on the other hand, look 'behind' and 'beyond' the surface. For instance, they examine the historical and socio-economic contexts of what they perceive to be Namibia's present situation. A specific example is as follows: whereas students generally are interested in what people look like and in the clothes they wear, the norm originators are aware of class divisions and interests in Namibian society, and they have a clear view of how these class divisions structure and perpetuate the status quo.

Furthermore, there is contestation in the norm originator text of what 'reality' is. More specifically, 'reality' is constructed as material, ideal, sociological, political and psychological respectively. This is not the case with the student responses.

#### **5.3.5. Articulating the past**

Among the norm originators there is a powerful sense of the past. This is manifested in the way they articulate their own identities, in the way they see present power divisions as being legitimated, and in what they perceive to be the psychological make-up of many Namibians. The past is constituted by them as having left scars which are very much evident in the present.

The students, on the other hand, tend to posit a clean break between the past, present and future and there is little articulation of how events in the present are informed by what occurred in the past.

The norm originators tell multiple stories of the past. For instance, resistance against oppression is spoken of as multi-faceted and exile is constituted as a complex phenomenon. In the students' responses the past is spoken of in the general terms of violence and the struggle, if it is spoken of at all.

### **5.3.6. Tension between past and future**

The norm originator text is, on the one hand, quite concrete about what has to be discarded and what has to be left behind to create a new future. On the other hand, the past is evoked and kindled again and again. Thus, their deliberations are informed by an important tension which is not evident in the responses of the students.

Amongst the norm originators there seems to be a strong commitment to the community which they are part of: this comes across in the way they situate themselves in respect of past, present and future.

### **5.3.7. Constituting others in terms of race: engaging in the discourse of race**

The norm originators draw more extensively on the discourse of race than the students do. Only three students engage in this discourse. There is a powerful awareness in the norm originator text of how the discourse of race has had, and still has pernicious effects in the Namibian context. In the norm originator text the manner in which the discourse of race is engaged in differs widely. This ranges from calling for black unity in the Namibian context, a call which is challenged on the grounds of its racist implications, to drawing on the discourse of race to differentiate between oneself, one's experiential world and that of another participant (of another race group). Participants in the group discussion sometimes draw on the discourse of race to engage with one another, even as the discourse differentiates them.

Whereas the students draw on specific adjectives to describe black and white people respectively and assign particular attributes to them, the norm originators, even though they draw on a discourse of race, do not do this. Labelling, which is a form of distancing, does not play a role in the norm originator text.

### **5.3.8. Talk about role models/authority figures/heroes**

The norm originators talk about authority figures in a much more differentiated way than the students do. This applies specifically to talk about the Namibian President. In the response sets of the students there tend to be extremes such as reverence on the one hand and derogation on the other. The norm originators, when they speak about authority figures -

and they do so much more seldom than the students - tend to do so in an abstract, analytical manner. For example, they describe how politicians in Africa cast themselves and are cast by others in the mold of resistance to evil oppression. Thus, the norm originators try to see these authority figures within the historical and social contexts in which they emerge, or they call for a critical assessment of these authority figures.

Even though in the text of the students the existing role models/heroes/authority figures are at times reviled, nothing is said about them being replaced or at least being countered by alternative heroes. Thus, whereas in the text of the students the authority figures are there to stay and there is an inevitability about them, in the text of the norm originators this is not so strongly the case. Even though politicians are said to be there to stay, possibilities for creating new heroes are articulated.

#### **5.3.9. Talk about Namibians**

Those students who do describe and evaluate 'Namibians' do so either in terms of a continuum of 'us' as united - 'us' as differentiated (2), or they give Namibians negative labels, for example, as incompetent. The norm originators in this regard function on a different level of abstraction where they see such 'self - labelling' as indicative of a lack of self-respect. Thus, the norm originators, rather than engaging in the practice of 'bad-mouthing' Namibians, reflect on the fact that Namibians tend to 'bad-mouth' themselves.

#### **5.3.10. Namibia's position in the world**

Students sketch Namibia's position in the world in terms of economic relations, while the norm originators are focused on a more socio-psychological level. Specifically, the latter articulate the need to develop Namibian identities within a global context and they talk about the local creative efforts that this requires.

#### **5.3.11. Namibian - South African relationship**

The norm originators never discuss the relationship between Namibia and South Africa in the present even though there are occasional references to the pre-independence relationship. In the responses of the students this relationship is articulated, and this is done in terms of 'small brother - big brother'.

### **5.3.12. Focus on the present problems**

The norm originators spend much time discussing the present social and political situation in Namibia whereas the students hardly ever focus on the present. There is a pervasive consciousness amongst the norm originators of what is problematic now in and about Namibia, about what is not good or right.

### **5.3.13. Helplessness/powerlessness**

In analysing the present situation in Namibia the norm originators talk extensively about the prevalence of helplessness and powerlessness amongst the Namibian population and at times they situate themselves as powerless and fearful. This is in marked contrast to the students, only one of whom engages in a discourse of helplessness which is manifested in angry withdrawal/distancing. Even though the norm originators constitute Namibian society and occasionally themselves in terms of a discourse of helplessness and powerlessness, they also search for solutions, and articulate different ways to get out of the present problematic situation. In this manner they articulate a sense of hope.

Thus, although the norm originators talk about helplessness and powerlessness, they themselves seem not to be helpless or powerless.

### **5.3.14. Self-creation**

Whereas the language of self-creation is engaged in by the norm originators, this language is not evident in the articulations of the students.

### **5.3.15. Power**

When the students talk about power, they do so in terms of the orderly take-over of power by Namibia from South Africa and in terms of Namibia's power or lack thereof in a more global context. The norm originators, too, reflect on Namibia's power in a global context, but they also discuss how power is 'distributed' and exercised inside Namibia, and the mechanisms by which this is done. Furthermore, the norm originators constitute power in terms of access to material wealth, political influence and influence on people's perceptions and ideas, for instance, through the media.

Although the norm originators constitute the exercise of political power in an African context such as Namibia as being based on the relationship between black and white, on the resistance to apartheid as well as on charismatic political leaders, they also conceptualize political action in terms of how people might exert their influence in matters they deem important. In this way they construct themselves as being political actors and as exercising power.

This sense of exercising some political power is not present in the responses of the students.

#### **5.3.16. Commitment**

Commitment to Namibia is assumed amongst the norm originators. This becomes evident in, amongst other things, the way in which group participants are emotionally involved in the problems facing their communities and in how they attempt to find solutions. This is not the case for the students.

#### **5.3.17. Identity**

There is much variation amongst the norm originators with respect to how identity is constituted. This ranges from articulating a marginal identity, to positing a 'mixed' identity, to situating oneself as being fully identified with Namibia. This range is not evident in the responses of the students.

### **5.4. Analysis of second discussion with norm originators**

The third phase of data generation consisted in involving the same norm originators who took part in the second phase of data generation in another group discussion. Unfortunately, one of the norm originators, M, had to cancel at the last minute. The main focus point for discussion was the researcher's analysis of the previous meeting. As in the previous phase this second session was recorded on tape and later transcribed. It was then analysed in accordance with Parker's (1992) criteria for recognizing and analysing discourse as explicated in the previous chapter.

#### **5.4.1. Articulating the past**

In this text the past is related, not as an abstraction, but is rendered concrete in the actions of specific people, including relatives and acquaintances. There is an insistence, articulated in the extracts J.08 and J.36 below, that any other telling of the past would be limited and, to an extent, a falsification.

Thus, the past is a patchwork of individual narratives which weave in and out of one another; this despite the existence of systemic restrictions such as racial segregation.

V.01 Well, - there are many issues that I can identify with, for instance the first issue here articulating the past. When I think about the past, it must be older than fifty years I can never leave out the coming into power of the nationalists in South Africa and what followed later on up to 1990 when we got our independence in all that period, you know when I was younger, when I became older I started understanding what happened as to when I was much younger, so I can put it into focus as an abandoned past or something like that could be condemned, forgotten and not something that should be condemned actually, so the past is very much alive - when you think about the present and the future you can't divorce the three.

J.02 I remember a situation when B [first name of one of cabinet ministers], just after independence we were at a cocktail party hmmm he is fantastic telling stories, [surname of the cabinet minister], and he described how after independence he

V.14 hmmm

J.03 And he described how after independence - he grew up in Usakos -

V.15 ja

J.04 old man Berger had the shop there.

V.16 ja, I used to buy from there too, ja

J.05 and how he how he drove the first time he drove to the coast I drove drove through Usakos and then this is this element that you talk about this sort of human experience shared across this divide of being driven back and stop at the shop and he said he wanted

to see old man Berger. Now he wasn't in the shop when they fetched him and they like fell into each others arms although

V.17 hmm

J.06 Although B. had been a little guy and he always remembered and in the values of the day old man Berger was relatively speaking a liberal. In other words he was known in the Usakos location to be a sort of "fair white man or something like that"

J.08 I've got a complaint. In some ways it's to me I think in terms of the analysis it speaks generalized in an African sense. Hmm, ignoring to an extent some very interesting Namibian I think one of strongest Namibian features, which shapes all our experiences is the small number of people as opposed Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and places like that. These things you talk about are also an element of scale.

J.36 but this ja the I think to an extent, I think also this talking sort of brings out the - I think the Namibianess of what I feel that's to an extent in some of the interpretation is somewhat abstract, academic which is again a function of this, it's too global

The past is related nostalgically and as having been ideal, for instance, there was solidarity amongst people then and people lived a rich social life. The fore-fathers and -mothers are depicted as dignified, worthy and strong. In the midst of grinding poverty the forebears were rich. Even though there is an awareness of the psychological mechanisms which play a role in constructing an idealized past, it is still possible to identify with this construction and to enjoy it.

A.30 My aunt grew up in the old location. She used to tell us stories you know the old location was so nice. Well it was shanty houses but they all so neat and you know it was well structured and what we became actually so like really envious, you know like I wish I was there I wish I could also experience, but we were kids and we sometimes kept on talking about this. Why don't you tell other



stories, this old location we are tired of it. And then she put up an example like, "you are now here in Katutura. What will happen to you if you were removed like now while you were here and you were removed to total different areas which you don't know what is there and you were dumped there". So you know she she really put us through experiencing what they had really experienced and I think I always enjoy listening to them (murmured agreement) because even my uncle when he passed before he passed away he said he wanted to be buried there and hmm they should first walk around where the family were living they, should walk around that place before they take him to the graveyard. You know I think it's like you were there in Klein Windhoek you grew up there and immediately you have been removed so all your values and whatever you have experienced there it's like going back so I think I really have got empathy with them, feelings what they have experiences but then again we are now in a different situation like us who grew up in Katutura, we grew up in the life of running, SWAPO meetings you know those things tear gas and that was our life, very fast life, not living peacefully very fast.

K.28 That was really a slow life and they stood for what they wanted.

A.31 Ja

K.29 I don't think that it could happen in Katutura people stand together as they stood together.

A.32 Ja, they were like one big family, if you listen to the stories they were like one big family.

K.30 Ja its true (all speaking together) Those people from the old location. They all know each other. They all spoke.

J.88 It probably like one big prison camp it seemed to be a very strong community. Everybody I talk to always talks about the old location.

- A.33 And normally when you listen to it it's like good memories that you feel that will never happen in Katutura (agreement) for example they used to have a hall a dancing hall
- V.98 ... or something what was the name. ]
- J.89 It was called the International Hall and then they had .... hall. ]
- K.31 So when my father tells me about these stories I always see myself you know in that hall, even music that they would play there ]
- V.99 We played jazz. ]
- K.32 ... .. as if I was there but I barely there, I wasn't even born but it's like I wish we people could go back to that and
- J.90 and the school under the tree and old Mrs Kloppers ... and St. Andrews and all that
- K.33 Ja, ja
- J.91 and there was you know hmm the chiefs the relationship like old Mrs Kloppers ... .. it wasn't just, where it was an integrated school. This was the important thing, everybody kept on talking all the Nama, Damara, almal saam you know. They were all in one school
- K.34 Hmmhmm
- J.92 and then later it got split into Damara, Herero.
- A.34 And its very funny, you can tell you know like. I find the people who grew up in Katutura, the old toppies or the old ladies. When they walk in the street you can tell you know this is are the old location people. The way they behave. (all speaking together)]

J.93 Dignity ]

A.35 ja, dignity ]

In response to the analysis of the previous discussion, forgetfulness in respect of the past (of oppression and suffering) is constituted as tantamount to accepting all the injustices done and thus collaborating in one's oppression. This would be a betrayal of oneself.

V.02 No, no I was trying to say that ah when I was much younger, maybe three four or five years old, maybe I couldn't understand why why we did not live in houses like the houses in which the European lived.

G.02 right

V.03 Because I was too young to be able to analyse those things. But as I became older, I started understanding the past much better and then I reached a stage where I was critical

V.04 and then a stage where I started condemning the past for instance I had a personal vendetta against the colonial regime. My father was killed by a member of the South African police force when I was twelve years old and nothing happened because he is considered as someone who died for unknown reasons and there was an inquest and the thing was over and the policeman was never charged with anything, you know they just erased everything, so as I was growing older that thing in me also grew stronger so the desire to be able to do something about the regime was therefore charged from a very early age.

G.04 So you had a very strong sense that justice was not done.

V.05 ja

#### 5.4.2. Discourse of intimacy, familiarity, closeness, connectedness

Contained in the second norm originator discussion is the following sense: 'We are characters in the same narratives; we know each other.' Furthermore, knowing one another is constituted as providing safety: it keeps Namibians from committing violence against one another.

J.10 .... and this place had and then I think very much you would probably like to the experience of the old location, it's very different from the Soweto experience and the large part of that is the scale, the sheer scale of it. This country is more similar to Botswana, Chad, Mali, Central African Republic let's say small that's why, I think we are also more tolerant and less violent because the smaller the population, that's the difference between Mongolia and China, the smaller the population the more in proportion the people know each other

V.20 hmm

J.11 the more human it is. They grow up together you know. If you will remember twenty whites here it is very different from something like you remembering twenty whites in Jo'burg where there are like three million of them or in Lagos where there are eight or twelve million.

V.21 Like for instance I was looking for Edward Eggars and I saw a house that had his name on and every time I went there he wasn't there. I used to work for his father well they had the shop just near Louis Botha there and I used to be his playmate and there are many other German speaking boys that I remember some Jewish families like Goldblatts for instance, the owners of [name of shop] now at the moment. My father used to work for them and the other day I met Frau Goldblatt in town, at Kafee Schneider with other old ladies from that era. I knew her specifically because my father was working for her, I moved over greeted her in German and others were all surprised that "how could such a young man know such an old lady". (laughter) You know so the conversation started so "oh no this is the son of our

friend" what, what, what, what and we greeted each other and I left, now things like that in Namibia are common.

J.12 It's very intimate.

V.22 ja

S.03 That's why I find your. What you got out of the last meeting came across as so negative. That is really how it seems. I know that I would look at it and think because everybody, although everybody is more or less racially divided or socially or financially or whatever. Because we are so intimate there is so much hope. That didn't come out of the last meeting. ]

J.17 .... of course one never, comparison doesn't help anyway. In a way it's an abstraction to say that we are not better off purely because of the smallness of the country we are not better off than say Nigeria but then you, somebody sitting here and saying well I live here I do not live in Nigeria and so what, how does it help me, but I would also support this that I think one of the country's one thing which makes me optimistic about the country even if things go wrong is this intimacy, is the the human scale. I think it would be very difficult to have violence, internecine even between black groups like they say Herero, Owambo or so because everybody you know half of you or they are related, they went to school with the sister or know the father or the mother you know I think for this side of society to unravel like a Czechoslovakian, like a Yugoslavian thing. It is more difficult. ]

S.05 ... that's why you were saying is even when the war was happening the elements of compassion from both sides in this very quiet way here it's not the brutality and the cruelty in such large scales like Bosnia ]

The discourse of intimacy is juxtaposed with a discourse of separateness, of division based on race. This juxtaposition can be put as follows: 'I knew their (white) world so intimately and yet we were miles apart.'

V.19 .... Ja it's interesting it's there is a poem that I wrote about about the old location now what was it, called "Contrast". It's a pity I don't have a copy of the poem here because the house was just the other side of the river bed I could see lights going on in the white neighbourhood and imagined those kids listening to the radio not all battery operated but connected to the current and I am using a radio that is battery operated and I can't use it for a long time because the battery would go flat, only when it's necessary, maybe the news or some ... program but then I can't switch on the electricity because there was none. I had to use a hurricane lamp, you know and then do my homework, you see, so in one point I described that feeling of living so next the white neighbourhood that what my age mates were doing because I knew in inside of some of those houses I've been in the bedroom of those boys you know. playing you know or drawing you know, you see so I know. I remember the time when I didn't have a bicycle of my own then I go there and we will be riding with the bicycles and you know and talking about films and the things that we had, now there was something that we read every week. I used to spend about something like either two shillings or one shilling and six-pence per week just buying magazines, I'll buy "Die Jongspan" produced in South Africa, not necessarily for black kids, I'll buy "Knockout" from Britain and I cannot remember what other comics, whatever there was, ... or whatever, so I read American comics British comic also shows you that when you are a kid you know you reason differently. You think those parents have so much money to buy so many magazines and newspapers and your own parents can't even buy a daily newspaper, so you felt that unfairness in the system.

Furthermore, there is a tension between the separateness imposed by an encompassing social structure on the one hand, and the day to day interactions between people across these divisions on the other. It is this, the combination of years of apartheid and the resultant racial awareness, and the intense connections between people across these divides that makes

Namibia unique. The extract above is illustrative of this point and so are the ones that follow.

V.13 Ja, old location just here nearby because our house was very near Louis Botha, just across the river, so I knew families who used to live in all these areas. So when I was - abroad you know I imagined, maybe one day going to join the forces and fighting against schoolmates, I mean playmates, guys that I used to play with. I used to have that feeling that, you know I .... it could happen or it has happened to a number of people who who were probably fighting against the son of the man where his father or mother worked you know something of the sort, you know and there were also things that made us feel it doesn't mean that because SWAPO was fighting the colonial regime they had no human feelings. The thing was fast, you're fighting against the structure and you are fighting against those who are defending that structure. I remember a very sad story where twins of the SADF were killed in a landmine explosion. Now it's a rule of the war that you can't have two brothers in the same platoon, they have go to be divided and these guys were divided, one was you know a different platoon and so on but as they were coming back from an engagement they decided to drive together in one vehicle and they went over a landmine and both died there. So I for instance remember when I was discussing it with other people and saying that now what about the family? How do they feel having lost two people at once? This is just a family, they probably not concerned as to whether the blacks would come and rule and so on and their children were just conscripted, now you have to think about this family that has lost two people now there are issues like that that we used to discuss and this is probably something that people on the other side of the what's name never thought of. Ja. It was a quite an experience.

Being intimately connected entails knowing the differences between people; specifically, ethnicity becomes a means of knowing one another rather than being a divisive force. It is because Namibians are both divided and intimate

that there is hope for the future (see second extract under this heading, S.03).

V.26 Something fascinated foreigners when they came to Namibia during the days of UNTAG. We were sitting at a cafe and someone passed, "hallo hallo, V., hallo. This guy asked me "what is she?" I say "no, she's a Rehoboth Baster". Another one come "hallo, hallo, hallo", "and she is she a Rehoboth Baster. I say no that one is a Coloured, then she passed and then another one comes, he said, ... "and this one?". "No this one is a Herero." "But they all look the same, how could one be Coloured, one be Baster and one be Herero, and I said "it's in your eyes and it's a matter of upbringing whether you are brought up as a Oshiwambo speaking person and your culture is that of an Oshiwambo speaking person, or a Herero or a Coloured or a Baster, because a Baster would only be from Rehoboth, a Coloured could be from Keetmanshoop. Anyone who speaks Afrikaans and not Nama-Damara but being from parents who are either Herero, Damara things like that, and that thing still confuses people in Namibia, because they no longer know who is Baster, who is Kleurling, who is Herero who is this. Look, if you are looking in the telephone book and you are looking for Linda Schulz and you drive to Linda Schulz house and she opens you won't expect to find a Coloured woman or a gentleman who is as dark as I am. And yet she's Schulz, this kind of thing can only happen in Namibia.

The discourse of intimacy intersects with a discourse of power; thus, (sexual) intimacy across divides, particularly racial divides is constituted as forced, as being, in effect, rape. However, such intimacy is also depicted as being engaged in by consenting partners and it is formalized in marriage. The following extract provides examples of both these manifestations of intimacy.

V.43 Ja, very few people have been charged with the Immorality Act in Namibia and yet the children born from this interracial sexual relationship are quite many and there are incidents like there was an old Herero ... called Kariku who used to tell stories about the



German military officers, when they came to the Hereros were kept in concentration camp. A young officer would take M.[woman's name] today for about seven days and keep her there and then bring her back and tomorrow take A. [woman's name] for another seven days and keep her there and then you will find people within one family having the same grandfather. Incident like that. Go there and you will find this is von Francois because the officer he was busy with so and so. ]

A.01 Unfortunately ]

G.20 Sorry, say that again A. ]

A.02 I said I am from [German surname] from my grandfather's side and [German surname] from my grandmother's side, so it was E [German surname] who came from German Koblenz and they find a place which looks like a Koblenz in Germany and they actually meant Koblenz here in Namibia and so they was staying in that area and they got children he got a child with a Himba

V.44 HmmHmm

A.03 woman with is my great grandmother's side and the other one just a Herero woman from the south which is my great grandfather's side so they end up getting married to each other but both their parents, even now you see. Postcards they used to send from Germany, Christmas cards and all those things.

#### 5.4.3. Local-universal discourse

What is characteristic of the second norm originator text is how an awareness of encompassing socio-political structures is permeated by small local narratives of relatedness and familiarity with other people. Resistance to the larger system is posited as always having been informed by an intimate, personal knowledge of those who, willy-nilly, kept the structure intact. The struggle to hold on to and to remember the local stories in the face of larger structural demands is also a struggle to remain humane (even as surely the effective resistance to larger systems would have required that such stories

be forgotten). Specifically, Namibians are depicted as relating to one another in terms of race, a very general category, but also in terms of small-scale personal histories. For illustrations of these points see 5.4.2. *Discourse of intimacy, familiarity, closeness, connectedness*, the extracts of V13 and V19.

#### 5.4.4. Identity

Identity is powerfully constituted in terms of moving in different spheres, overstepping boundaries, steeping oneself in the 'stuff' of different worlds, material and mental; these worlds are deemed to be precious. This sense can be articulated as follows: 'I did not let apartheid close other worlds to me and keep me from knowing the 'other', and consequently I also became acutely aware of inequity and injustice.'

V.19 .... so in one point I described that feeling of living so next the white neighbourhood that what my age mates were doing because I knew in inside of some of those houses I've been in the bedroom of those boys you know, playing you know or drawing you know, you see so I know. I remember the time when I didn't have a bicycle of my own then I go there and we will be riding with the bicycles and you know and talking about films and the things that we had, now there was something that we read every week. I used to spend about something like either two shillings or one shilling and six-pence per week just buying magazines, 'I'll buy "Die Jongspan" produced in South Africa, not necessarily for black kids. I'll buy "Knockout" from Britain and I cannot remember what other comics, whatever there was. ... or whatever, so I read American comics British comic also shows you that when you are a kid you know you reason differently. You think those parents have so much money to buy so many magazines and newspapers and your own parents can't even buy a daily newspaper, so you felt that unfairness in the system.

Many stories are told of confused and confusing identities, and all these stories are different. These are also stories of how people have escaped classifications and how they have manoeuvred themselves into classifications and places where, strictly speaking, they do not 'belong'.

J.25 Guys like that sitting, and there was a lot of bull like this. I remember some of the SWAPO guys that were in Cape Town in the late fifties who got themselves classified as Coloureds S. [name of politician] was one. ]

S.08 I was working with these guys, four guys and because of the person who paid for the production wanted a demographically sound group of people identified so I had to ask, you know what's your background, Herero [Tape no longer audible], from or Usakos, so I just don't get it. I would struggle with the German, Afrikaans, English speak to, anyway, so I ended up asking them and I don't think one of the guys actually was either. Herero, one guy's mother was a Nama, the father was an Herero and the other one's mother was from the north and his mother was from the east and eventually I just said, well that's fine, I've got everybody, the whole country being four people. (laughter) It takes care of that, but yes I also got the negativity from everything being racial, I mean being white, you are so aware all the time for me that I am white and what it represents

J.19 Or Baster (interruptions) And what fascinates me is the newspaper guys. They can all, and they are young see at a hundred metres see the difference between a Boer and a German (many interjections) they run around,

S.17 they have never got me right.

K.03 No it's true you can tell even when it's a lady or a man, you can tell this is German, this is English and this Afrikaner (interruptions)

J.20 They know (interruptions), Allgemeine Zeitung. They are hundreds of metres (many interjections)

K.04 From a very young age they can tell.

J.21 I said in South Africa why don't they sell the Allgemeine or the Republikein. You not a Boer. They won't hand the Boer Allgemeine Zeitung, no ways

S.18[whose home language is English] They will hand me the Republikein or the Allgemeine, they will never hand me the Namibian. I always have have them I think (interruptions)

J.22 now obviously this well being me judges German or English or it make you physiologically close to Germans than to Afrikaans.

S.19 It's just a little fraud in the (laughter) ]

J.54 I heard this bizarre conversation I crossed the road from the Bistro and just in front of me walks one of the GDR girls and a German guy from Germany .... and they obviously having a fight. She says to him in perfect German "sprech doch sprech doch anstaendiges Deutsch Du bloeder Hund" (laughter) You know "can't you talk proper German?" Like an idiot, she says to him and she's black and he's white and he talks this thick Austrian accent which I cannot even understand. You would irritate the hell out of me and there's this Owambo eighteen year old Owambo girl saying in perfect German " why can't you speak decent German you asshole" (laughter) and I nearly packed out because you know it was a complete reversal. Your situation [P's] is a bit I could sort of feel when I go to Germany when you come here, you black but you detribalized in some way you know you made .... (laughter) and a black person will walk up to you and think you black and treat you as black and talk to you and then you and then you will have a hard time describing in spite of your looks were different actually as some type of German, like when I am in Germany I speak German and everybody assumes I am German and I am not. I am emotionally vastly removed from what the German German is like in Frankfurt and Munich. I am a detribalized semi-anglicized white African type bastard (laughter) total bastard. I'm, when I am in Germany I become intensely aware of my non-Germaness whereas here everybody says "oh Deutsche". Ja I am nailed down as a German, over there and I

eventually got so fed up with the situation and I spoke English only in Germany because then I didn't have to explain ....

Identity is articulated as adaptable in the sense of being able to relate to many different people and of living in terms of different ideologies.

P.13 a, that's why ... okay hmm. In Germany, I mean I grew up in Germany and I how should I say, I got adaptable ]

V.71 Before you start with black people, go on -- socially do you click with the young people from here? Like going out with a girlfriend, for instance from here and you are from Germany. Do you click? (interruptions)

....

P.14 How should I say can I. Ja, I mean ja ]

V.72 Like your girlfriend, I met her the other day she's from here ]

P.15 She's from here, I am quite adaptable. (interruptions) ]

....

....

....

....

P.18 What I was saying is. What I was saying. Maybe hmm I regard us very adaptable. We grew up in a socialist country which eventually broke down. We had certain values which we were taught in school keeping the socialist value brought down, capitalism, we had to change (interruptions) and then we had to change. And then we had to come down here and go to our families. There were a lot of struggles I think very adaptable. ]

Identity is constituted in terms of different discourses which intersect with each other: in terms of a discourse of race, specifically of interracial relationships, and of social class.

A.02 I said I am from [German surname] from my grandfather's side and [German surname] from my grandmother's side, so it was E [German surname] who came from German Koblenz and they find a place which looks like a Koblenz in Germany and they actually meant Koblenz here in Namibia and so they was staying in that area and they got children he got a child with a Himba

V.44 HmmHm

A.03 woman with is my great grandmother's side and the other one just a Herero woman from the south which is my great grandfather's side so they end up getting married to each other but both their parents, even now you see. Postcards they used to send from Germany, Christmas cards and all those things.

V.45 Ja

G.21 A., as you were growing up under the previous system, you were aware of this obviously?

A.04 Ja

G.22 What was that like for you then?

A.05 Umm., no those years when we were kids, and we were actually more they were better off they were like the rich people in the village so hmm we everyone would come and get cream, milk buy bread from them so we were like you know hmm, because they got another surname after [German surname] and [German surname] and they were Kasette which was also apparently taken from German's side. I don't know what it meant. So they were we were more like on the white side

#### 5.4.5. Discourse of race

The norm originators depict the lives of Namibians as inevitably permeated by racial awareness because of the history of the country; it is a matter of fact. On the one hand, the preponderance of a racial discourse is spoken of with a sense of resignation and this can be articulated as follows: 'the history of racism is imprinted in me, on my skin and I cannot escape it, but I must live with it, however uncomfortably'. On the other hand, race and racial divisions are spoken of ironically, playfully and humorously. The humour is closely connected with how people fall between racial categories.

J.14 .... then there's the second thing of course the experience I think of apartheid and that's one of my complaints [about the analysis of the previous discussion] is that it's strictly too much just simply as a colonial experience on par with say Nigeria or Kenya, which is not the case. Southern Africa and you get that when you talk to Ghanians and Ghanians come here and Zambians, Nigerians. They know the this in a short time and for a couple of days they keep on coming is essentially racist but nowhere else was it so clearly and juristically defined and it was for such a long time as in South Africa and Namibia. It's clearly, it's quite a difference. I remember especially the west coast in Africa. I used to I remember once the legal adviser of Athisaari is a Ghanian ... he once made quite a long analysis of this. He said you know I have been all over Africa you know he had been a professor in Ghana in the earlier days and he had been ... in the liberation struggle and he said "I have never seen any part of the world and I didn't know it existed that is so permeated by racial awareness." He says, never nowhere nowhere in Africa ....

V.24 Ja

S.07 It's the whole racial thing. It's the whole racial thing but if we ever want to get away from it so we may as well turn the whole racial thing around and make an issue that would turn to our advantage, make it fashion. (Laughter)

K.02 It's becoming a fashion nowadays, don't you think.

S.08 I was working with these guys, four guys and because of the person who paid for the production wanted a demographically sound group of people identified so I had to ask, you know what's your background, Herero [Tape no longer audible], from or Usakos, so I just don't get it. I would struggle with the German, Afrikaans, English speak to, anyway, so I ended up asking them and I don't think one of the guys actually was either, Herero, one guy's mother was a Nama, the father was an Herero and the other one's mother was from the north and his mother was from the east and eventually I just said, well that's fine, I've got everybody, the whole country being four people. (laughter) It takes care of that, but yes I also got the negativity from everything being racial, I mean being white, you are so aware all the time for me that I am white and what it represents

V.27 Yeah, yeah

S.09 and what it comes from and what our folks did and what background regardless whether we believe or not. ]

....  
....  
....

S.11 .... I often stand in a bank, and you know when you in a bank you are in a long queue and you stand around and you look around and without realizing I don't know J., being tall, I suppose sometimes you feel it as well you look and you realize because you looking often just above everybody else

V.30 Yeah

S.12 you the only white person

V.31 Yeah

S.13 there, and there's no it's just all of a sudden that you realize that your soul is a white soul ]



....  
 ....  
 ....  
 S.15 But anyway I was relating that bank thing as a positive  
 thing ]

In responding to the researcher's analysis of the first discussion, participants point out that racial awareness as such is not necessarily problematic. This is, for instance, illustrated in S's story as cited above, about standing in a queue in a bank. Furthermore, the fact that people are often unaware of race and do not evaluate in terms of race is an achievement.

S.16 I don't know how other people and more or less aware of it it is just interesting that in Windhoek and often if you travel around the country you do become unaware of it. It is which is a great thing you know considering where things could be going. We could have been fleeing with the .... at the moment.

There is much contestation regarding the 'nature' of race; whether it is a matter of skin colour, a matter of upbringing or of cultural background.

P.03 [to understand the significance of this excerpt it should be kept in mind that P's skin colour is dark] As I see one's being how should I say, one's being is actually characterized by one's identity and the identity is formed by the way you grow up. Let's say for instance, somebody looks like for instance [V's son], he is light in colour, I don't know how is he the way, I grew up with them hmm, I regarded myself just as just like they would, I mean the mentality and everything. I don't know, maybe he changed I don't know.

V.37 [My son], you can tell that he's not white.

P.04 Ja okay, not white, okay somebody everybody else here would say he is a Coloured or something ]

- V.38 Ja, ja he is a Coloured, they speak Afrikaans to them and he will tell them that, "ek praat nie Afrikaans nie, ek praat net Duits en Owambo taal.
- P.05 Ja, okay let's say if he is together with some Coloured guys the skin is the same but I would not say the mentality. ]
- V.39 No the mentality, this is something that I mentioned earlier. I don't know whether you were here that it depends how you were brought up when I was talking about Coloureds, you know Basters ]
- J.23 I can't see if you were brought up in Europe. ]
- P.06 But if somebody was brought up you cannot see them, why ]
- V.40 No but the Coloureds and the Whites, I can tell (interjections) around this area [points to the eyes]. It is like (interjections) the Chinese and the Japanese. They can differentiate and say he is Japanese, and not Chinese (interjections). But you can't because you are not from Asia ja, you are not familiar with that so you cannot tell who is Japanese and who is Asian and who is Korean ]
- S.20 Sorry, the satirist Pieter Dirk Uys I don't know if you've seen any of his stuff. He was here the other day and he read a thing that Helen Suzman was a liberal. She once a year she would ask for there reclassification in South Africa and they have to read it in Parliament and three hundred white people reclassified as Coloured. Thirteen Coloureds became white people, and every year they did this

#### 5.4.6. Discourse of difference

The norm originator text includes a focus on the peculiarities of different groups of people in Namibia as manifested in dress, in the way people talk and in surnames.

Vi01 I was just wondering if I am not wrong you talked a lot about the black and white racial segregation what about mmm segregation among the black.

S.26 That was new to me. I think that all the black people were uniform.

V.66 Now with blacks, Nama, Damara, Owambo or Herero and so on. You know at times I can't distinguish who is Herero, who is Oshiwambo, but if I speak to the person and ask for a name, I know exactly this one comes from Okavango, or Katima or Herero or he's Oshiwambo .... because of the surname.

S.32 Hmm

A.13 But also the

V.67 ja

A.14 younger generation now. It's very difficult now to see which one is. But I think somewhere there one could still tell this is pure Nama person that one is pure name or that one is a mix or something that he was saying a mix of Nama or Damara, but I think the young generation, it's now difficult to tell because there are a lot of intermarriages and inter- relationships. ]

V.68 You know years ago I would know a Herero man from a distance because he will be wearing a hat

A.15 and carrying a

V.69 and carrying a stick even if he works as a mechanic. When he knocks off at five o'clock he will go and have a shower put on his suit whatever blazer or something his tie put on his hat take his walking stick and go home and you could tell by them that that's a Herero walking there you may find an Owambo dressed like that but you could also tell that this is an Owambo by the way they dressed and then come the others, the Nama, the Damara, the

Herero one could distinguish from afar, but it's no longer the case, they will all be wearing blue jeans, you will not find that a Herero with a hat in town only at the wedding or at a funeral when you go to these ethnic ]

K.12 I think they got the style from the Germans ]

V.71 Ah but the thing is the Hereros had the thing just like the Jews that you cannot be in the public setting without your ekori like the hat gear that the kaalkop people put on, the woman that is known as ekori which is a hat or something for a hat the Jews always put on the smaller thing, and so on ]

The discourse of difference is articulated in terms of language and cultural, as well as ethnic and racial distinctions. These distinctions tend to become mixed up in the sense of being used interchangeably at times.

Namibia is constituted as being unique because people are so highly differentiated in terms of cultural and ethnic affiliation (see 5.4.2.: *Discourse of intimacy, familiarity, closeness, connectedness*, sixth extract, V.26). On the one hand, distinctions between people, especially ethnic distinctions, are depicted as being clear, easily recognizable, and as an aspect of another person's identity which one can be certain of and as something that will surface, even if it has remained hidden for a while.

V.35 You know it's strange. I am with P.'s mate, my son doesn't know the distinction between a Coloured and a white as such in Namibia not because his hair is more like mine so he can relate to that but then there are Coloureds whose hair are not like his but like yours, you know I have got a way of telling who is Coloured and who is not, even when they are supposed to pass for white or something like that, (interruption) what I have to do, if they are wearing glasses they must take off the glasses. Somewhere in this area tells I don't know how. I may look at them (interruptions) I can say this one is Coloured, this one is white ]

J.19 Or Baster (interruptions) And what fascinates me is the newspaper guys. They can all, and they are young see at a hundred metres see the difference between a Boer and a German (many interjections) they run around,

V.42 In 1962 there was a Coloured girl working for Pink and Blue in Walvis Bay and this girl her friends, thought most of her boyfriends were white and her friends said, ag come on so and so you can play white because you have everything about the white and then a year later a woman came from South Africa looking for her daughter a white woman and she was looking for this girl. When she was born the mother was poor so she handed the child over to a Coloured woman to bring her up. You see now the girl had to be reclassified from Coloured to white. ]

On the other hand, these distinctions are seen to be blurred and arbitrary and participants relate experiences of being classified 'wrongly' (see 5.4.4.: *Identity*, the fourth excerpt where S insists that the newspapers sellers mistake him for a German or Afrikaner; 5.4.6.: *Discourse of difference*, 1st excerpt, specifically A.14). On the one hand, all Namibians are depicted as being engaged in making such distinctions as a matter of course (see 5.4.2. *Discourse of intimacy, familiarity, closeness, connectedness*, the sixth extract). On the other hand, they are constituted as not being concerned about such distinctions.

Although groups of people in Namibia are distinct, they have learnt one another's language, sought one another's company, built intimate relationships and had children across the divides, even before independence. Thus, people have transgressed boundaries, especially racial divisions. (apart from the first excerpt below, see also 5.4.4.: *Identity*, extract 7, A's family history). Sometimes the transgression of boundaries has been such that the most distinguishing characteristic of a group is what they have appropriated from another group, for instance, a style of dress or words.

J.32 [J is a white man] .... On my grandfather's farm there were about fifty people and they have been there for three generations. My grandmother and the Nama matriarch of that group was the same

age, born the same year as my grandmother. Her daughters grew up with my mother and I grew up with their children and everybody spoke Nama. My grandmother spoke Nama practically better than her own because she spend the whole day with them my grandfather never talked so she only talked the whole day, and I grew up with just my mother speaks Nama fluently

S.25 So do you speak Nama?

J.33 I then it's a pity I spoke as a kid, but then I ended up in Swakopmund too long in the school and holidays were too short and then I lost it but I still sort of when I go south I sort of like look around, these faces they like specially the smaller they are you know I was (interrupted) ]

V52 There used to be someone just near to Louis Botha [a shop] that Max Werner who used to have a shop, it was just directly opposite our house. His wife spoke Nama Damara fluently and so did Edward. Herbert Eggars' wife could also speak Damara Nama fluently.

J.34 My mother spoke it fluently when she met Hage [the Prime Minister who speaks Nama-Damara] for the first time she went [making click sounds typical of the language] off. (laughter) and I thought it was very funny. ....

...  
...  
...

J.36 but this ja the I think to an extent, I think also this talking sort of brings out the - I think the Namibianess of what I feel that's to an extent in some of the interpretation is somewhat abstract, academic which is again a function of this, it's too global

In the following extract that which is most characteristic of Herero men is a style of dress adopted from the Germans.

V.68 You know years ago I would know a Herero man from a distance because he will be wearing a hat

A.15 and carrying a

V.69 and carrying a stick even if he works as a mechanic. When he knocks off at five o'clock he will go and have a shower put on his suit whatever blazer or something his tie put on his hat take his walking stick and go home and you could tell by them that that's a Herero walking there you may find an Owambo dressed like that but you could also tell that this is an Owambo by the way they dressed and then come the others, the Nama, the Damara, the Herero one could distinguish from afar, .... ]

K.12 I think they got the style from the Germans ]

The discourse of difference, especially with respect to ethnic grouping, at times turns into 'different and unequal' talk, but difference also arouses interest.

A.09 I think it's because especially from the Herero side they make their children believe that other people are not good. they are the best and even I can tell you what happened some few weeks ago. I was in a car and the radio was on, but it was Nama-Damara station so this lady was I could hear she was complaining about something so I asked the guy next to me what is she talking about. He said "no, she's complaining about a child." She has got a child in a Herero man so she was studying and they came to take the child to help her out but now they don't want to bring the child back because they say the child is going to get Damara manners or whatever, Damara culture so they make the Hereros are people who believe that they are the best. ]

K.08 They are too proud ]

....  
....

....

A.10 Because if you call a Herero a Herero you wouldn't have a problem with he won't fight you. But these things they have projected onto the other people, the other races if you call someone Nama-Damara or ....., they will kill you. If you refer to someone as Oshiwambo but when you say Oshihherero or something like that they are like "so what" you know and I mean there's too much fighting.

J.43 Similar with a Zulu it's the Herero behave very much like the Zulu, or visa versa and they have a lot in common to an extent although the Zulu have also settled agricultural production but it's also the sense of being war-like which gives you a natural arrogance. I mean and the Namas were the weakest by far the weakest the political tribal entity and everybody looked down.

K.09 Is true

J.44 The Namas were the the Orlams enslaved them, the Hereros enslaved them, the Owambos didn't want to know about them, everybody treats. They treat the Namas a bit like they treat the Irish in Britain, the Damaras. They were like I noticed how often I sit there I sit and (interrupted) ]

....

....

....

....

J.45 There is no Damara language ]

A nationalist discourse occasionally overrides the "difference" discourse.

#### 5.4.7. Place

The names of places in Namibia tell stories in which specific people whose



names are known are the characters; therefore the names of places are meaningful.

#### 5.4.8. Discourse of gender difference

The discourse of gender difference intersects with the discourses of culture and of race. Consequently it is impossible to say anything generally about men and women, and about gender relations as such. Gender relations are relativized in the sense that they are constituted as being subordinate to culture.

J.60 For example to me as a white man, considering my age I could be considered old-fashioned.

S.41 (laughter)

J.61 To me I spend enough time with mostly Herero guys and I hear them flirt and chat up women and I nearly go pale and I am not particularly sensitive on this, but they I mean the flirting style

V.84 ja

J.62 between let's say Europeans from Europe (interruptions) you know that I see, I always have to laugh, when they say it in Herero, I ask them "what did you say to the woman" then you go then I say "oh" you know ]

K.21 I was with a colleague of mine. We travelled to the north Ohangwena, and some girl who was ... .. started saying you are ... .., saying oh you have nice legs and I want you ... .. almost beat that guy. So I hate it when you say that, but for us you can't like ... you just pass by because they say anyway they start shouting things you know. Come here I want you and things like that. But the girl almost like hit the guy. I said no, no, no relax.

J.63 Funny enough, I have also been educated and that's one of the problems with most Europeans here and Europeans from Europe,

Swedes or Fins. I have spent enough time with people like that to actually get relaxed about it and I realize the victims are not profoundly hurt, in fact and then I had an interesting experience. I knew a black American woman. She was here for a long time. She came here with UNTAG and she stayed here and she was making scornful remarks about the whole sexual intimidation in the States, the harassment because even to American blacks this was ludicrous because flirting and heavy flirting was normal social intercourse and if you didn't do it in fact - you know she came from the south she landed up in New York and then she was here. She was a fully modern liberated black woman, but she said in black circles in America this, although they had been off this continent for two or three hundred years this sort of that you automatically supposed to flirt with every woman, and it's done in a casual and often crude style and everybody has to take it with a sense of humour and if she doesn't want it, she will like tell the guy to get stuffed. You know she doesn't need the law to look after her.

G.31 Uh

J.64 And here too I mean I eventually, I got used to it but hmm it's a less - to most things, it seems it's a less stressful experience to be chatted up heavily to let's say in white circles. That doesn't mean that if you're very sensitive to the issue then she would be profoundly hurt.

On the other hand, such relativizing is implicitly rejected in that individuals in a particular culture are depicted as accepting for themselves 'outside' cultural norms pertaining to sexuality and gender relations.

K.19 It is a big problem because I was not even sure my friend said that my brother was at UNAM and he was telling me. Why is it now that Namibian women tend to start relationships with foreigners or people from outside people who have been abroad, rather than people who are local here and I think the biggest part

is the gender insensitivity of men around here very arrogant very like, you know is just a piece of person. ]

V.83 chauvinistic

K.20 Ja, very chauvinistic

Vi.02 Just want to say something related to my experience today in class, I went to the arts studio and I was painting a piece of work and then a few guys were working and the other two and, I asked one to pass me the paint and then he said. He won't be sent by a woman and I couldn't take that and then he started complaining about this painting then he said it is a woman's job and he cannot do a woman's job. And then I told him you know the best chefs are men, the best uhm whatever tailors around town are men, why, I mean work is just work. You don't have to be a woman to do it.

Such relativizing is also spoken of ironically and this shows how absurd it can be.

J.63 Funny enough, I have also been educated and that's one of the problems with most Europeans here and Europeans from Europe, Swedes or Fins. I have spent enough time with people like that to actually get relaxed about it and I realize the victims are not profoundly hurt, in fact and then I had an interesting experience. I knew a black American woman. She was here for a long time. She came here with UNTAG and she stayed here and she was making scornful remarks about the whole sexual intimidation in the States, the harassment because even to American blacks this was ludicrous because flirting and heavy flirting was normal social intercourse and if you didn't do it in fact - you know she came from the south she landed up in New York and then she was here. She was a fully modern liberated black woman, but she said in black circles in America this, although they had been off this continent for two or three hundred years this sort of that you automatically supposed to flirt with every woman, and it's done in

a casual and often crude style and everybody has to take it with a sense of humour and if she doesn't want it, she will like tell the guy to get stuffed. You know she doesn't need the law to look after her.

G.31 Uh

J.64 And here too I mean I eventually, I got used to it but hmm its a less - to most things, it seems it's a less stressful experience to be chatted up heavily to let's say in white circles. That doesn't mean that if you're very sensitive to the issue then she would be profoundly hurt.

S.42 Because in the white society the women are the ones who carry on like this. (Laughter) It's really terrible.

By reducing gender relations to heterosexual flirting, legitimacy is claimed for a position which subordinates a discourse of gender to that of race, and which renders the legal protection of women's rights as so much Eurocentric nonsense (see extract above, specifically, J.63).

A gender discourse is also subordinated to a discourse of social class, that is, relationships between men and women are explained in terms of poverty and alcohol abuse.

K.22 When I came back from the States, before I went, you know people just come and touch you like this or but over there sexual harassment is like a big thing. Don't touch a woman (interruptions). So when I came here to stay ... .. a guy who was driving around just came to fetch me here I was with [a friend] I was so angry. I couldn't take it and she was like "what what's wrong". I said no, no, no because it was like I was used to another way of living nobody would ever touch you unless you know you tell him to. ... .. touching your thigh I was really angry.

S.43 It turns to violence so often, specially in Namibia. I mean violence against woman is ]

J.65 I mean there's many different sources I think ahh.

S.44 No relation?

J.66 No what's often, -- look you have got an equivalent, specially in the south for example that type of violence is you get exactly that type of violence in the poorer areas of New York or Hamburg. It's very much a poverty, alcohol, social (interruptions) it's not race related. People are always fond of saying the most horrible things happen here. You know what happens in Hamburg. You know what happens in Detroit, in Chicago in the poor areas, irrespective of race this type of incest, rape and beating up

K.23 and a sense of power also I think

J.67 is very much a class of poverty. (all talk at once) It also comes across from small living quarters, extreme poverty, people jammed on each other and it breeds frustration, unemployment you know and that breeds violence

K.24 ja

The division of power between men and women is differently depicted. At times, women are constituted as being powerful despite appearances to the contrary.

A.26 That sense is still there with the Ndonga people, because the man doesn't say anything in that house, the woman will be the one taking decision you know, the man will just go with whatever is said even though maybe the women are not proposing anymore. When you are development in the rural areas there you notice that you come there if the man is there he will wait for the husband the wife to come from what do you call her mahango fields (all talk together) ]

V.88 Because work is done by the woman you know most of them, because she is in control of the situation

J.73 ... the husband can't

V.89 because women in rural areas I think most of the household, more than seventy are fed by women (interruptions)

J.74 Except on some issues. My father was interesting I don't know whether it's all Herero or just Omaruru, the Hereros where the wife has total control over the money ]

A.27 Oh, yes that's true.

J.75 Okay, so my old man used to have this strange experience he'd look out and there had been like forty patients sitting waiting for treatment and then the guy will come in and my old man would fix him and he would go out and then the wife would come in and pay for him and then he realised there were not forty patients there were actually only twenty patients and the women were bringing the men and they had the money and the guy would get treated, the woman would pay for it and then my old man ]

....

....

A.28 You see one old man was telling me even though I am the one sitting in front of you telling ... my wife might be the one you know telling me what I should come and say especially on that issue.

J.77 Health things and money.

Men are described as the victims of socio-cultural and environmental changes which have led to a loss of traditional roles.

J.83 Traditionally, and this is the problem with today is the it's not that the men are lazy or what. (interruptions) Their role has been

removed in traditional society with the country full of carnivores, you know lions, leopards, hyenas and wild dogs, the woman might plant and produce a lot of food down there but the guy was essential to protect the cattle from being eaten by lions, leopards, hyenas, jackals and to protect the territory to fight. Men were basically machines of violence in protection defence and attack whereas the woman planted the fields and the men prevent the lions eating the cattle. Now that all the lions have disappeared, the hyenas and all that and then he was not allowed to hunt anymore because there was no more game he actually becomes, through a cultural process spare, it's not that woman's, always, I am pretty sure all societies like that had a perfect balance and everybody had their job like kids look after cattle and kids did this and that and grandmothers did that and men did this and if the environment changes to such an extent that one element of the society becomes superfluous in a way ]

Women are constructed as victims in the sense that they are the recipients of unwanted, intrusive attention. Both men and women are regarded as victims and perpetrators of violence in gender relations.

J.68 and it's mutual violence, I mean you must hear I mean I heard, as a reporter you hear, woman cannot beat up men but what they do is they beat the crap out of them psychologically.

K.25 Oh yes

A.25 hmm

J.69 You know a woman can a stupid man, or a dull insensitive man, a woman can turn into hamburger and then he sits there like a dumb brute and then she takes him apart psychologically and eventually he blows his fuses and he beats her up

S.45 Hm

J.70 and there's actually a lot of mutual violence which is often ignored, because the one violence shows scars and the other doesn't.

G.32 Right

**5.5. An explication of how the norm originators reconstructed the realities constituted in their first discussion and in the analysis of that discussion.**

The most important research question for this part of the project is how people reject or incorporate into their articulations of self attempts by another to redescribe their own accounts of themselves and of publicly shared events. More concretely, what did the norm originators do with the researcher's analysis of the first discussion in which they participated?

**5.5.1. The uniqueness of the Namibian experience: from generalizations and abstractions to specific accounts**

The norm originators describe the analysis as being too abstract and too general, and they counter this analysis with many individual, specific, local stories. The norm originators emphasize the uniqueness of their own situation/context. For instance, the identifying features of Namibia within the African context are addressed and the uniqueness of the country is insisted on. The meaning of the Namibian experience is lost if it is lumped under the rubrics of colonization and liberation struggle.

J.36 but this ja the I think to an extent, I think also this talking sort of brings out the - I think the Namibianess of what I feel that's to an extent in some of the interpretation is somewhat abstract, academic which is again a function of this, it's too global

V.55 Ja

**5.5.2. The construction of uniqueness in 'positive' terms**

They tend to constitute the uniqueness of their own context in 'positive' terms. These 'positive' terms are as follows: in Namibia people are recognized and respected as individuals, people are tolerant of each other and it is a



relatively non-violent society. Their depiction of Namibia(ns) is that, despite the apartheid system which divided people and the war propaganda which rendered those 'on the other side' as monsters, tolerance remained part of the fabric of Namibian life, and it has been possible to achieve peace.

The achievement of peace does, however pose new challenges: now that the struggle for peace and independence have been won, politics and the roles of people in the community have to be re-defined.

The articulation of that which they value about Namibia happens, at least in part, as a response to parts of the analysis which the norm originators regard as negative. They focus strongly on and question those parts of the analysis which they see as being negative. The norm originators talk somewhat vaguely about the gloomy note in the analysis; the only way in which they specify this assessment is to focus on the analysis of the racial discourse.

P.01 Ja, now what I think about the comparison, hmmm I would agree to S., what he said, it's a little bit too, how should I say I read a lot of negative things, and as he said, I really do ... see, how should I say a future, because I really don't know if we said all these things (laughter)

G.19 what is there where you felt "hell no we did not say that".

P.02 Hmmm(mumbled comments from others), no hmmm, (long pause) it's hard to tell you. ]

S.07 It's the whole racial thing. It's the whole racial thing but if we ever want to get away from it so we may as well turn the whole racial thing around and make an issue that would turn to our advantage, make it fashion. (Laughter)

### 5.5.3. Articulating the past

In the comparison of the first norm originator discussion with the responses of the students it was noted how the former tell multiple stories of the past. This tendency is even more pronounced in the second discussion with the norm originators in which there is an insistence that a telling of the past in terms of

abstract themes would amount to a falsification. By rendering the past as a patchwork of individual stories, the norm originators also create possibilities for connectedness amongst disparate groups of people in the present.

J.13 When I was staying, I am often staggered. I was now in Swakopmund. I sit at a bar and there were two black women sitting there and we're getting to chatting, it turns out they're both nurses. Then it turns out my father treated her mother and attended the birth of her sister which was all about twenty-five years ago and suddenly we talk , uh I so and so I bababa. And what happened to so and what happened to so and so and suddenly there's and for this to happen in Los Angeles or New York is a scarce thing. It is incredibly intimate as a result also I think in all countries where there's small numbers of people, each individual counts more there's more mutual respect, you're not just a number. If I go to Germany, there are eighty million Germans, just like an ant in an ant hill. In Namibia, you can't really be an ant in an ant hill, it's ah you know if I walk the street, every second face I've seen before

In the second discussion with the norm originators the articulation of the past is linked to personal developmental histories. In the case of one person this is constituted as a growing awareness of the impact of larger social structures on his own life. Maturing is depicted, at least in part, as the gaining of such awareness and the concomitant capacity to be critical of those larger structures. His identity as someone who is critical and aware is rooted in the ability he developed to articulate the past in terms of themes like apartheid, oppression and suffering.

In both the discussions with the norm originators the past as lived by the grandfathers and grandmothers is invoked as an example and as a source of pride; this does not occur in the responses of the students.

A major difference between the first and second norm originator discussions is that in the latter the past is constructed in terms of how people were even then connected across divides. There was a whole fabric of relationships which was not entirely destroyed during the course of the war. Furthermore,

it is a fabric which could be drawn on after the conclusion of the war and which could be taken up again and embroidered. Instead of foregrounding the war and its divisiveness when talking about different groups in Namibia, what is foregrounded is the time before the war and how people related to one another then. This latter articulation is deemed to be more legitimate than a construction of the past in terms of oppression, concomitant suffering and resistance to this. The past as oppression and resistance against this is also pushed aside in that the lives of previous generations are rendered as rich and the people as dignified and worthy.

J.16 Like Vekuru, Vekuru comes, back from exile, I am at [work place] he comes in then we get introduced to each other he was then in charge I forgotten what it was this was 1991. We introduce each other, I say J, he says Vekuru. He says, you are J, he says hey look, my ankle. I broke my ankle at the age of eleven, your father fixed my ankle (all agree), and this happens like all the time here, as where in China the chances would be zero. You go to another town in China, and nobody knows you, you're an attraction in Nigeria, a hundred million people. ]

#### 5.5.4. Difference and relationship

The norm originators articulate a number of ways in which Namibians are different and they put considerable emphasis on the distinctions between groups. At the same time they powerfully constitute their own identities in terms of how they do not fit into categories and are not identified with any particular group. This is possibly the most salient feature of the second group discussion: the talk of the distinctiveness of different groups of people is almost obsessive, but personal identity is always situated on the edges. For instance, A constitutes herself as German-Himba. V emerges as one who, as a black man, has intimate connections with white people; this includes his participation in 'their' cultural narratives in the form of popular magazines. P is a black man born in Africa who has appropriated German culture for himself. J is, in his own words, "a de-tribalized semi-anglicized white African type bastard".

On the whole, differences are spoken of in a non-evaluative manner. Difference is constituted in terms of a rich diversity. Furthermore, the norm

originators extensively address connectedness across divisions. In the analysis of the first norm originator discussion a specific question was posed pertaining to how black people and white people can ever hope to say something which the other will find meaningful if they are constituted as speaking from opposite sides of a great divide. In the second discussion numerous examples are provided of how this has been done and is still being done. Furthermore, identity is articulated against a background of parents and grandparents making contact across racial boundaries by learning the other's language and seeking the other's company.

#### **5.5.5. Constituting others in terms of race: engaging in the discourse of race**

The norm originators, in responding to the analysis of the previous discussion, note how there might have been a negative tenor to the previous discussion and how this is amplified in the analysis. The negative drift is seen to be closely connected with an emphasis on race. Having articulated the negative drift thus, the norm originators then 'deal' with this in a number of ways. Firstly, they constitute racial awareness as being an integral part of their lives. In other words, this cannot be denied nor wished away. This does not mean that there cannot be changes in the quality of people's awareness, for instance, such awareness might come to carry less of an evaluative tone. Furthermore, there is a possibility that with time and with political changes people might become less and less aware of race. Secondly, the discourse of race is engaged in ironically. Thirdly, its importance in 'who a person is' is contested.

As in the previous discussion race, ethnicity and culture are sometimes used synonymously or interchangeably and little effort is made to keep these categories 'pure' and distinct.

Interestingly one specific participant, V who in the previous discussion constituted himself as a victim of race classification, emerges in the second discussion as an expert in race classification and in making distinctions in accordance with ethnic group membership. Yet he also tells his own story as one of transgressing boundaries.

### 5.5.6. Identity

Compared to the previous group discussion, the articulation of identity in the second discussion is centred around being wrongly classified by others, being of 'mixed' ancestry and falling between racial categories.

Here norm originators are not only involved in constructing their own identities, they also talk about identity at a 'meta-level'. At this level they argue about the significance of 'what the eye can see' in the construction of identity, whether they themselves and others are classifiable and how they and others have escaped and still escape classification. They also speak of their own identities as being complex, and relate how they do not fit into established categories and how they have transgressed boundaries in their own development.

The constitution of identity, in the previous discussion, in terms of a discourse of suffering and of - experiences with - racism is put in perspective by a construction of identity in terms of having opened up new worlds for oneself and having participated fully in those worlds despite structural restrictions. In this way an identity as victim is de-emphasized. Furthermore, the very act of becoming knowledgeable about different worlds enables an awareness of injustices and this makes it possible to escape the role of victim. As one who is thoroughly aware of injustices and of the system which perpetuates these injustices, it is also possible to have empathy for those who help to keep the unjust system intact.

In the previous discussion the acceptance, especially by whites, of who they are in racial terms, as well as greater self-acceptance by Namibians generally were posited as important psychological changes which would enable a new future. In the second discussion at least some of the norm originators articulate precisely this sort of acceptance of who they are in racial terms.

### 5.5.7. Politics

In the second discussion politics in Namibia is constituted in terms of new issues, for instance, environmental and gender issues. Interestingly the norm originators spend a considerable part of the second session discussing gender. In this way they themselves are moving away from the old encompassing themes which have dominated Namibian politics.

### **5.5.8. Discourse of helplessness/powerlessness**

The discourse of helplessness/powerlessness is altogether absent from the second discussion.

### **5.6. Concluding comments**

In this chapter the different phases of data analysis were presented. This includes the following:

- i) firstly, a summary of the analysis of eighteen students' responses to a video recording of the Namibian independence celebrations of 21 March 1990,
- ii) secondly, an analysis of the transcribed first norm originator discussion,
- iii) thirdly, an articulation of the difference between the first and second phases of data analysis, that is i) and ii),
- iv) fourthly, an analysis of the transcribed second norm originator discussion,
- v) fifthly, an explication of how the norm originators reconstructed the realities constituted in their first discussion and in the analysis of that discussion.

In the next chapter the theoretical work completed in the first three chapters will be drawn on in order to develop a framework for the interpretation of the data to be dealt with in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 6: "Texts of identity" and "articulating difference" revisited

The aim of this chapter is to draw on the theoretical work done in the first three chapters in order to develop a framework in terms of which to deal with the interpretation of the data which will be undertaken in the next chapter. To do this, this chapter will articulate the generative tension of the title of this project "Articulating difference: texts of identity in post-independence Namibia" by drawing on the work of the first three chapters. This chapter will elucidate how the one 'side' of the title is not reducible to the other, but also how the two sides are not opposites. The one side requires the other and therein lies the generative tension. Furthermore, this chapter will pave the way for the interpretation of the data, for the linking of the data with the theoretical work accomplished in the previous chapters.

As was elucidated in *Chapter 2*, "articulating difference" is an ongoing process involving change, transformation and activity. This may leave the impression that "texts of identity" entail finished and integrated products which are worked on and transformed in the process of articulating difference, that the text of identity is the smooth woven surface which is ruptured in the process of articulating difference. However, this is a misconception which would entail the positing of a spurious dichotomy. The text of identity itself contains the contradictions, the tensions and the discrepancies. The phrase "texts of identity" indicates that it is never possible to say 'I am' in a clear and unambiguous way; neither is it possible to say 'I am' definitively. In speaking of texts of identity it is possible to avoid the "obliteration of heterogeneities" which makes Lyotard (in Dews, 1987) so sceptical in respect of identity as concept. The analogy with language is helpful: the signifier never points directly to the signified, the 'thing that is' always slips away from the signifier which cannot 'grab hold of the thing'. Thus, speaking in terms of "texts of identity" is a rejection of 'identity' as 'something' unitary, integrated and woven of one cloth. To speak of "texts of identity" is not the same thing as saying that identity is multi-faceted; as if the multi-faceted 'nature' could in the last instance be brought into a singularity.

We live the agony of difference in the sense that 'I', like the 'thing' remains elusive. It is not possible to grasp 'I' or 'it', to articulate these 'just right', perfectly. 'I' and 'it' remain always beyond reach; there is always a gap and a

sense of loss. Articulating difference happens as, time and again, we experience the discomfort, the dis-ease of having said and done and knowing that this was not 'it'. Thus, articulating difference arises, not out of fullness, but from a sense of lack.

How might articulating difference be thought of in relation to commitments, identifications and values? At first glance commitments, identifications and values seem ongoing and stable, and appear as more or less firm guidelines in terms of which we might live our lives. Taylor (1989), for instance, seems to regard commitments and identifications as durable frameworks which provide direction in our lives while Kristeva (1993) regards values as enabling human beings to live their lives outside the ambit of 'automatic', unquestioned and unquestionable parameters as provided by, for instance, nationalism. The restlessness, the constant questioning and doubt which seem to be a concomitant of articulating difference would appear to be diametrically opposed to commitments and identifications and values.

However, commitments, identifications and values are not abstractions. Neither are these 'things in our heads'. It is not as though a pre-existing grid is imposed on each specific situation which we live. Rather, each situation which we live informs our commitments and identifications, as well as our values. Commitments and identifications are lived in practical reality and consequently cannot provide ready-made answers. Thus, as we live in terms of our commitments and identifications we are engaged in judging as Arendt (1990) conceives of it, namely as a 'bottom-up' process. Judging in this sense involves uncertainty and 'I', as 'my' commitments and identifications, am interrogated by the situation.

Texts of identity can be understood in terms of commitments and identifications as follows; it is not as though 'I' as an entity am committed to and invested in something else that is separate and apart from me. That which I am identified with and committed to does not have an existence in and of itself, but is brought into being, it is shaped as I live 'it', even as these commitments and identifications render me as the sort of person I am. Should we then say that the commitments and identifications are 'I'?

This brings to the fore an issue which is being grappled with at many levels in this project. Very simply it can be put as follows: how is it possible to



maintain the tension, the anguish which is born of difference in the face of wanting to dichotomize on the one hand, and on the other hand, wanting to collapse everything into a big, undifferentiated melting pot? How may differentiation be thought of if not in terms of one thing opposed to another thing, standing over and against the other thing? A further elucidation of this issue requires a closer look at 'dichotomy' which is very closely related to 'identity'. A dichotomy involves two 'things' or entities, each of which is self-contained and with hard boundaries, identified with itself and excluding the other. Identity has been talked of in this sense. This is the antagonism of identity. The agony of difference has to do with the tension of being the same but apart, and this is what identity as commitments and identifications is.

The connection between texts of identity, and commitments and identifications must be explicated further. A practical example will serve to illustrate. What can it mean to say that a woman identifies herself as a mother and is committed to being a mother? These commitments and identifications take shape and transmutate in terms of available narratives of motherhood, and in terms of the institutions that help to constitute motherhood, including the family, the breast-feeding association and books on childhood education written by 'experts' in the field. In this sense her commitments and identifications are textually mediated. Her commitments and identifications also take form as she lives everyday life with her children who become present to her through the speech and actions of other people for instance, her partner, their teachers, her friends and through the previously mentioned institutions and narratives. Thus, commitments and identifications are not 'things inside the head'.

Can the mother ever have access to the children as 'beings in their own right' and can they relate to her as 'a being in her own right'? How might her authorship in these commitments and identifications be thought of? Her authorship has something to do with articulating difference and Lyotard's ideas in respect of reflective thought would seem to provide an adequate model for articulating difference. Lyotard (1992) regards reflective thought as relying strongly on perceptual experiences. These perceptual experiences are not mediated; in other words, the input of data does not occur in accordance with already established codes which allow the data to be read. Lyotard's ideas regarding reflective thought are based on a distinction he

draws between language and the perceived world. While the speaker always excludes or eliminates other wor(l)ds in opting for a particular word, perception requires that those aspects of the perceptual field which are not the specific point of focus remain present. In this sense, perception presupposes 'holding the tension', allowing difference to be present.

Another aspect of Lyotard's thought which has pertinence to articulating difference is that it is not possible to perceive an object as it is. In other words, there is no "co-naturality" (Dews, 1987) between the world and language. Rather as human beings try to move towards the reality of things they are forced to produce ever new presentations of this as they are perpetually confronted with a lack of 'fit' between reality and presentation.

In talking about authorship it seems necessary to avoid positing some sort of substratum which remains uncontaminated by the reigning ideology, and from where authorship may emanate. This issue will be further addressed below.

From the above it would appear that "articulating difference" is here being posited as part of 'the human condition'. However, in the previous chapters "articulating difference" has often been 'used' in the sense of difference from what is generally, commonly accepted, said and done, and in the sense of origination. Closely related to this, "articulating difference" has been conceptualized in terms of autonomy, individuality, uniqueness and singularity, concepts which are integral to identity in modernist terms.

If articulating difference is regarded as part of the human condition we might expect to find 'instances' of articulating difference in everyday life and amongst all people. If articulating difference is seen to be operative in social transformation, then from this perspective all human interaction entails an element of social transformation. In other words, human beings never simply reproduce themselves and their social conditions, but they create these anew. On the other hand, articulating difference as operative in social transformation may be regarded as 'something special'. In this case, instances of this would not be found so readily and it might be expected that only certain people such as norm originators in certain situations might provide glimpses of what 'it' is. From this perspective, too it would be expected that a certain sort of articulation of identity would provide some clue about the psychology of social change. Accordingly it could be argued that

an investigation of the psychology of norm originators would enable the researcher to say interesting things about how social change might be effected.

An issue which appears repeatedly when attempting to theorize processes of individual and societal transformation is that of opposing forces which, at least to some extent, are mutually exclusive. For instance, ideology and ideology critique entails the positing of 'true' interests as opposed to 'false' interests. Furthermore, subjective experience in the sense of local interpersonal ways of relating may be set up as an opposing 'force' to relations of ruling as exercised in institutions and professional organizations amongst others (Smith, 1993). In the preceding chapters the 'force of subjectivity' (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992) and 'inwardness' (Craig, 1994) have been set up as being 'outside' language. Authorship may also be seen as based on such an opposition where the author is cast as an agent who might 'resist' the status quo on the basis of a Marcusean (Agger, 1992) type substratum that is not contaminated by the dominant ideology, a kernel that might be able to resist this ideology.

In the discussion above it was argued that commitments and identifications are mediated, for instance 'through' institutions, organizations and what the experts say. In this sense 'texts of identity' are constituted in accordance with relations of power and power becomes not so much something that people 'have', but rather an atmosphere, like the air we breathe. This raises once again a number of questions which in part were also addressed in previous chapters. If power is so pervasive is it then possible to distinguish between instances/situations where people exercise more or less power? What is the relationship between power, on the one hand, and awareness, insight and consciousness on the other?

One of the questions with which this project is concerned is how people might come to actively participate in the refashioning and recreation of the discourses that shape them. Presumably people are exercising power or are relatively powerful when they are engaged in the refashioning of discourses. What would such active participation look like? From the perspective of ideology critique active participation would be predicated on and constituted in terms of awareness of and insight into how one is tied into social reality

and which interests are being served by being thus tied into social reality. Knowledge in this sense is what makes ideology critique possible.

As was elucidated in previous chapters, ideology and ideology critique seem to have been discredited in the wake of postmodernism. Specifically, the concept of false consciousness, the binary logic of ideology as expressed in positing true interests as opposed to false interests seem no longer tenable. The binary logic also comes to the fore in certain discourses which seem to be intimately connected with ideology and ideology critique, namely the discourses of knowledge, oppression and emancipation. More specifically, and possibly articulated somewhat simplistically, ideology and ideology critique tend to be situated as follows in respect of these discourses: people were in a state of ignorance and concomitant oppression, but as a result of ideology critique, of having come to know the truth, they are now emancipated. The arrogance which is part of this thinking is indicative of its oppressive potential; the new 'emancipating' truth submits people to itself. Thus, the problem with ideology critique seems to be that it involves discrediting an old story and then setting up a new story, which is told as the truth, in its place. Does this mean that the concepts 'ideology' and 'ideology critique' ought to be abandoned, and deconstruction embraced?

Parker (1992) points out that the problems with the concept 'ideology' should not lead to its outright rejection. He argues that, instead ideology needs to be reconceptualized: it involves a description of relationships and of effects. Furthermore, 'ideology' should be used to describe specific relationships at a particular point in time and a specific place. This opens up the possibility that people are sometimes oppressed in certain situations and at specific times, while in other situations at other times they are relatively powerful. Thus, oppression and emancipation are no longer conceived as mutually exclusive states. Furthermore, Parker's reconceptualization implies that ideology critique would not be a 'one-off' exercise which provides definitive analyses.

In one of the previous paragraphs the question was asked whether ideology critique should be abandoned and deconstruction, the never-ending process of becoming unstuck, the constant detachment from a monolithic block - of opinion, belief, received knowledge - should be embraced. This brings to the fore stubborn questions pertaining to the political and, one may add psychological, effects of deconstruction. Specifically, is deconstruction

inimical to the 'positive' articulation of new or alternative visions and stories, and is this important? To pose the question somewhat differently: does deconstruction amount to and foster destructiveness, cynicism and hopelessness? A related question which may further elucidate the issue is whether 'positive constructions' are inevitably repressive because they come to pose as 'the truth' in the form of meta-narratives or whether they can have progressive political and laudable psychological effects? It seems that, as a source of hope, as a way of rendering life meaningful and as a way out of the compulsive repetition of limited renderings of the past, they can have such effects, provided that they do not become absolute and as long as they can be informed by smaller local stories and by individual situations.

Concepts such as commitments, identifications and values seem to 'point' towards the stability, integrity and integrated nature of identity. It must be realized, however, that to talk in terms of the stability, integrity and integrated nature of identity is not the same as devising a list of identifying characteristics. How is it possible to reconcile stability, integrity and being 'integrated' with the upheaval, doubt, questioning, contingency and irony which, as elucidated above are very much part of "articulating difference: texts of identity"? The point is that reconciliation is not possible: the tension must be sustained.

This explication of "articulating difference: texts of identity" also allows 'affirmation' to be seen in a new light, not so much as the certain assertion of a definitive list of traits or characteristics which one has or which belong to one, but as keeping on articulating, voicing, speaking from our experience in the sense that Smith (1993) has elucidated.

A further question which needs to be addressed when unravelling "articulating difference: texts of identity" concerns the role that consciousness, awareness plays in this process. This question is all the more important because this project is concerned with processes of individual and social transformation, processes which seem to be based on and to involve awareness, consciousness and reflexivity. Put somewhat simplistically: knowledge in the sense of awareness, consciousness, reflexivity supposedly renders us more powerful because, armed with this knowledge, this insight, we are less likely to become embroiled, we are less gullible, vulnerable and less likely to fall into traps. Such knowledge makes

possible the distancing (from entrenched patterns of relating, discourses that suck us into their vortex and the relations of ruling which, as Smith (1993, p 6) explicates, are "those forms that we know as bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organization, and the media") involved in showing up the manufactured nature of the social scene.

The question is whether the sense of power which we might have on the basis of being knowledgeable is an illusion which is all the more pernicious because the belief that we can predict and control blinds us. What does seem clear is that, whatever knowledge we might have and whatever distance this might allow us - as in humour, irony - this knowledge is always momentary and never definitive because life goes on and, what is more, it always brings surprises, the unexpected.

## Chapter 7: Interpretation of data

A general question for this project, a question which provides a very broad framework for the interpretation of the data, is what "articulating difference: texts of identity in post-independence Namibia" might 'look' like, and how this might be understood in terms of existing theory. The assumption is that the two texts constituted of the norm originator discussions and a comparison of these two texts with each other and with the text consisting of the students' responses would provide a glimpse of what "articulating difference: texts of identity in post-independence Namibia" entails.

Within this broad framework, one of the guiding questions is how the articulation of human subjectivity in the Namibian context could be constitutive of transformation at the individual and/or societal levels. This guiding question may also be framed as follows, namely, how life stories might be refashioned and narrated events retold in ways which would be enabling of, or alternatively a foreclosing on, the capacity to venture into the unknown future. Answers to this question can be used as a basis to theorize about the possibilities for deliberate attempts at transformation.

In *Chapter 6: "Texts of identity" and "articulating difference"* revisited the question was raised whether "articulating difference" is part of 'the human condition'. This would imply that all human interaction is potentially constitutive of individual and societal transformation. Conversely, "articulating difference" might be regarded as 'something special' which happens only in particular situations, and is engaged in by specific people, for instance, norm originators.

While the possibility that all human interaction is potentially constitutive of individual and societal transformation is the more defensible in the light of the analysis carried out in *Chapter 6*, this does not preclude the possibility that the processes involved in individual and societal transformation are more 'visible' in the articulations of certain groups of people such as norm originators. One of the assumptions in choosing a group of norm originators is that their articulations, the way they talk, would be constitutive of transformation or would provide a glimpse of processes of renewal. This is because norm originators by definition are people who can see 'old' things differently and who can get other people to perceive 'the world' differently.

Presumably the manner in which norm originators recreate life stories and reformulate narrated events would enable them and others to venture into the unknown future. Such recreating and reformulating would propel people out of 'being stuck' and the repetition of old stories. Presumably such a retelling would involve the opening of new worlds.

This process may be variously conceptualized. Following Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) it may be assumed that the norm originator texts will be replete with instances where the narrators attempt to revise the norms in terms of which they operate by both invoking them and transgressing them. Drawing on Shotter's (1993b, p 41) work it may be expected that the norm originator texts would provide many examples where participants render available ways of speaking their very own so that the inter-individual world is given an intonation "that is expressive of one's own very being."

In the research process the impetus for the retelling and refashioning is provided at two levels, firstly as the norm originators are invited to respond to the analysis of the student responses and, secondly as they are invited to respond to the analysis of the previous group discussion.

It is possible to reflect on the data generated and its analysis on at least two different levels, and the analysis can be connected to the theoretical work at these two levels. Firstly, it is possible to take a micro view inside the various sets of data generated and their analyses, that is, at this level various details of the first and second norm originators discussion could be linked to the theoretical work. Secondly, it is possible to reflect on the different sets of data as a whole, and in relation to one another; for instance, the first interview with the norm originators can be examined and reflected on as a whole, and in comparison with the responses of the students.

What follows is mainly a detailed or micro examination of the analysis of the first discussion with the norm originators in relation to the theoretical work done in the first three chapters. At times the analysis of the students' responses will also be drawn on in a comparative way to advance an argument.



## 7.1. Interpretation of first norm originator discussion.

### 7.1.1. Ideology, 'liberation' and power

'Ideology' and 'ideology critique' as important concepts in terms of which processes of individual and societal change may be understood have been examined in previous chapters. What follows is an interpretation of the data in respect of these concepts.

As has been argued in the previous chapter postmodernist ideas have made the re-examination of the concepts 'ideology' and 'ideology critique' an imperative. Specifically, the binary logic associated with the use of these concepts is no longer tenable. One example of the binary logic which seems so much a part of the traditional usage of these concepts may be found in the dichotomy 'oppression-liberation'. With specific reference to the Namibian context, independence certainly does not bring immediate deliverance from subjugation and oppression. This is not just because, as Young (1992) argues, oppression in modern times tends to be exercised very subtly rather than taking the form of colonial conquest and domination; it is also because, as Foucault's (in Rabinow, 1986) analysis of power has shown, oppression and liberation are not mutually exclusive states. The first norm originator discussion elucidates these issues in a number of ways.

The first norm originator text includes an analysis of how power and oppression are exercised in post-independence Namibia. Furthermore, a scrutiny of the text reveals how the norm originators situate themselves as exercising power/influence. This they do by, amongst other things, telling certain (his)stories as if they were definitive.

The norm originators explicate how in post-independence Namibia power bases are constituted by bestowing material favours/benefits. Those who enjoy such favours are loath to criticize the powers that be, specifically the actions of members of the ruling party, because they could lose the benefits. Furthermore, favours and benefits are seen to be granted in accordance with ethnic group membership. The following excerpts are illustrative of the above components of the analysis.

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J58: .... There's a serious well waBenzie syndrome in this town
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...
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V83: .... Mercedes Benz owners.

J60: .... security, houses, cars. I have worked now with the government through all the ministries .... I mean a lot of these people for twenty years but never had a cheque book or any money .... now they have sixty-seven or .... one hundred and ten thousand a year. The day they got their first cheque they got into one hundred percent debt. .... The whole family .... everybody comes, .... now they have to help the family.

M57: They have to make sure they remain there.

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J79: Those [rights] are abstract .... look when a senior SWAPO guy comes to me from the north and tells me I am employing too many people .... from the east or I am trying to put some Herero faction in there.

Apart from focusing on class and ethnic group membership as bases of power, the norm originator text elucidates how in the Namibian context authority figures can become inordinately powerful because they are constituted as being beyond criticism and because they are trusted and followed blindly.

page 9

S9: I notice from the questionnaire that there's this desire to want to have someone to follow to respect. The way they [the students] revere the President and things like that. It's without any basis. .... It seems like there's this whole father figure, this disciplinarian thing that's quite happily followed.

page10

S15: .... there's a desire from what I see here is for people to want to have someone desperate - to follow who they can believe and trust in.

....

S16: It comes from seeing a wonderful picture of a person in a lovely suit with wonderful sound quality.

How do the norm originators situate themselves in respect of these authority figures and what are the implications of being thus situated for the power which the norm originators may or may not exercise? The norm originators attempt to situate authority figures like the President of Namibia in the social and historical contexts in which they emerge. Furthermore, they call for a critical assessment of these authority figures.

A comparison with the text of the student responses contributes to the analysis. In that text existing role models/heroes/authority figures are, for the most part revered although at times they are vilified; however, there is no mention about them being replaced or at least countered by alternative heroes. Thus, whereas in the text of the students the authority figures are there to stay and there is an inevitability about them, in the text of the norm originators this is not so strongly the case. Even though politicians are depicted as being entrenched, possibilities for creating new heroes are articulated.

It may be argued that the norm originators exercise power as they call for a critique of authority figures and for the creation of new heroes. Interestingly one of the norm originators who is a film-maker situates himself as powerful/influential as he explains the significant role the media plays in rendering people powerful. In his profession he is involved in the validation of certain figures and in the creation of heroes.

page 9

S11: .... Television and film have an uncanny ability to validate the person we see, to put them on a perspective where we can't, where they are heroes.

page 16

S27: .... there is no Namibian identity which is suitable. We ask about the future. This is my whole, my profession is about creating heroes that aren't politically or financially -- exalted.

The manner in which the norm originators' analysis becomes suffused with the discourses of powerlessness and helplessness, and especially by the discourse of fear, may be hypothesized to be indicative of how in post-independence Namibia it has become much more difficult to distinguish

between 'oppressor' and 'oppressed'; in pre-independence Namibia this distinction would have been widely seen as coinciding almost exactly with a racial division. The fear seems to be closely connected with the perceived facelessness of the new oppressor.

More importantly, the way in which the norm originators' analysis becomes suffused with the above-mentioned discourses is indicative of how 'liberation' is not an 'all-or-nothing' condition. To be more specific, it may be assumed that the norm originators are relatively 'free' in the sense that they are instrumental in recreating the discourses in terms of which they are constituted and yet, at the same time, they engage in these discourses of powerlessness, helplessness and fear. The extent to which the norm originators engage in the discourses of fear, powerlessness and helplessness also helps to elucidate the differentiated 'nature' of power, specifically that power is something people exercise in particular situations. It may be assumed that the norm originators are relatively powerful in the sense that they can make their voices heard. It should be obvious that people who 'fit with' the operational definition of norm originators as provided in the methodology chapter are in some sense influential and thus powerful. However, being powerful, like being 'emancipated', is not an all-or-nothing state. This is illustrated in the following quotes from the first discussion with the norm originators.

page 22

M44: I mean you talk especially in the work environment. It is very difficult to survive in this. You can't criticize you can't say anything. Once you start criticizing you're isolated and once you're isolated its like instigation and all sorts of things

page 22

M45: .... you can't like confront issues or do whatever then you labelled and when you're labelled it affects you because it is very difficult to go from one job to the other. It is just a phonecall away

M46 .... some of these people, even in the private sector or wherever know one another from some place ...

....

....

....

....

....

M49: .... I know people who haven't been employed for two years and when you look at what was happening it was just phonecalls. Don't take him. Don't take him.

page 27

M68: Have you been some place when you open your mouth you, certain things would happen to you when you come back to this situation

....

M69: when there's so much paranoia and there is a lot of paranoia.

V: You can have a car accident. You can have an unexpected car accident, I mean all sorts of things could happen to you.

The analysis of power as engaged in by the norm originators and the way this becomes suffused with the discourses of powerlessness, helplessness and fear raises the issue of awareness/consciousness/knowledge which has been extensively discussed in the theoretical section of this project. This is also an issue which practicing psychologists grapple with all the time: if human beings are aware of and have insight into the workings of power this does not necessarily mean that they are not entrapped in those workings. The crucial question is how human beings deal with the insight, what they do with it and this is indeed a psychological question.

In the first norm originator text awareness/consciousness is posited as being empowering, as freeing people. However, the limitations of awareness/consciousness are also explicated.

page32

A12: .... The survival strategies and discipline mechanisms that were practically appropriate when in exile seriously are not appropriate in this context anymore. ....

....

....

....

....

M86: Ja, the whole of Namibia needs therapy.

....

S102: We just need knowledge. Info.

page 35

S106: .... I just get the impression that overall that people are not made aware of what the actual basic human rights are. People thought basic human rights was no-one was supposed to shoot you or treat you differently because of your skin colour. But surely six years later people should be given - the option to know what exists in the sense of what is dignified.

A15: But we are also talking about highly educated people who went through this [a traumatic past]. I mean some of them could be lawyers themselves for all I know. ....

....

S107: .... But the point is that if the people are empowered.

M89: By who?

S108: By us.

M90: Who are us?

S109: The journalist, people who can inform people.

M91: We are not marginalized in this country, aren't we? I would say so.

J103: In that case rational therapy would work. .... what you say, I have a neurosis and you going to tell me it's stupid to have a neurosis let me inform you that you cannot suffocate in a bed or something. .... Let me inform you it's a total illusion ....

Further questions are raised by the above explication. Firstly, what would 'entrapment' and 'imprisonment' look like and how would it be possible to recognize its 'opposite'? Concretely, are the norm originators entrapped by virtue of engaging so strongly in the discourses of helplessness, powerlessness and fear? Alternatively, are they empowered as they constitute themselves as creators of the future and as they ponder the possibilities for political action?

A second question is whether there is any value at all in making a distinction between 'helplessness' and 'powerlessness' on the one hand, and being empowered on the other. In other words, should we try to distinguish between entrapment in discourses and authorship of discourses? Is the

distinction posited not spurious and does it not entail a false dichotomization? At this point it is possible only to reiterate what was already touched on in *Chapter 1: Introduction* and *Chapter 6: "Texts of identity" and ...*, namely that people are more or less powerful in different situations, and that it does seem necessary to make room for the fact that people at times exert influence and exercise power while at other times they are at times caught in the webs of power. The practical difficulties alluded to above should not make us conceptualize power in monolithic terms.

In trying to elucidate these questions it is interesting to compare the norm originator text and that of the students. Whereas only one of the students engages in a discourse of helplessness which becomes manifested in angry withdrawal/distancing, the norm originators talk extensively about how pervasive helplessness and hopelessness is amongst Namibians, and also occasionally situate themselves as helpless and hopeless. Despite this, the norm originators themselves seem not to be helpless or hopeless. For instance, they engage in an active search for possible solutions to the problems which they see as predominant in Namibia and in this way are hopeful.

The norm originators do at times constitute themselves as powerless and as helpless. However, there are other occasions where they articulate a sense of agency, specifically where they speculate about possible political action which might produce the changes that they believe should be brought about.

page 21

S48: But I actually think it will change. All we have to do is convince society that we need Namibians.

V67: Use Namibian channels like Open Line to complain.

A05: Ja, but I also think that we viewers should come up very strong

....

M42: Something like not paying TV licences

....

....

....

....

....

V68 .... we must form these pressure groups to really.

There seem to be certain points in the discussion of the norm originators which may be conducive to a sense of agency and where the type of talk being engaged in might serve to undermine existing power relations, as well as the discourses of powerlessness and helplessness. Firstly, the varied constructions of the future, differentiated tellings of the past, and the way in which Namibians are 'levelled' by presenting all of them as being in need of psychotherapy may disallow dominant groups from telling their stories of the past as if these were the only possible stories of the past. Secondly, people are challenged to use standards other than 'their own' in thinking about situations.

As far as the first point is concerned there is, on the one hand, an insistence that the past be told in accordance with the themes of apartheid, oppression, suffering and the war of liberation, but there is also an attempt to broaden the number of legitimate themes.

page 3

A01: .... what touches me is that people some of the people hmm regard the past with nostalgia whereas really when you look at the people in the north no-one will have nostalgia for the situation which was there ....

page 14

J31: .... when I see the responses [of the students] I get quite depressed because

M23: Ja, same ... here

J32: .... I do not know at what age it starts when you can start getting shocked about the fact that .... everybody younger than you don't know the essential slices of history which were an essential part of your life. It's actually scary. ....

....

....

....

....

....



J35: .... of course one shouldn't get worried about that because that is part of the amnesia of society. ....

page 33

J96: Look the people one thing that struck me .... when exiles tell me about the shock they get .... when they got to Katutura [a part of Windhoek which used to be and still is the township where black people lived] and find all these people they fighting for in exile twenty years ago, .... these guys are highly critical and they do not take shit from exiles. .... because they were exposed to all kinds of SWANU, NPF [political parties]. .... This was a hotbed of political discussion and dissension. ....

V102: Well in exile who were the people making statements, only the leaders. They come to a camp .... and then one political commissar address them and introduces the President. The President talks about the one thing and finish and they go away.

In the following excerpt Namibians are 'levelled' in the sense that they are all constituted as struggling with the pernicious effects of the system that was in place prior to independence, irrespective of whether they were beneficiaries of that system or tried to resist and to change it.

page 32

A12: But also I think everybody needs training, even people who been in exile, with due respect needs training. The survival strategies and discipline mechanisms that were practically appropriate when in exile seriously are not appropriate in this context anymore.

The manner in which the discourses of powerlessness and helplessness are countered by pushing them towards an absurd extreme is illustrated in the following quote.

page 27

M68: have you ever been some place where if you open your mouth you, certain things would happen to you ....

S75: Sure

M69: where there's so much paranoia.

V86: You can have a car accident, .... I mean all sorts of things could happen to you.

S76: Wait a minute, you have just given me a clue here. Are we talking about sort of political in Hitler's thing and things like this, and taking care of?

With respect to the second point, that is, people being challenged to use standards other than 'their own' in thinking about situations, the following extracts are illustrative.

page 15

J37: .... but what scares the hell out of me is somebody who can look at this video and just comment on the clothes and stuff like that. .... that means there was no understanding of the historic significance of the event [independence]. .... I mean what scares the hell out of me is no response or trivial responses about dresses ....

S24: But what do we learn from that? I mean we can't just

M27: Trivial from whose perspective?

S25: Exactly

K05: Ja.

page 1

V01: You know it's to an extent a little bit unfair to ask a young person about something that's fundamental as independence and freedom .... I feel that maybe these young ones should have been combined with adults, the adult viewpoint as to what independence meant .... to them. For instance, in one respect independence meant I could go back to the former residential area of my people ....

S01: But I think just because it's a different opinion, it doesn't at all, it means it is just another relevant opinion.

V02: Ammm

S02: So what if it is younger or older.

Coming now to a further aspect of power, Parker (1992) has developed three auxiliary criteria for recognising discourse; these criteria are concerned with

institutions, ideology and power. In accordance with these he suggests that discourse analysis is also concerned with examining how discourses allow dominant groups to tell their stories of the past. Extrapolating from Parker it may be argued that those who can tell their stories in such a way that they can be heard and can possibly even have their stories accepted as the stories clearly exercise a great deal of influence and power. Thus, power is also about whose stories should be accepted as definitive. In the norm originator text the past is very prominently constituted in terms of the discourses of oppression and suffering and, especially at the start of the discussion and in response to the analysis of the students' responses, attempts are made to render the stories constructed in terms of these themes as definitive. This produces a crisis of legitimacy for those who did not suffer under the previous system, a crisis which will be further elucidated later in this chapter under the heading 7.1.6.: *Legitimation: the role of available discourses*.

Under the heading 2.6.: *Ideology Critique* in Chapter 2 an argument was put forward that in the Namibian context ideology critique might be rendered difficult because the newly emerging ruling class may constitute itself or be constituted by others in terms of the discourse of 'liberators' and 'freedom fighters', while any critique of this ruling class might be labelled as reactionary. Support for this argument emerges from the first group discussion with the norm originators, specifically in their articulation of a 'Politics in Africa' discourse.

page 12

J20: .... I think .... that's a typical European attitude towards the politician.

S19: Is it wrong though?

J21: Nujoma like Kenyatta .... is not a politician is not a prime minister like in Britain, Germany .... . Nujoma like Nyere is the founding father of the liberation party seeing it now from the kids' point of view which their parents grew up with .... the leader of the liberation against evil apartheid. .... He is the man who led the struggle to the liberation of Namibia and he actually achieved it. ....

....

....

....

....

....

J25: as you .... criticized the fact that they [the students] saw him [Nujoma] as some great hero figure .... they don't seem critical about him. I don't think you can expect that.

S20: I don't know, ....

page 13

V42: Do you know that .... Seretse Khama photos with his wife Ruth used to be sold commercially and they almost were in every house in Windhoek .... and that was long before independence simply because he was regarded as someone who you know defy white rule .... and went and married this white woman and brought her to Africa.

This discussion by the norm originators raises a number of questions. Firstly, if politics and politicians in Africa are about resistance to apartheid, is it then possible to be critical of these leaders without immediately being labelled reactionary and pro-apartheid? Secondly, how can people ever become political actors in any sense other than being followers of, or opposed to political leaders? Thirdly, how is it possible to feel alive politically once apartheid is something of the past? Fourthly, the strong differentiation between politics in Africa and elsewhere may make it impossible to draw on other models outside Africa to critique political practice inside Africa. This concern seems to be present in the norm originator text, although implicitly (see the extract above: S: Is it wrong though?).

There is a third aspect of the section 2.6.: *Ideology Critique* which is elucidated by the discussion of the norm originators. Eagleton (1991) points out that the deceptions involved in ideology can be seen to be generated by an entire social structure. From this point of view ideology critique would involve a type of macro analysis. However, ideology critique may also be pitched at a psychological level. In this connection Eagleton refers to Althusser according to whom ideology involves the ways people are at an unconscious level tied into social reality. From this perspective emancipation would consist in liberating ourselves from ourselves.

In their analysis of the present situation in Namibia the norm originators focus on both these levels. As far as the macro level is concerned the way in which they examine power relations in Namibia has already been elucidated above. In respect of the 'micro' or the psychological level the following excerpts are illustrative:

page 32

M83: .... so I think if you really thinking about the future for Namibia we have to really make a very conscious effort to start retraining people in so many ways. It is about our identity, dignity I mean stand for the truth and what it would mean and the risk you have to face. I mean it's like retraining from scratch like they used to conscientize people to value themselves. I think we really need that.

page 32

A12: But I also think everybody needs training, even people who been in exile, with due respect needs training. The survival strategies and disciplines that were practically appropriate in exile are not appropriate in this context anymore.

### 7.1.2. Private and public

As was explicated in the *Chapter 1, Introduction* this research project developed, at least in part, from the author's perception that the Namibian context is marked by increasing withdrawal into ever smaller private spheres and that this leaves people impoverished. Furthermore it was argued that, as the spheres within which people operate and live their lives contract, so the chances for renewal and transformation are also reduced; there is no longer room for conflict, for debate and people do not engage with one another. This issue was further elucidated by drawing on the work of Arendt (1990) who is critical of individual liberty - as opposed to public freedom - which is attained by withdrawing into the private sphere. She associates such individual liberty with the sense of being beleaguered and threatened. Articulation in the private domain, if not fed into and informed by engagement in the public domain, would remain at the level of a defensive process.

The norm originators certainly posit increasing withdrawal into the private sphere in post-independence Namibia as a process which is strongly

associated with a loss of certain freedoms, for instance, the freedom of expression, and with a decline in critical voices. The increasing withdrawal into the private sphere is expressed in terms of a loss of solidarity and an overriding concern with individual material wealth. The private sphere is constituted in terms of a materialistic discourse.

page 21

A09: I think things have changed since independence because I think it's now the people are more on an individual basis. Before it used to be as a group .... and you go for your own salary or for your own well-being is like I don't care.

page 22

M44: ....Once you start criticizing you're isolated and once you're isolated it's like instigation .... so I think in the end for your own survival people just decide 'Oh, I just have to withdraw.'

K06: Ja, exactly what I was talking about.

page 33

J96: .... I covered political meetings .... and you could see .... towards independence attendance going up .... and after independence it just sucked, gone. People were sick of hearing all these political problem struggles. .... then I also felt after independence hhh, now let's get on.

....

J98: Let's worry about this and that, fix up the car you know and people have kids and family ....

On the other hand, the psychological sphere, specifically identity, is seen as the arena where renewal may and can take place, where there is room for change. It is posited as a place from which the status quo might be challenged. Significantly there is a recognition that the supposedly private psychological sphere is constituted in terms of publicly available narratives, that is, the stories of heroes.

page 16

S27: .... there is no Namibian identity which is suitable. We ask about the future. .... my profession is about creating heroes that aren't politically or financially – exalted.

page 16

S27: .... We do not have a Namibian identity. You see the war is over and there are no heroes left who aren't politically and military based and that is where the future is challenging is to develop a Namibian identity or personality ....

It may be argued that, in giving credence to both the private, specifically the psychological, as the domain from where renewal might emanate and, more implicitly, to the public domain as the sphere where certain freedoms might flourish, the norm originators maintain the generative tension between private and public articulation.

Arendt's (1990, p 24) point, that individual liberty as the retreat into an "inward domain of consciousness" is regressive is indeed valuable and there is much to be said for her insistence that freedom is possible only within a "tangible worldly reality". Furthermore, it seems that she is correct in arguing that engagement in the public sphere allows human beings to exercise power. On the other hand, all the 'games' and the power struggles which are inevitably part of the public sphere can also drain creativity; the very fact that compromises are virtually always called for in the public sphere is restricting, perhaps even suffocating, and this raises the question whether renewal really is possible in the public sphere. In the light of these concerns about the public sphere Rorty's (1989) insistence that the private and the public sphere should remain strictly separate, and that renewal and creativity are possible only in the private sphere in which human beings are, amongst other things, unencumbered by the demands for justice, makes sense.

### 7.1.3. 'Race talk': restrictions imposed by totalizing discourses

As was discussed in *Chapter 3* under the heading 3.8.: *Implications of identity dissolved* the constitution of identity in terms of encompassing and monolithic common denominators such as nationality can be highly problematic. In that discussion the work of Kristeva (1993) and of Taylor (1989) was drawn on to explicate that this manner of constituting identity is linked with the

fragmentation of individuals and an inability to develop and to 'hold' specific values.

In the first group discussion of the norm originators, not nationalism, but race at times becomes an encompassing monolithic common denominator. This certainly does not mean that the norm originators constitute themselves only in terms of race. It thus appears as though Kristeva's thesis, that the "fragmentation" of individuals leads to an attempt to build a semblance of personality in terms of such encompassing denominators as nationality, does not apply to the norm originators.

In pre-independence Namibia people were severely confined by apartheid practices. In accordance with these practices people were defined first and foremost in terms of race while other possible identifications tended to be excluded. What emerges from the analysis of the first discussion with the norm originators is how race as a common denominator can be extremely stifling if used to constitute the experiences of someone of the same racial group or where shared racial group is assumed to give one person the right to speak for another. The stifling effects are further intensified where the discourse of unity and of race intersect.

page 40

P24: Ja, look in Germany I have problems I have racial problems but .... I grew up into that society and as the way I see Germany. Germans are very liberal people. ....

V117: What you are trying to say in the GDR then.

P25: No, not only even West Germany. West Germans are more liberal than East Germans.

V118: No, no

P26: it's true

V119: Let me tell you, you could say it in the GDR and I know exactly how the GDR was .... they had a number of racists then I was attacked. Just a few kilometres from their [P's] school.

....

K19: Probably you don't want to deal with racism here but deal with it there outside ....

....

....



....

P28: .... When a German let's say for instance comes to you he regards you as a human being. You know you have got your dignity, ....

....

....

V120: You know the very things you say did not happen in Germany happened. .... I could remember instances where I went to a nightclub Saturday and someone would come and say "what's this black thing doing here, it belongs to the gas chamber." That's your GDR.

P30: Ja, but I am not saying it did not exist.

V121: .... The answer is you are you can deal with racism in Germany but you do not want to deal with racism here!

page 31

J93: [white male addressing S, another white male] You have never experienced that sort of vulnerability nor have I. Most whites have never experienced it.

page 42

A17: Because I find that amongst the blacks themselves, we are more tribalistic, than the white and black thing really .... we are supposed to be one but the way we are divided.

#### 7.1.4. Affirmation and identity

The norm originator text casts an interesting light on the 3.7.: *Controversies of affirmation* as discussed in *Chapter 3*. In a context of domination and oppression discourses of affirmation and of identity may, as they do in Fanon (1986), intersect as follows: in an attempt to assert himself the oppressed person may construct a list of qualities which render him a worthwhile person. Such an attempt may well fail because, as Rorty (1989) points out, as long as human beings try to affirm, to maintain with certainty, anything about themselves they remain trapped. He argues furthermore that freedom consists in recognizing and living with contingency and in the ability to be ironic, also about oneself.

The norm originator text provides an example of what would seem to be the ultimate affirmation of those who were previously oppressed: learned helplessness amongst Namibians is constituted as an effect, not of the previous system, but of the post-independence system. Thus there is a powerful assumption operative here that those who suffered under the previous apartheid system were by no means helpless or powerless in the face of that system. The effect of doing this is so powerful that it becomes difficult to even write 'those who were previously oppressed'; it seems naive and hollow to do so.

page 22

M44: .... I find Namibians after independence to have adopted this learned helplessness attitude towards everything.

page 22

M45: .... it is this learned helplessness .... I know somebody that he went to Britain and he was telling me that he is in a field he did not even study for. He hasn't read a book that is related to his field. There's so much apathy. It's just dead. .... I mean it's intellectually not stimulating anymore.

What is on the one hand noteworthy, but on the other hand also obvious is that those norm originators who, on account of their skin colour have suffered prejudice and oppression, are very much present and able to make their voices heard. For these people affirmation in the sense of 'positively' constructing identity is simply not an issue.

A further point which can be made in respect of affirmation is that indirectly the norm originators engage in considerable self criticism<sup>4</sup> as they are critical of 'Namibians'. While at one level such self criticism may appear to be stifling, it also intersects with a discourse of self creation which seems to call on participants to be creative and to imagine new ways of doing. The discourse of self creation also revolves around what has been achieved.

The following is an example of how self criticism might be stifling

page 22

M44: .... I find Namibians after independence to have adopted this learned helplessness attitude towards everything.

page 22

M45: .... it is this learned helplessness .... I know somebody that he went to Britain and he was telling me that he is in a field he did not even study for. He hasn't read a book that is related to his field. There's so much apathy. It's just dead. .... I mean it's intellectually not stimulating anymore.

The following two extracts are illustrative of how the discourse of self creation intersects with (implied) self criticism.

page 16

S27: .... there is no Namibian identity which is suitable. We ask about the future. .... my profession is about creating heroes that aren't politically or financially – exalted. ....

....

S28: .... just in the last couple of weeks there was a television first drama series made by a Namibian. It was so successful that the guys who acted in it had become celebrities and they followed around everywhere and there's a whole new focus on being looking up to a Namibian instead of having to look up to Malcolm X ....

page 16

S27: We do not have a Namibian identity. You see the war is over and there are no heroes left who aren't politically and military based and that is where the future is challenging is to develop a Namibian identity or personality ....

As was elucidated in *Chapter 3, Texts of Identity* Kristeva (1993) would appear to regard a 'positive' construction of identity as a bulwark against attempts to 'be someone' in terms of national origins. Berlin (1990) argues that in the context of an underdeveloped nation it may be expected that identity may be given shape in the vigorous assertion of national consciousness as a response to the contempt and superiority expressed by more advanced nation states. He expresses considerable scepticism in

respect of such attempts. In the first norm originator text the discourse of self creation is, at least in part, constituted in nationalist terms. More specifically there is a call for a Namibian identity to be 'created' as a counter to global discourses and, particularly, Americanization. How should this sort of engagement by the norm originators in a nationalist discourse be seen? Is it regressive in the sense that Kristeva (1993) explicates? Should the employment of this discourse be approached with the same scepticism that Berlin does? Alternatively is this to be regarded as an example of resistance against the complex of discourses, including cultural discourses, that "interpenetrate and coordinate multiple sites of ruling" and against "relations of ruling" as these are manifested in, amongst other things, the abstraction and objectification of people's everyday experiences, the squeezing of these into universalized forms (Smith, 1993, p 6). In trying to answer these questions the one point to remember, and this is something Parker (1992) insists on, is that no discourse is repressive per se. Rather what is required is to consider the effects of a particular discourse at a specific time in a particular context. Returning to the norm originator text it seems highly unlikely that the employment of a nationalist discourse in this context is repressive.

#### 7.1.5. Construction of identity in terms of available discourses

A very good example of how people get caught in language, of how culturally available narratives inevitably 'find their way' into the construction of our 'own' experiences and our 'selves', can be found in the way the norm originators engage in the discourse of race during the first group discussion. There is a powerful consensus in the group that racism is morally wrong and yet the discourse of race is pervasive in the way participants constitute themselves, other people, Namibian society and their past.

page 4

J04: If they are white nostalgia would not be surprising.

A04: Ja.

J05: .... I didn't know the responses whether it was a white or black person. If it was a white person it would be obvious.

page 6

K01: .... I think people around the country felt oppression in different ways, even though there were no whites in certain villages ....

V18: But .... I said that physical - for those that felt apartheid

.....

.....

.....

.....

K03: Oh, physically. Oh, okay

V19: .... the entire country was under apartheid regime but there are people went to school in the north .... they have never carried a past. .... They have never gone to a restaurant and being told 'you sit there but don't sit there' ....

page 41

K20: Because .... when I went to the States and I went to an all-white school .... it was like racism you could say. Now coming here I met somebody at work who was from South Africa a boer .... she did not want to talk to everybody like she was scared of black people. And I don't have to deal with that. I dealt with racism before independence.

page 43

S137: Because I mean a white-black thing in Namibia isn't hardly an issue now any more.

M97: Oh Oh.

K25: It depends where you go.

V125: A week ago .... we were in a small bar, and .... one younger Afrikaner he got drunk, and he picking out words, 'you black kaffirs'

.....

P32: .... something which is suppressed in the white minds.

Vi03: Ja, ja that racism. I mean it still exists but suppressed somehow....

page 27

M64: Listen fear comes especially for those who have experienced it closer. You know some of us have been far removed from this realities, you know what I'm saying. Other people have been very close to what could actually happen.

S72: Fear

M65: Ja

S73: I got fears

J68: .... A different type of fear

M66: I am talking about this type of fear (laughter) I mean we are talking about (laughter) different types of groups here. Certain people (laughter)

J69: Say it, white and black. Say it.

page 31

J93: [white male addressing S another white male] You have never experienced that sort of vulnerability nor have I. Most whites have never experienced it.

One of the participants draws on the moral wrongfulness of racism to justify and explain his identity as not Namibian, but in the process gets entrapped in the discourse of race. It may be hypothesized that his entrapment is characteristic of what many Namibians experience.

page 38 Note that these excerpts are taken from four pages

P12: Honestly spoken, I myself ahm (pause) I still can't. I have difficulties to identify myself with this country with the culture and ah the mentality of all the how should I say of all the races across the board.

....

....

....

page 39

S128: But what is the whole cultural thing that I am missing?

....

....

....

page 40

P22: It's more the mentality. .... how people are sometimes. Okay I have got some colleagues, mm, it's a Damara colleague .... there's an Ovambo guy .... he's a kind of messenger, and mm the way they are treating or talking to each other .... it's actually disgusting. ....

She says for instance in front of the white colleagues mm this Ovambo guy, .... Wambos are shit. ....

....

S130: We got this terrible racial background to overcome.

P23: It's that racial thinking people primarily race race and it's just, I don't know.

M94: Okay, everything is race?

P24: Ja, look in Germany I have problems, but I grew up into that society and as the way I see Germany. Germans are very liberal people. ....

V117: What you are trying to say in the GDR then.

P25: No, not only even West Germany. West Germans are more liberal than East Germans.

V118: No, no

P26: it's true

V119: Let me tell you, you could say it in the GDR and I know exactly how the GDR was .... they had a number of racists then I was attacked. Just a few kilometres from their [P's] school.

P27: Ja, racial I haven't said ....

K19: Probably you don't want to deal with racism here but deal with it there outside ....

....

....

....

page 41

P28: .... When a German let's say for instance comes to you he regards you as a human being. You know you have got your dignity, ....

....

....

V120: You know the very things you say did not happen in Germany happened. .... I could remember instances where I went to a nightclub Saturday and someone would come and say "what's this black thing doing here, it belongs to the gas chamber." That's your GDR.

P30: Ja, but I am not saying it did not exist.

V121: .... The answer is you are you can deal with racism in Germany but you do not want to deal with racism here!

### 7.1.6. Legitimation: the role of available discourses

The extent to which the articulation of identity is carried out in terms of available narratives becomes clear in efforts made by the norm originators to legitimate their own voices. This is also an indication of how human beings try to fit their "personal" stories into larger frameworks. Right at the start of the discussion legitimacy is powerfully claimed on the basis of having suffered, personally and directly, under the system of apartheid. Legitimacy is also asserted on the grounds of having informed the world of people's suffering. Furthermore, the validity of stories which are not constituted in terms of these themes is questioned. Specifically, articulations of independence which are not built in terms of these themes are questioned. Thus, a thorny issue is raised, namely how those who cannot lay claim to having been victims of apartheid might become heirs of independence. Two options emerge from the text. Firstly, they could make claims to legitimacy on the basis of being knowledgeable and of being aware of that history of suffering. This includes being in contact with and being informed about the lives and ideas of those who did suffer. However, if these claims are pushed too far sanction may be expected. Secondly, they could try to broaden the range of stories which would render them legitimate heirs or situate themselves as active constructors of possible future stories.

The following excerpt provides an example of how identity is constructed in terms of suffering under apartheid and the enforcement of this policy.

page 6
V16: [who grew up in Windhoek and had a great deal of contact with white people] ..... students in the north who were generally under oppression and some of them probably completed their secondary education without having seen the practice of apartheid. Some have never carried the past. They only read about the past system. .... they did not suffer the direct physical contact of apartheid.
page 6
V20: .... there are people went to school in the north .... they have never carried a past. For instance we were carrying a pass(?) ....



They have never gone to a restaurant and been told 'you sit there but don't sit ....

page 3

V07: .... don't know now whether there was anything [in the responses of the students] that touched a raw nerve. I mean to me I've been so hardened by events I've seen, talked to people like those that survived Cassinga .... and explain or tell other people what happened at Cassinga and many other events during the war ....

In the following extracts legitimacy is claimed on the basis of being knowledgeable, specifically about the history of one's region and how that history involved restrictions being placed on the lives of certain groups of people. The first quote follows immediately on V's talk about those who did and did not suffer directly under apartheid.

page 7

J13: For instance women .... before independence there were practically no Oshiwambo women in the whole country you know.

....

J14: They never came out you see under the contract labour system. The only Ovambo the women were only nurses and teachers and the wives of priests and the rest of the women were prohibited ....

page 33

J97: .... I covered political meetings in Katutura from 1987-1991 and not just in Katutura, in Olympia [a traditionally 'white' residential area of Windhoek] and everywhere in the north ....

In the following extract legitimacy is claimed on the basis of having been present while history was being made in the Namibian context.

page 15

J37: .... What was relevant was Pik Botha standing there and de Klerk .... while their flag after .... say sixty years was being pulled

down .... and Mandela witnessing that and I watched those three faces. I was very close to them .... and I watched those faces because there the history was being written ....

The second avenue for asserting legitimacy is to constitute oneself as an African who 'knows about' the workings of the continent and who is able to recognize Eurocentrism. This is one way of articulating belonging. This is what J. does in the following extract.

page 12

J20: I think .... that's a typical European attitude towards the politician.

S19: Is it wrong though?

J21: Nujoma like Kenyatta like Mandela like Nyere is not a politician is not a prime minister like in Britain, Germany, Italy or Spain who come and go every four to five years .... . Nujoma like Nyere is the founding father of the liberation party seeing it now from the kids' point of view which their parents grew up with .... . .... You cannot assess people's attitude towards a figure like Nujoma like you can assess the attitude of English kids for John Major or Margaret Thatcher .... .

In the second illustrative extract which follows, the first part that is not underlined provides the context for the underlined section where J. indirectly legitimizes his own voice by naming the Eurocentrism of S.

page 27

M64: Listen fear comes especially for those who have experienced it closer. You know some of us have been far removed from this realities, you know what I'm saying. Other people have been very close to what could actually happen.

S72: Fear

M65: Ja

S73: I got fears

J68: A different type of fear

M66: I am talking about this type of fear (laughter) I mean we are talking about (laughter) different types of groups here. Certain people (laughter)

J69: Say it, white and black. Say it.

....

J70: He [S] is a European liberal.

As was noted above, a second way in which those who were not direct victims of apartheid could try to claim legitimacy would be to broaden the range of available stories. Furthermore, they could situate themselves as active constructors of possible stories. The following excerpts help to illustrate this.

In the following extract S responds to V who challenges the construction of identity in terms other than those of having suffered under apartheid and the enforcement of this policy.

page 1

S01: But I think just because it's a different opinion, it doesn't at all, it means it is just another relevant opinion.

page 16

S27: But why does that [young Namibians wanting to be as Americanized as possible] happen because there is no Namibian identity which is suitable. We ask about the future. This is my whole my profession is about creating heroes that aren't politically or financially -- exalted.

The process of legitimation also is a good example of how identity is negotiated in interaction with others who play an important role in setting limits and in providing openings. The setting of limits can be seen in the checks which V. places on J's attempt to be an educator of SWAPO youth.

page 14

J32: .... I can tell SWAPO kids that I meet in the street.

V49: You mean GDR kids

J33: sometimes they do not know about it [history]

V50: ... SWAPO kids or GDR kids

J34: Well actually both

V51: (laughs)

A certain construction of history thus places certain constraints on what people can legitimately do.

#### 7.1.7. Rendering the inter-individual word one's 'own'; active participation in discourses

One of the objectives for this project is to investigate how people situate themselves within socially offered narrations as they relate publicly shared events and tell their life stories. Furthermore, the project focuses on how people might construct original accounts as they 'recount' publicly shared events. How available discourses invite certain perceptions of ourselves and of others (Parker, 1992) was examined in the previous paragraphs. What follows is an inquiry into how human beings render available ways of speaking their own so that the inter-individual word is given an intonation "... that is expressive of one's own very being" (Shotter, 1993b, p.41).

Namibia's independence would certainly count as a significant publicly shared event. The norm originators, in relating the meanings of independence, do not speak in terms of cliches as the students tend to do. Their articulations tend to be more personal and concrete in the sense that they relate their own experiences of independence as well as the ways this happening has impacted on their lives. The following extracts will help to illustrate this.

page 1

V01: .... For instance, in one aspect independence meant I could go back to the former residential area of my people because my father is buried there, I bought a house there, I feel spiritually at home there. That is only one aspect of it and it sparks off so many answers and at times questions, too.

page 15

J37: .... What was relevant was Pik Botha standing there and de Klerk .... while their flag after .... say sixty years was being pulled down .... and Mandela witnessing that and I watched those three

faces. I was very close to them .... and I watched those faces because there the history was being written ....

page 41

K20: .... Now coming here [to Namibia] I met somebody at work who was from South Africa and when she joined [the organization where the participant works] she did not want to talk to everybody like she was like scared of black people. And I don't have to deal with that. .... I dealt with racism before independence.

At this point a few comments in respect of the term 'original accounts' are in order. If 'original' is to be read as something totally new and without precedent then the meanings which the norm originators articulate in respect of independence cannot be regarded as original. In Rorty's (1989) terms the norm originators are probably engaged in elegant re-writings of previously written poems. However, as was argued in *Chapter 3, Texts of Identity* under the heading 3.19.: *Enfoldedness and origination: not necessarily excluding each other* human beings must necessarily immerse themselves in what is around them in order to originate (Freeman, 1993). If we can stop thinking of culture as something 'out there', existing over and against the inner self and imposed on the individual (Flax, 1990) then we can begin to see that creativity is possible because there is something to make use of.

Assuming that the analysis of the students' responses provides an indication of some of the socially offered narrations in the Namibian context, it is notable that, at least at the start of the discussion, half of the participants contrast their own experiences, their own lives and their knowledge with the analysis of the student responses. These participants keep articulating the following sorts of messages: 'I cannot identify with this; this has nothing to do with me, with my life; nothing of this touched me or is meaningful to me.' While half of the participants articulate how the (analysis of) the student responses do not 'fit with' them, there are at least two norm originators who insist that the students' voices should be treated as equally valid. These articulations of the norm originators may be interpreted as follows: they seem to be actively involved in the reformulation of the discourses in terms of which they are constituted.

Such active participation becomes apparent in another comparison between the students and the norm originators: whereas the former tend to situate themselves passively and as having change happening to them, the latter also situate themselves as being able to introduce changes, to bring about change. The norm originators do this by, inter alia, imagining possibilities for political action, by identifying needs and shortcomings in their country and by speculating what could be done about those needs.

#### 7.1.8. The dissonance in "articulating difference: texts of identity"

When considering the analysis of the first interview with the norm originators 'as a whole' what is noteworthy is that for practically every statement which can be made as part of the analysis, the opposite is also true. For instance, there are many points where the norm originators engage in a discourse of helplessness and powerlessness, but there are also several instances of engaging in a discourse of agency.

page 22

M45: .... you can't like confront issues or do whatever then you labelled and when you're labelled it affects you because you can't go from one job to the other. It is just a phonecall away ....

....

....

S50: That's misinformation, that is misinformation.

M47: What.

S51: You can bitch and shout and scream and protest as much as you like anywhere, and no-one is going to do anything to you. ....

M48: Oh, Oh excuse me!

....

M49: I know people who haven't been employed for three years and when you look at what was happening it was just a phonecall. Don't take him, don't take him ....

....

S53: ... I am a great follower of lawyers, legal systems,

M50: Ja but, you have to have the money, you have to have the money .... to go for lawyers ....

page 28

A10: Ja, but apart from that also there is another group where you find in our society that some class they do not even have the power to go to the law .... so they scared of these things because they do not .... know what their rights are.

S79: That is an information problem.

....

M72: Who is going to give information?

J76: Well, it's a real problem.

M73: To question them ..., tell me

....

S80: Okay

M74: The media is controlled in such a way anyway that who would give the information.

Another example where contradictions are evident is in respect of the 'unity discourse'. In the following extracts A's call for unity amongst black people is contradicted by P who seems to be critical of the way whites are excluded by the black unity discourse.

page 42

A17:.. Because I find that amongst the blacks themselves, we are more tribalistic, than the white and black thing really if you look at we are suppose to be one but the way we are divided.

....

....

....

page 45

P34: Now you say as blacks we must actually be one. How come are you saying we blacks? What happened to the whites?

A further example consists in the way the past is constituted: on the one hand, a construction in terms of the themes of apartheid and suffering is posited as being the legitimate way while, on the other hand, any construction is deemed to be appropriate.

Linking this to the theoretical work of the first three chapters, it would seem that dissonance is build into the norm originator text. This dissonance is apparent, not just on a content level, but also in the way the norm originators

challenge one another, on occasion exposing one another's implicit assumptions.

The above paragraph makes it seem as though the dissonance, the tensions 'belong to' the norm originator text as an entity consisting in and of itself. However, it is worth noting at this point that the method of generating and of analysing the data are of such a 'nature' that difference will be manifested. An examination of 'discourse' and of discourse analysis makes this clear. Even though 'discourse' provides a general concept, a focus for ordering a piece of text, a way of classifying disparate parts of the text so that it becomes manageable, there is room for tremendous variation within each discourse and this becomes apparent in the analysis of the norm originator text. For instance, even though it is possible to recognize in this text a discourse of independence, 'independence' is constructed very differently and people situate themselves very differently in respect of this discourse.

As was argued above, an analysis and interpretation of the difference between those norms, signs and symbols which are readily available in the Namibian context, and what the norm originators do with these should make it possible to get an indication of how the articulation of human subjectivity could be constitutive of transformation in the Namibian context.

#### **7.1.9. Personal engagement/involvement**

An important difference between the norm originators and the students which was identified in *Chapter 5: Analysis of student responses and discussions of norm originators* was that the minority of the students are really engaged in the accounts which they provide. Generally speaking their accounts are distanced and they tend to remain passive onlookers; they do not engage in and struggle with issues, usually in that they simply do not see the issues or ignore them, but sometimes also overtly, in that they refuse or reject issues. The norm originators, on the other hand, were fully and personally involved as they participated in the group discussion. Furthermore, commitment to Namibia is assumed amongst the norm originators. This becomes evident in, amongst other things, the way in which group participants are emotionally involved in the problems facing their communities and in how they attempt to articulate solutions. This is not the case for the student responses.



The above can be linked to the theoretical work pertaining to identity, specifically the material regarding commitments and identifications. To recap, Taylor (1989) argues that the question 'Who am I' can be adequately answered in terms of 'where I stand'; identity is a matter of commitments and identifications. It was pointed out that identity as explicated by Taylor is a relational phenomenon with a strong emotional 'component'.

Against this theoretical background the difference between the norm originators and the students may be articulated as follows: the norm originators, unlike the students, articulate a strong sense of identity, not in the sense of being bounded, self-contained creatures, but in the sense that they are invested and engaged, in Taylor's terminology, committed to an identified with. It is not as though the norm originators are identified with and committed to certain specific things (although they may be this, too). Instead we are here concerned with a way of being in which it is not really possible to distinguish a committing, identifying' being from a thing which that being is committed to or identified with.

In previous discussions the question was raised, whether commitments and identifications might become restrictive. The norm originator text certainly provides an instance of how this is possible. There is a strong underlying assumption that identity is constituted in terms of being identified with and committed to Namibia. This comes to the fore in the way the one person who constitutes his identity in terms of how he is not Namibian feels it necessary to justify and explain his non-identification with Namibia. The restrictiveness referred to above becomes evident in the way his story is constituted as regrettable and his justifications are rejected. Here a nationalist discourse becomes repressive in being taken for granted. Identity talk in this sense is problematic in that it presupposes 'belonging' and identification.

In the light of the arguments developed in *Chapter 3, Texts of Identity*, that origination requires an immersion in that which is around one, it might have been expected that norm originators would be so fully personally engaged.

The norm originator text is indicative of a strong tendency to be critical of that which is being identified with and to see the problems in that. For instance, even though the norm originators implicitly regard the independence of the country as 'good', they also articulate the difficulties that are part of

independence and are manifested in the problems which the country now experiences. One of these problems is that people are careful to express ideas and criticisms because they might lose material benefits. In other words, the meaning of independence is reduced to material entitlement. Although there is a strong sense amongst the norm originators that independence is by no means a fairytale happy ending, they do not become rejecting in their criticisms. This applies particularly to their talk about Namibians which contrasts with the way the students talk about Namibians. In respect of the following explication it is important to keep in mind that all but one of the norm originators identify themselves as being Namibians.

Those students who do describe and evaluate 'Namibians' do so either in terms of a continuum of 'us' as united - 'us' as differentiated, or they attach negative labels to Namibians, for instance, calling them incompetent. The norm originators function on a different level of abstraction where they regard such 'self - labelling' as indicative of a lack of self-respect amongst Namibians. In other words, the norm originators do not engage in name-calling, but reflect on the fact that Namibians tend to call themselves bad names.

The previous two paragraphs elucidate the 'nature' of commitments and identifications in an interesting way. In *Chapter 6, "Texts of identity" and "articulating difference" revisited* it was argued that it would be a mistake to conceptualize the 'I' which 'does the committing and identifying' and that which I am committed to and identified with as two bounded, separate entities. It would also be wrong to collapse the two into one. The tension of differentiation must be maintained. If this argument is related to what the norm originators do, it would seem that they manage to maintain this tension and this differentiation. This they do by being both committed to and identified with (projects, ideals and groups), as well as critical of these. In being critical the norm originators in a sense keep their distance while remaining involved. This process is very different to setting up rigid boundaries as would be the case in outright rejection.

A final point is worth making here: even as the norm originators are strongly committed to and identified with, there is much variation amongst them with respect to how identity is constituted, ranging from articulating a marginal identity, to a 'mixed' (in terms of ethnic affiliation) identity, to being fully

identified with Namibia. This range is not evident in the responses of the students. Thus, it would appear that, at least in this sense, strong commitments and identifications do not necessarily entail rigidity.

#### **7.1.10. Situatedness in respect of time**

Among the norm originators there is a powerful sense of the past, in the way they articulate their own identities, in the way they see present power divisions as being legitimated, and in what they perceive to be the psychological make-up of many Namibians. Relating this to Appiah's (1992) work he maintains that the decolonized mind does not despise the past and is able to integrate the past. When comparing the two texts produced by the students and the norm originators respectively what emerges is that the latter manage to integrate the past, that is, make it present in their accounts now, whereas the students tend to posit a clean break between the past, present and future and there is little articulation of how events in the present are informed by what occurred in the past.

Appiah also asserts that the decolonized mind does not harp on the past. The capacity which he posits to integrate and transcend the past is likely to be undermined by the discourses of blame and guilt. The discourses of blame and guilt would be associated with a compulsive repetition, like a record needle that has become stuck in a groove. Although the norm originators constitute the past as having left scars which are very much evident in the present they do not engage in discourses of blame or of guilt.

An interesting example of how integrating and transcending the past affects the construction of the present can be seen in the way the norm originators deal with the relationship between South Africa and Namibia. Whereas the students articulate this relationship in terms of small brother - big brother, the norm originators never discuss the relationship between the two countries in the present although there are some references to the pre-independence relationship. In this way the norm originators bestow a new meaning on independence.

The assimilation and integration of the past is linked with envisioning the future in the norm originator text as follows: the text specifies quite clearly what aspects of the past have to be abandoned in the creation of the future, even as the past is repeatedly evoked. The norm originators engage in the

discourse of self-creation in this process of assimilating and integrating the past as they anticipate and imagine the future.

As was intimated in *Chapter 3* under the heading 3.13: *Not any account (of 'the past') will do*, multiple tellings of the past which, however, have regard for "actualities" would allow the past to be transcended. The norm originators tell multiple stories of the past, for instance, resistance against oppression is spoken of as multi-faceted, exile is constituted as a complex phenomenon. Such multiple tellings can help to undermine established power differentials by challenging those versions of the past which dominant groups tell as 'the truth'. In the students' responses the past is spoken of in the general terms of violence and the struggle, if it is spoken of at all.

In the norm originator text there is a strong focus on the present social and political situation in Namibia. In contrast, the present is hardly ever addressed in the student responses. There is a pervasive consciousness amongst the norm originators of what is problematic now in and about Namibia, about what is not good or right. However, as elucidated above, this does not prevent them from imagining the future. This can be linked to the theoretical work as follows: Rosenwald & Ochberg (1992) explain how the attempt to force a new narrative without taking heed of the past can be disempowering. To elucidate this point further it is helpful to make an analogy between telling personal narratives and writing fiction. Warren (1962, in Wiersma, 1992) has pointed out that good fiction, while it allows us to escape the restrictions of the world, also returns us to the world. As was noted in the *Chapter 3 Texts of Identity*, returning to the world would include taking into consideration the political and social realities in which one's story unfolds. This indeed is what the norm originators seem to be doing as they envision the future.

However, there are occasions where the focus on present difficulties is so pervasive that it becomes seemingly impossible to draw on the past in envisioning the future. Interestingly one of the norm originators attempted to use 'the' past to break out of pessimism about the present, but this attempt is not taken up by the others.

S77: That is the past. That is the present. The future is self-employment.

....

V89: But how many people can employ themselves?

K14: Exactly, because

....

A10: Ja, but apart from that there is another group .... in our society .... they do not even have the power to go to the law or approach the law so they scared of these things ....

S79: That is an information problem. ....

....

....

....

....

....

M74: The media is controlled in such a way anyway that who would give the information.

page 29

J78: You're employed, S you must

S81: The legal assistance centre doesn't do any public relations.

J79: Those are abstract, ....

....

....

....

S82: Our future is people with self respect, dignity where they have the courage to stand up for what they ... like in the struggle. I mean hell the war.

J81: S, those are abstractions ....

#### 7.1.11. Appearances and 'beyond'

As explicated in *Chapter 5* under the heading 5.3.4. *Appearances and 'beyond'* the students are concerned with what is 'there', on the surface. For example, they are generally preoccupied with people's appearance, their hairstyles, the clothes they wear. In contrast to this the norm originators look 'behind' and 'beyond' the surface. For instance, they examine the historical and socio-economic contexts of what they perceive to be Namibia's present

situation and articulate how class divisions structure and perpetuate the status quo in Namibia.

Furthermore, the 'nature' of 'reality' is contested in the norm originator text with reality being constructed as material, ideal, sociological, political and psychological. This does not happen in the text of student responses.

It may be argued that, when people simply take things at face value, they also in a sense accept that 'this is how the world works'. This is an unquestioning stance which is at the same time disempowering, and which can lead to a sense of helplessness.

#### **7.1.12. Constituting others in terms of race: engaging in the discourse of race**

The norm originators draw more extensively on the discourse of race than the students, only three of whom engaged in this discourse. There is a powerful awareness in the norm originator text of how the discourse of race has had, and still has, pernicious effects in the Namibian context. The norm originators engage the discourse of race in many different ways. This ranges from calling for black unity in the Namibian context, a call which is challenged on the grounds of its racist implications, to drawing on the discourse of race to differentiate between oneself, one's experiential world and that of another participant (of another race group), being acutely aware of doing so, and showing discomfort about this. Participants in the group discussion sometimes draw on the discourse of race to engage with one another, even as the discourse differentiates them.

Whereas the students draw on specific adjectives to describe black and white people respectively and assign particular attributes, the norm originators, even though they draw on a discourse of race, do not do this. Labelling, which is a form of distancing, does not play a role in the norm originator text.

#### **7.2. An explication of how the norm originators reconstruct the realities constituted in their first discussion and in the analysis of that discussion.**

As was explained at the start of this chapter, there are two points in the research process which allow for the re-narration of events and of life stories.

The invitation to the norm originators to discuss the analysis of the student responses constitutes the first point and the request that they deliberate on the analysis of their first discussion constitutes the second point.

The analysis of the first group discussion and its presentation to the norm originators may be regarded as an intervention, as a deliberate attempt at transformation.

A more specific research question which may be asked in respect of this part of the research process is how the norm originators deal with attempts by the researcher to redescribe their own accounts of themselves and of publicly shared events. More concretely, what did the norm originators do with the researcher's analysis of the first discussion in which they participated?

An important question, one which also pertains to the comparison of the student responses with the first norm originator discussion may be raised here: even though it is reasonable to assume that in re-narrating life stories and publicly shared events the norm originators would be opening new worlds, it is also reasonable to assume that at times the articulations of these norm originators would amount to 'mere' repetition. How, if at all, is it possible to distinguish between those articulations which involve some origination, some violation of the norms, and those that do not? Such distinctions are all the more difficult to make if it is accepted that it is impossible to create something new out of nothing (Flax, 1993), and if it is accepted that norm originators too must necessarily draw on available discourses and already existing narratives. It is certainly not possible to develop a set of abstract principles for making these distinctions and then to impose this grid on the said of the norm originators. Instead, the theoretical work of the first three chapters will be consulted in an attempt to differentiate between repetition and a retelling which also involves origination.

### **7.2.1. Individual, personal stories: transforming abstractions and generalizations**

What is perhaps most salient of the second norm originator discussion is the insistence on narrating individual, personal stories. As was mentioned in *Chapter 5* under the heading *5.5.1.: The uniqueness of the Namibian experience: from generalizations and abstractions to specific accounts the*

norm originators describe the analysis of the first discussion as being too abstract and too general. The following extract is illustrative:

page 2

V13: ... Ja, old location [the place from which black people were forcibly removed in 1959 to Katutura] just here nearby because our house was very near Louis Botha, just across the river so I knew families who used to live in all these areas. So when I was abroad you know I imagined, maybe one day going to join the forces and fighting against ... playmates, guys that I used to play with.

page 5

J08: I've got a complaint. In some ways its to me I think in terms of the analysis it speaks generalized in an African sense. Hmm ignoring to an extent some very interesting Namibian. I think one of the strongest Namibian features which shapes all our experiences is the small number of people ... . .... I think it's very dangerous to talk about the Namibian experience or the South African experience as a colonial experience in the sense of might it happen in the whole continent.

page 6

J12: ... It's very intimate.

V22: ... Ja

J13: [J is a white man] ... I was now in Swakopmund. I sit at the bar and there were two black women sitting there and we're getting chatting, it turns out they're both nurses. Then it turns out my father treated her mother and attended the birth of her sister which was all about twenty-five years ago ...

How can this complaint and the associated telling of many local stories, as well as the emphasis on the uniqueness of their own situation/context be understood? This may be regarded as another attempt - the first was noted in the comparison of the first norm originator discussion with the responses of the students - to avoid cliches. In a sense the generalisations and abstractions are empty categories which nevertheless exert considerable power. It may be argued that such generalisations and abstractions play a



significant role in what Smith (1993) refers to as "relations of ruling". What the norm originators do is to fill these empty categories, thereby transforming them. In doing so they seem to be engaging in "the process of speaking from experience" (Smith, p. 2). Specifically, the norm originators object to the generalisation of 'colonisation'. In the Namibian context this very discourse of colonialism is liberally drawn on by those who exercise political power in order to keep exercising that power, and to legitimate their own positions. By telling their own personal narratives the norm originators do indeed articulate their very own being even as they draw on the inter-individual word (Shotter, 1993b) to do so. The process of narrating many personal stories involves the setting up of a tension between culturally available codes and the force of subjectivity (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). The effect of this seems to be that it is possible to listen with interest and compassion.

### 7.2.2. Narrating the past: moving into the unknown future

The second norm originator discussion sheds some light on how the past might be re-told in a way which allows for venturing into the unknown future. Firstly, the past is constituted in terms of the concrete actions of specific people as can be seen in the following quote.

page 4

J06: ... Although Ben [one of the Ministers in the present government] had been a little guy, and he always remembered that in the values of the day old man Berger was relatively speaking a liberal in other words he was known in the Usakos location to be sort of fair white man or something like that.

page 2

V13: ... I remember a very sad story where twins of the SADF were killed in a landmine explosion, now it's a rule of the war that you can't have two brothers in the same platoon, ... and these guys were divided ... but as they were coming back from an engagement they decided to drive together in one vehicle and they went over a landmine and both died there. So I for instance remember when I was discussing it with other people and saying that now what about this family? How do they feel having lost two people at once? This is just a family, they probably not concerned as to whether the blacks would come and rule ...

page 33

A30: My aunt grew up in the old location. She used to tell us stories you know the old location was so nice. Well it was shanty houses but they all so neat and you know it was well structured ... .

If it is accepted that the institutional order of society involves the ways in which the local actualities of people's everyday lives as lived are organized extra-locally and objectified (Smith, 1993), then the institutional order would seem to be undermined by people relating the past as the concrete actions of particular people.

What emerges from the narrations of one of the norm originators is that a failure to remember the injustices of the past would amount to a betrayal of himself and of his own development.

page 1

V01: ... When I think about the past, ... I can never leave out the coming into power of the Nationalists in South Africa and what followed later on ... you know when I was younger, when I became older I started understanding what happened as to when I was much younger, so I can put it into focus ... .

....

V02: ... when I was much younger, maybe three, four or five years old, maybe I couldn't understand why we didn't live in houses like the houses in which the Europeans lived.

G02: Right.

V03: Because I was too young to be able to analyse those things. But as I became older I started understanding the past much better and then I reached a stage where I was critical and then as stage where I started condemning the past ... .

Interestingly he narrates the injustices of the past without a trace of bitterness and there is evidence of self respect and dignity in his stories. In fact, the act of remembering makes it possible not to be a victim; remembering and recounting redeems him from being the mute, naive, suffering one. Remembering is closely associated with being aware and being aware entails the capacity to be critical of larger social structures, as well as non-

acceptance of injustices. Connecting this to the theoretical framework (see 2.6.: *Ideology critique* in *Chapter 2*), this seems to be an instance of 'ideology critique' on a micro scale. As was explicated in *Chapter 2* an important aspect of oppression is that certain everyday practices are accepted as natural and therefore as being beyond question. Thus to have become aware entailed non-acceptance that 'this is how the world works'. This sort of remembering seems to entail the capacity to envision other worlds.

Non-acceptance that 'this is how the world works' was made possible by prying open new worlds and participating fully in those worlds despite structural restrictions, specifically apartheid. The very act of becoming knowledgeable about different worlds enables an awareness of injustices and it is this which makes it possible to escape the role of victim. As one who is thoroughly aware of injustices and of the system which perpetuates these injustices it is also possible to have empathy for those who help to keep the unjust system intact.

page 4

V19: .... I used to spend something like either two shillings or one shilling and six pence per week just buying magazines, I'll buy "Die Jongspan" produced in South Africa not necessarily for black kids, I'll buy "Knockout" from Britain and I cannot remember what other comics, whatever there was, .... so I read American comics, British comics, and I read the newspaper meant for youth in South Africa as a kid, plus all the magazines that I used to read in the white neighbourhood .... . You think those parents have so much money to buy so many magazines and newspapers and your own parents can't even buy a daily newspaper, so you felt that unfairness in the system.

page 2

V13: .... so I knew [white] families who used to live in all these areas. So when I was abroad you know I imagined maybe one day going to join the forces and fighting against schoolmates, I mean playmates, guys I used to play with, .... I remember a very sad story where twins of the SADF were killed in a landmine explosion, .... as they were coming back from an engagement they decided to drive

together in one vehicle and they went over a landmine and both died there. So I for instance remember when I was discussing it with other people and saying that now what about this family? How do they feel having lost two people at once? This is just a family, they probably not concerned as to whether the blacks would come and rule and so on and their children were just conscripted, now you have to think about this family that has lost two people ....

There are at least two senses in which the past is related nostalgically: the connectedness of people across different race groups is idealised as is the life of the 'old location' where black people used to live prior to being forcibly removed to Katutura in 1959 which then became the new location of the capital, Windhoek.

page 33

A30: My aunt grew up in the old location. She used to tell us stories you know the old location was so nice. Well it was shanty houses but they all so neat and you know it was well structured and what we became actually so envious, you know like I wish I was there, I wish I could also experience, ...

K28: That was really a slow life and they stood for what they wanted.

....

....

....

....

....

J88: ... It seemed to be a very strong community. ...

K33: And normally when you listen it's like good memories that you fell that will never happen in Katutura for example they used to have a hall, a dancing hall ...

....

....

....

K31: So when my father tells me about these stories I always see myself you know in that hall, even music they would play there.

V99: We played jazz.

Interestingly there is an awareness in the norm originator text that accounts of the past, particularly in respect of the old location, are idealised.

page 33
A30: My aunt grew up in the old location. She used to tell us stories you know the old location was so nice. Well it was shanty houses but they all so neat and you know it was well structured ... . And then she put up an example like, you are all now here in Katutura. What will happen to you if you were removed like now while you were here ... to total different areas which you don't know what is there and you were dumped there, so you know she really put us through experiencing what they had really experienced ... .

Nevertheless the accounts are accepted as 'real'. Thus 'the past' takes on a fascinating quality of being 'real' and 'ideal' at the same time. The past is imagined in the sense elucidated by Glass (1989). It is possible to speak with enthusiasm, respect and pride of those people, the forefathers and mothers who inhabited this past. Here the norm originators engage in affirmation, not in the sense of constituting a sphere of life of the 'colonised' which was uncontaminated by the colonizer, (see 3.7.: *Controversies of affirmation* in Chapter 3), but in attributing dignity and self respect to the 'colonised', as well as a strong sense of community. The dignity and self respect included making a western way of dressing their own.

As was explicated in Chapter 5 the past is rendered as a patchwork of individual stories in the second norm originator text. In this way possibilities are created for connectedness amongst disparate groups of people in the present. In this sense reconciliation becomes, not a process that has to start from scratch, but one which has its antecedents in the multiple connections between people across a number of divides in the past.

page 6
V21: [a black man]: Like for instance I was looking for Edward Eggars and I saw a house that had his name on ... . I used to work for his father well they had a shop just near Louis Botha there and I used to be his playmate and there are many other German speaking boys that I remember and some Jewish families like

Goldblatts for instance, ... My father used to work for them and the other day I met Frau Goldblatt in town, ... I moved over greeted her in German ... .

page 7

J16: [a white man]: Like Vekuru, Vekuru [a black man] comes back from exile, ... he comes and then we get introduced to each other ... . He says, you are J., he says look my ankle. I broke my ankle at the age of eleven, your father fixed my ankle (all agree), and this happens like all the time here ... .

page 15

A02: I am [German surname] from my grandfather's side and [German surname] from my grandmother's side, so it was E.S. [grandfather] who came from German Koblenz .... and he got a child with a Himba

....

A03: woman which is my great grandmother's side and the other one just a Herero woman from the south which is my great grandfather's side so they end up getting married to each other, but both their parents even now you see. Postcards they used to send from Germany, ... .

### 7.2.3. Authorizing the discourse of race

It may be argued that the participants in the group discussion are powerfully constituted in accordance with the discourse of race. This is something they themselves acknowledge. Since this project is interested in how people reformulate and refashion the discourses in terms of which they are constituted, it is interesting to see what the norm originators do with this discourse during the course of the second discussion. What is perhaps most significant is that the discourse is articulated in many different ways. Thus, the norm originators are active as readers and as authors (Craig, 1994). They authorise this discourse in speaking of race ironically and in contesting the significance of race as an aspect of a person's identity. The norm originators speak of the pervasiveness of this discourse with anguish and with equanimity.

In the following extract the pervasiveness of racial awareness is spoken of with anguish and with equanimity, but also ironically.

page 9

S07: It's the whole racial thing, but if we ever want to get away from it so we may as well turn the whole racial thing around and make an issue that would turn to our advantage, make it fashion (laughter).

....

S08: I was working with these guys, four guys and because of the person who paid for the production wanted a demographically sound group of people identified so I had to ask, you know what's your background .... and I don't think one of the guys was either, Herero, one guy's mother was a Nama, the father was a Herero and the other one's mother was from the north and his mother was from the east and eventually I just said, well that's fine, I've got everybody, the whole country being four people ... . But yes I also get the negativity from everything being racial, I mean being white, you are so aware all the time for me that I am white and what it represents and what it comes from and what our folks did ... .

The part of the text quoted beneath follows on a discussion of people being identified on a racial basis. P. seems to be arguing that to know a person's race is of little help in knowing and understanding a person.

page 12

P03: As I see one's being how should I say, one's being is actually characterized by one's identity and the identity is formed by the way you grow up. Let's say for instance somebody looks like [V's son], he's light in colour ... I regarded myself just as just like they would, I mean the mentality and everything [P is dark skinned] ....

V37: [V's son], you can tell he's not white.

P04: Ja okay, not white, okay somebody everybody else here would say he's coloured or something.

V38: Ja, ja he's coloured .... .

P05: Ja okay let's say if he is together with some coloured guys the skin is the same but I would not say the mentality.

Whereas the researcher, in her analysis constitutes the engagement in a discourse of race as problematic, the norm originators point out that participation in the discourse is not problematic per se. What the norm originators make clear is that Namibians cannot simply do away with a discourse. This would be akin to what Rosenwald & Ochberg (1992) refer to as trying to hasten a new genre, to create a new language, without paying sufficient attention to history or to the larger political context. Specifically the norm originators argue for a possibility that with time and with political changes people's awareness of race might wane, or that the quality of the awareness may change, may become more 'matter of fact'.

The following extract illustrates the way in which being aware of race has become, in a sense like being aware that one has a nose, it is simply a matter of fact. The extract also illustrates how such awareness might wane.

page 10

S11: ... I often stand in a bank, and you know when you in a bank, and you in a long queue and you stand around and you look around and without realizing ... and you realize you the only white person there, and there's no it's just all of a sudden that you realize that your soul is a white soul.

....

....

....

....

V32: ja, ja that of of moving being in motion not aware of anything, say for instance you are walking, your hands are not even in front of you, you see nothing black, ....., you are just a soul, ... .

....

....

S15: Anyway I was relating the bank thing as a positive thing.

page 6

J14: ... I remember once the legal adviser of Athisaari is a Ghanean ... he once made quite a long analysis of this. He said you know I've been all over Africa ... and he said I have never seen any part of the world and I didn't know it existed that is so permeated by racial awareness. He says never, nowhere, nowhere in Africa ... .



These issues surrounding the discourse of race appear to be reflective of a more general paradox. With the coming of independence new metaphors, new ways of speaking, are called for, but this is not best achieved by self-consciously silencing old discourses. It seems necessary to keep drawing on the old narratives in the process of transforming them. This indeed is what the norm originators seem to be doing.

Another way in which the norm originators may be seen to be active as authors of discourses is evident in how they deal with concepts of race, ethnicity and culture. These are sometimes used synonymously or interchangeably. In the following citation race is spoken of ironically. In trying to illustrate the 'impurity' of race S. then employs the discourse of ethnicity.

page 9

S07: It's the whole racial thing, but if we ever want to get away from it so we may as well turn the whole racial thing around and make an issue that would turn to our advantage, make it fashion (laughter).

....

S08: I was working with these guys, four guys and because of the person who paid for the production wanted a demographically sound group of people identified so I had to ask, you know what's your background .... and I don't think one of the guys was either, Herero, one guy's mother was a Nama, the father was a Herero and the other one's mother was from the north and his mother was from the east and eventually I just said, well that's fine, I've got everybody, the whole country being four people ... .

#### **7.2.4. Knowing one another: a basis for solidarity**

It would appear that in the second discussion an effort is made to develop a new sort of solidarity. This effort should be seen against the background of the previous discussion in which the norm originators lamented the lack of solidarity in Namibia. The new solidarity is not grounded on a political goal, neither does it exist on the basis of a general abstract principle, but it is founded on knowing one another. It is based on the way people's stories are made to interconnect. To put this in other words: the norm originators in the second discussion try to articulate a basis for community. In doing so they

retell the past in ways which minimise the historical dividing lines, especially of race and ethnicity, and maximise the historical roots of solidarity. The norm originators make use of the unique features of their own context, specifically Namibia's small population, to envision the possibilities for solidarity.

However, there are also allusions to how the historical connections across races which allow for solidarity are at the same time reflective of power and coercion. Thus it would seem that solidarity does not exclude divisions, that solidarity is not the same as unity. Furthermore, if one considers the historical bases for solidarity in the Namibian context then it is not possible to simply get rid of the spectre of coercion.

page 3

J02: I remember a situation when B [a Minister in the present government] just after independence we were at a cocktail party

....

J.03 and he described how after independence he, he grew up in Usakos

V15: Ja

J04: Old man Berger had a shop there.

V16: Ja, I used to buy from there too, ja.

J05: and how he .... drove the first time .... to the coast .... drove through Usakos and then this is the element that you talk about this sort of human experience shared across this divide of being driven back and stop at the shop and he said he wanted to see old man Berger. Now he wasn't in the shop when they fetched him and they like fell into each other's arms .... .

page 4

V19: .... so in one point I described that feeling of living so next to the white neighbourhood that what my age mates were doing because I knew the inside of some of those houses. I've been in the bedroom of those boys you know playing you know or drawing .... . I remember the time when I didn't have a bicycle of my own then I go there and we will be riding with the bicycles and you know talking about films and the things we had .... .

page 5

J10: .... This country [Namibia] is more similar to Botswana, Chad .... let's say small that's why, I think we are also more tolerant and less violent because the smaller the population .... the more in proportion the people know each other

V20: hmm

J11: the more human it is.

page 8

S03: .... What you got out of the last meeting came across as so negative. That is really how it seems. I know that I would look at it and think because everybody is more or less racially divided or socially or financially or whatever. Because we are so intimate there is so much hope. ....

page 8

J17: .... one thing which makes me optimistic about the country even if things go wrong is this intimacy, is the human scale. I think it would be very difficult to have violence internecine even between black groups .... because .... they are related, they went to school with the sister or know the father or the mother ....

The following excerpt is illustrative of how relationships across racial divides have also involved coercion, for instance, in the sense that members of one racial group were forced to engage in sexual intimacies with members of another group.

page 14

S24: But this race classification thing .... in Namibia. I got here in the mid-eighties and I hitchhiked from the Cape and the first thing that struck me, I think it was in Keetmanshoop already was that there was a very much more relaxed relationship, heterosexual relationship between the races. Never ever seen in the Cape, Transvaal, but I saw it immediately.

V43: Ja, very few people have been charged with the Immorality Act in Namibia and yet the children from this interracial sexual relationship are quite many and there are incidents like there was

an old Herero ... called Kariku who used to tell stories about the German military officers. when they came to the Hereros were kept in a concentration camp. A young officer would take M. today for about seven days and keep her there and then bring her back and tomorrow take A for another seven days .....

### 7.2.5. An absence: the discourse of powerlessness/helplessness

As noted in *Chapter 5*, the discourse of helplessness/powerlessness is altogether absent from the second discussion. It may be hypothesized that, in addition to the discourse of race it is this part of the analysis which the norm originators are responding to when they maintain that the researcher's breakdown of the previous discussion and the previous discussion itself are gloomy and have a negative tone. If this is so, then why is the gloom blamed on the analysis of racial discourse only?

In trying to address this question it is worthwhile noting that in the second discussion the issue of race is dealt with differently from the first discussion. In the judgement of the researcher many of the problematic articulations surrounding race are absent in the second discussion. For example, there is no instance of speaking for the other in the name of racial unity nor are the experiences of others simply redefined for them in terms of race. It would seem that the norm originators are able to deal effectively with the problem of race. Helplessness and powerlessness, on the other hand, are extremely encompassing concepts especially if they are not related to specific concrete issues.

A salient feature of the second group discussion is the following tension: the talk of how different groups of people in Namibia are distinct is almost obsessive but personal identity tends to be situated on the edges. In other words, identity is constituted in terms of not being identified with any particular group, in terms of not fitting into specific categories. Thus there is no certainty as far as identity is concerned.

page 11

J19: ... And what fascinates me is the newspaper guys. They can all and they are young see at a hundred metres see the difference between a Boer and a German.

S17: They have never got me right.

K03: No, it's true you can tell even when it's a lady or a man, you can tell this is German, this is English and this Afrikaans.

....

....

....

S18: They will hand me the Republikein or the Allgemene, they will never hand me the Namibian. I always have them I think

J54:... Your [P's] situation is a bit I could sort of feel when I go to Germany when you come here, you're black but you detribalized .... and a black person will walk up to you and think you're black and treat you as black and talk to you and then you have a hard time describing that how you in spite of your looks were different actually as some type of German. .... like when I am in Germany I speak German and everybody assumes I am German and I am not. I am emotionally vastly removed from what a German German is like in Frankfurt. I am a detribalized, semi-anglicized white African type bastard (laughter) total bastard.

As was elucidated in *Chapter 5* under the heading 5.5.2. *The construction of uniqueness in 'positive' terms* the norm originators tend to constitute the uniqueness of their own context in 'positive' terms. These 'positive' terms are as follows: in Namibia people are recognised and respected as individuals, people are tolerant of each other and it is a relatively non-violent society. Their depiction of Namibian(s) is that, despite the apartheid system which divided people and the war propaganda which rendered those 'on the other side' as monsters, tolerance remained part of the fabric of Namibian life, and it has been possible to achieve peace.

The achievement of peace does however pose new challenges: now that the struggle for peace and independence have been won, politics and the roles of people in the community have to be re-defined.

#### 7.2.6. Difference and relationship

On the whole differences are spoken of in a non-evaluative manner. Difference is constituted in terms of a rich diversity. Furthermore the norm originators extensively address connectedness across divisions. In the

analysis of the first group discussion a specific question was posed pertaining to how black people and white people can ever hope to say something which the other will find meaningful if they are constituted as speaking from opposite sides of a great divide. In the second session numerous examples are provided of how this has been done and is still done. Furthermore, identity is articulated against a background of parents and grandparents making contact across racial boundaries by learning the language of the other, seeking the company of the other.

Interestingly one specific participant who in the previous discussion constituted himself as a victim of race classification emerges in the second discussion as an expert in race classification and in making distinctions in accordance with ethnic group. Yet he also tells his own story as one of transgressing boundaries.

### **7.2.7. Identity**

Compared to the previous group discussion the articulation of identity in the second discussion is centred around being wrongly classified by others, being of 'mixed' ancestry and falling between racial categories.

Here norm originators are not only involved in constructing their own identities, they also talk about identity at a 'meta-level'. At this level they argue about the significance of 'what the eye can see' in the construction of identity, whether they themselves and others are classifiable, how they and others have escaped and still escape classification, as well as the complexities of their own identities, how they do not fit into established categories and how they have transgressed boundaries in their own development.

In the previous discussion the acceptance, especially by whites, of who they are in racial terms as well as greater self acceptance by Namibians generally were posited as important psychological changes which would be enabling of a new future. In the second discussion at least some of the norm originators articulate precisely this sort of acceptance of who they are in racial terms. Furthermore they seem to be highly self respecting as they point out how Namibians have been able to hold peaceful elections and to be tolerant of one another despite many years of war and concomitant propaganda.

### **7.2.8. Politics**

In the second discussion politics in Namibia is constituted in terms of new issues, for instance, environmental and gender issues. Interestingly the norm originators spend a considerable part of the second session discussing gender. In this way they themselves are moving away from the old encompassing themes which have dominated Namibian politics.

### **7.3. Concluding comments**

In this chapter 'texts of identity' as contained in the students' responses and in the two norm originator discussions, and 'articulating difference' were analysed with respect to existing theory. The insights yielded by the interpretation can be summarized in terms of several topics. The first concerns the tension between re-membering and envisioning in the construction and legitimation of texts of identity. The second pertains to the relationship between new ways of speaking and old discourses which have become suspect or unacceptable. The third topic involves the relationship between universal narratives and local, personal stories. The fourth topic concerns power; the following specific questions may be formulated in this regard. What does it 'look like' when people exercise power? What is the relationship between being marginal and exercising power? What is the relationship between discourses of helplessness and powerlessness and a 'lived sense' of helplessness and powerlessness? The final topic pertains to the articulation of divisions and connections between people in terms of power, coercion and solidarity.

These topics will be addressed again in *Chapter 8: Conclusion*.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

Possibly the most important objective for this research project was to investigate how, if at all, the articulation of human subjectivity in the post-independence Namibian context could be constitutive of transformation at the individual and/or societal level. In trying to address this question at the level of theory, the title of the project, namely "Articulating difference: texts of identity in post-independence Namibia" was made to do a great deal of work. In other words, at the theoretical level, an attempt was made to access processes of change and transformation through the prism of articulating difference and of texts of identity, and the generative tension between these two 'parts'.

At the theoretical level this project draws on the ideas of postmodern thinkers and may be regarded as situated in a 'tradition', developed by authors such as Gergen (1994), Parker (1992), Sampson (1993) and Shotter (1993a, 1993b), who rearticulate psychology in such a way that it is no longer "a bastion of possessive individualism and narcissistic introspection" (Samuels, 1993, p 6). Even as this project makes use of the resources provided by postmodernism, an attempt is also made to critically assess these resources in terms of their possible implications for 'the' Namibian context after independence.

In an effort to answer the question, how the articulation of human subjectivity in the Namibian context could be constitutive of individual and/or societal transformation at the empirical level, a number of research steps had to be formulated. The focus for the first step was how texts of identity may be elicited. What guided the development of the research design in respect of this question was a recognition of the way in which identity is constituted in terms of culturally and socially available narratives. An attempt was made to obtain such generally available symbols, signs and norms by getting senior students at schools and at the University of Namibia to respond to a video recording of the Namibian independence celebrations of 21 March 1990. These responses were then analysed. The next step in generating texts of identity was to get a group of norm originators to answer a number of questions in respect of the analysis of the students' responses, and to discuss the analysis and their answers amongst themselves. In developing the questions for the norm originators, the researcher was guided by Taylor's



(1989) conceptualization of identity as commitments and identifications. The reason for choosing a group of norm originators was that their ways of articulating, their talk, could be expected to be constitutive of transformation. More specifically, it was expected that, by analysing and interpreting the differences between those norms, signs and symbols which are readily available in the post-independence Namibian context and as contained in the responses of the students, and what the norm originators did with these, it would be possible to reach this research objective.

A third step was build into the research design in the effort to meet the objective of this project. This step was 'driven' by the following question: "How might life stories be refashioned and narrated events be retold in ways that would be enabling of or, alternatively a foreclosing on, the capacity to venture into the unknown future?" To try and answer this question the same group of norm originators was provided with an analysis of the discussion they had engaged in as part of the previous step. They were asked to answer similar questions as during the previous step and to discuss these.

What differentiated the accounts of the norm originators from those of the students was the extent of engagement. Generally speaking, the accounts of the students tended to be distanced and they tended to remain passive onlookers. In most cases they ignored issues and failed to struggle with these. The norm originators, on the other hand, were fully and personally engaged in the discussions. They also evidenced emotional involvement in the problems faced by their communities and tried to articulate possible solutions to these. It may be argued that the norm originators, unlike the students, articulated a strong sense of identity, not in the sense of being delimited, self-contained creatures, but in the sense of being invested and engaged in issues and ideals. In other words, the norm originators are powerfully constituted in terms of their commitments and identifications.

What seems to emerge from the norm originator text is the extent to which being committed to and identified with also includes being critical of. The following example will illustrate the point: although the norm originator text implicitly posits the independence of Namibia as 'good', the difficulties that are part of independence are also prominently articulated. Even though the norm originators are critical of that which they are committed to and identified

with, they do not become rejecting in their criticisms. This is especially the case in their talk about 'Namibians'.

In this project it has been argued that, in answering the question: 'who am I', by focusing on commitments and identifications, it would be a mistake to conceptualize the 'I' who does the committing and identifying, and that which I am committed to and identified with as self-contained, neatly separated entities. However, it is also not helpful to collapse the two into one. Instead, the tension of differentiation must be upheld. The norm originators seem to do just this in being at the same time committed to and identified with, and critical. In being critical they maintain a distance while still being involved.

Whereas the students hardly draw on the discourse of race, the norm originators do so extensively and in many different ways. This includes calling for black unity, challenging such a call on the basis that it is racist, relying on the discourse of race to distinguish oneself from another participant and to articulate unshared and, possibly, 'never to be shared' worlds, and drawing on the discourse of race to engage with one another. Whereas the students make use of particular adjectives in describing people of different races and in assigning different attributes to them, the norm originators do not do this. In other words, labelling, which may be regarded as a form of distancing, is not evidenced in the norm originator text.

It may be expected that, as part of the processes of and expectations for individual and/or societal transformation which mark independence, certain discourses may be rendered problematic or even taboo. In the Namibian context this would seem to be the case with the discourse of race. This discourse is pervasive in the Namibian context as attested to by the norm originator discussion. Yet, it has also become taboo and it would appear that there is much denial in respect of this discourse. To put it somewhat simplistically, many people would like it to 'go away'. There is evidence of this both in the norm originator texts and in the way the researcher interpreted these texts, especially the first.

This raises an issue addressed by Rosenwald & Ochberg (1992). They argue that to push a new story line without any regard for the social and historical context is potentially disastrous. When certain discourses have shaped people's lives for decades, for generations, they cannot simply be

done away with. In some sense this would amount to doing away with people's histories. We are here dealing with the limitations of speaking differently. With respect to the Namibian situation the attainment of independence calls for new metaphors and new ways of speaking. However, it seems that this is not best achieved by self-consciously silencing old discourses. Rather it would seem to be important to keep drawing on old narratives in the process of transforming these, something the norm originators in this study do extensively.

In the Namibian context an awareness of the pernicious effects of the discourse of race, for instance, the recognition that in terms of this discourse, groups of people are readily rendered monolithic and denied plurivocity, can lead to the repression of the discourse. However, this would seem to be counter-productive. A general question that may be formulated on the basis of this discussion is the following: 'what can people do about discourses in terms of which they are constituted, but which they recognize as being problematic or undesirable?'

Especially in a context where race has been a particularly divisive factor people might resort to a 'common humanity' discourse (as happens in the norm originator text, although not to the exclusion of a discourse of differentiation) in an attempt to overcome divisions. The suggestion that the experience of the other may be radically different to my own and the concomitant implication that we are radically separate may well induce agony. A 'common humanity' discourse may well be conducive of a monolithic telling. Furthermore, a 'common humanity' discourse is particularly likely to have pernicious effects for those whose stories are on the margins of the official versions of history.

The way in which the norm originators engage in the discourse of race during the second discussion may provide some clues to the question posed above, namely what people can do about discourses in terms of which they are constituted, but which are recognized as problematic. The analysis of the first discussion confronts the norm originators with the extent to which the discourse of race is pervasive in their talk. What is significant, is that in the second discussion the discourse of race is articulated in many different ways. Race is spoken of ironically and the significance thereof in the construction of people's identities is contested. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of this

discourse is spoken of with equanimity and with anguish. It may be argued that, in this sense, the norm originators are active as readers and as authors.

Processes of individual and societal transformation may well involve a 'remembering' of the past. An interesting aspect pertaining to the construction(s) of the past in the norm originator texts is the following: reconciliation is depicted, not so much as a goal to be attained after the achievement of independence, but as being embedded in the interconnectedness of people's lives across divides in the past, prior to independence. Thus, instead of positing a lack or a shortcoming, a 'solid' basis for a desirable goal is propounded.

Especially in the second discussion the norm originators constitute the past in terms of the concrete actions of particular people. What are the possible effects of telling the past in this manner? Smith (1993) maintains that the institutional order of a society is established and maintained in that the local actualities of people's everyday lives as lived come to be organized extra-locally, and are objectified and abstracted. If this is so, then it may be argued that the construction of the past as the concrete actions of specific human beings helps to undermine the institutional order.

Although the norm originator text contains multiple tellings of the past, forgetting is regarded as lamentable. The second norm originator text contains instances where remembering makes it possible not to be a victim; by remembering and recounting it is possible to avoid being the mute, naive and suffering one. Furthermore, in the text remembering is closely connected with being aware, and being aware also involves the capacity to be critical of larger social structures. Being aware also involves a consciousness of injustices, together with the capacity to reject these. In other words, with heightened awareness everyday ways of doing things are no longer accepted as 'natural'.

The norm originators are quite aware that certain accounts which they construct of 'the' past are idealized. Nevertheless, these accounts are taken to be 'real'. In telling these stories of the past, the forefathers and mothers and how they lived are spoken of with enthusiasm, pride and fascination. The norm originators affirm themselves as they affirm their 'colonized' grandparents and great-grandparents by picturing these as dignified and as

self-respecting. Ironically the dignity and self-respect are derived, at least in part, from dressing in a western way.

Implied in the notion of forgetfulness (of the past) is an idea that there are more and less accurate ways of relating the past or - at the least - there is an imperative to remember the past in particular ways. Thus, 're-membering' is not arbitrary.

Because 're-membering' is not arbitrary, a crisis of legitimacy may hit certain histories as societal transformation gets underway. When legitimacy is strongly based on having suffered under apartheid, there may be doubt about whether those who benefited from apartheid are legitimate heirs to independence. Those whose positions are heirs of independence are in doubt would seem to have two options. On the one hand, they can assert legitimacy on the basis of being knowledgeable about the history of suffering. On the other hand, they can attempt to broaden the range of acceptable stories and in this way secure their position, not only as inheritors of independence, but also as legitimate architects of the future.

In this regard the following hypothesis may be formulated: if we cannot tell our stories of the past in a way which makes them part of legitimate, sanctioned accounts of the past, we may be prompted to give form to our stories by making them part of visions for the future. In other words, our projects are placed in the foreground rather than our histories.

One of the aims of this project is to interrogate postmodernist and poststructuralist insights regarding power in 'the' Namibian context. In a newly independent country such as Namibia the discourse of 'empowerment' is pervasive. The work of Foucault (in Rabinow, 1986) provides an incisive tool to interrogate this discourse. It may be argued that in the very act of interrogating a discourse we constitute ourselves as 'powerful', as exercising power. At that moment we are not 'simply' constituted by power. This raises a number of related questions which are of importance in a context such as Namibia after independence. Firstly, in which ways may people be thought of as powerful, as exercising power; what 'does it look like' when people exercise power? Secondly, to what extent are people powerless and helpless as they engage in the discourses of powerlessness and helplessness?

In respect of the first question, people may be said to be exercising power when they make it impossible for others, specifically those who are perceived to be the dominant groups in a society, to tell their stories as if these were the only possible stories. It may be argued that, by telling alternative stories, people undermine existing power relations. In other words, power is undermined when monolithic stories are disallowed. As happens in the norm originator text, this can take the form of challenging people to think in terms that are different to 'their own' terms. Irony plays an important role in this, because, through the use of irony the cohesiveness of a particular discourse is unravelled.

In respect of the second question, it is notable that the first norm originator text in particular is pervaded by the discourses of fear, powerlessness and helplessness. These discourses are particularly prominent in their talk of difficulties facing Namibia. Furthermore, the norm originators at times constitute themselves as powerless and helpless. Nevertheless, the norm originators may be said to exercise power as they actively explore possible solutions to the severe difficulties which they see as marking Namibia.

The relationship between exercising power and being marginal emerges from this project as rather complex. As far as the norm originators are concerned they would seem to be, at least in some sense, marginal (at one point in the norm originator text they speak of themselves as being marginal). As such, the norm originators are aware of the limitations in respect of the power that they might exercise. In other words, the fact that they are marginal may make it difficult for their voices to be heard. Nevertheless, norm originators also exercise power, for instance, in the sense that they can get people to think differently. In fact, their ability to get others to think differently seems to be, at least in part, a function of their being marginal. If they belonged fully, they probably would not have been able to 'see' and to articulate differently, and they probably would not have shocked the members of their community.

It seems that the positing of a one-to-one relationship between being marginalized and being powerless is simplistic. It would indeed be interesting to investigate how different groups of people in the Namibian context are both marginalized and powerful.

Another, connected question that would be worthwhile investigating pertains to the connection between exercising power and 'having' a sense of power on the one hand, and consciousness in respect of how power operates on the other.

An important concept which is closely connected with power and which was interrogated in this project is "human agency". Samuels (1993) maintains that political power at the personal level revolves around 'agency'; he conceptualizes agency as the capacity to choose freely whether to act and how to act. Clearly, such a conceptualization is problematic in the light of postmodernist and poststructuralist insights. However, this is not sufficient reason to simply discard the conceptualization. In fact, it may be argued that to discard it would be contrary to the postmodern 'spirit'.

Expanding on Samuels' idea, it may be argued that, even as people are constituted through power relations, they also are powerful, for instance, in 'having' a sense that they are able to do something about their circumstances, and in being able to exercise some control over their lives. In respect of the norm originators, it may be argued that they are empowered as they constitute themselves as creators of the future and as they ponder possibilities for political action. Thus, although the norm originators in comparison to the students talk extensively about the pervasiveness of helplessness, powerlessness and fear amongst Namibians and occasionally situate themselves as powerless and helpless, they themselves seem not to be helpless and powerless. This can be gleaned from the way in which they do not simply take things at face value, accepting that 'this is how the world works'. Arguably, to take a questioning stance is empowering. Furthermore, they actively engage in a search for possible solutions to problems; they are in this sense hopeful.

One observation that provided an impetus for this project is that people in Namibia still seem to live their lives in accordance with the divisions instituted and/or perpetuated by the South African policy of apartheid. This observation prompted an investigation of different models of human relatedness and an interrogation of concepts such as 'communication', 'understanding' and 'empathy'. In the norm originator text the concern with relatedness is articulated in terms of 'solidarity'. An increasing individualism, situated in and perpetuated by growing concerns with material wealth, is

constituted as undermining solidarity. Furthermore, the interconnectedness of people's stories in the Namibian context seems to be constituted as a basis for solidarity. The past is told in a way which minimizes historical dividing lines, ethnicity and race in particular, and which maximizes the historical roots of solidarity.

What is interesting about such a conceptualization of solidarity is that it appears to avoid the positing of general and abstract principles as 'basis' for solidarity. There would be at least two difficulties with propounding such general and abstract principles. Firstly, these principles are bound to be quite meaningless in the everyday lives of people. Secondly, they can readily produce homogeneity and, as Flax (1990) points out, homogeneity always reflects the effects of power. These considerations would appear to point to a paradoxical quality of solidarity: even though solidarity may be a desirable goal in any given situation, it would seem that attempts to envision it 'before the fact', that is, before it becomes manifested, are bound to produce repression instead of solidarity. Nevertheless, the 'solution' offered by the norm originators clearly is flawed: to attain solidarity by coming to know one another simply is not practical.

Even as the norm originators emphasize the historical connections between people of different racial groups and propose this as basis for solidarity, they also allude to the manner in which the historical connections are, at the same time, reflective of power and coercion. In other words, they seem to be articulating that solidarity is not the same as unity and that solidarity includes divisions.

The norm originators maintain that, prior to independence, during the time of the struggle for independence, solidarity was less problematic, at least in the black community. This raises the following consideration: it may be argued that prior to independence there was a tendency to deal with "difference as variations between fairly homogeneous and unrelated blocks" (Flax, 1993, p 6). With the achievement of independence there is, on the one hand, a greater likelihood of recognizing difference as 'internal' differentiations and conflicts, as discord within groups which previously were constituted as homogeneous. On the other hand, the policy of national reconciliation appears as a counter to such recognitions. To restate this in the language of solidarity: national reconciliation would seem to be an attempt to envision an



encompassing solidarity. What we can glean from Flax, on the other hand, is that it would be more appropriate to speak in terms of different and shifting solidarities.

As was briefly mentioned above, the final step in the research design consists in providing the norm originators with the researcher's analysis of their previous discussion and getting them to discuss this, also with reference to a number of questions meant to elicit commitments and identifications. This part of the research allows for the re-narration of events and of life stories and may be regarded as a deliberate attempt at transformation. The research question which guides this part of the process is how the norm originators reject or incorporate into their articulations of self the researcher's efforts to re-describe their own accounts of themselves and of publicly shared events.

What is perhaps most notable about the second norm originator text is the strong emphasis being placed on individual, personal stories, and on the uniqueness of their context. It would seem that the generalizations and abstractions, the grand narratives of history, which in the case of Namibia include colonization and the liberation struggle, can be very repressive, even though they are, in a sense empty. The norm originators 'fill' these empty categories. In the process they transform these categories and also undermine existing power relations. More specifically, the norm originators object to the researcher's generalizations such as 'colonialism' and 'colonial'. In the Namibian context the discourse of colonialism is relied on extensively by those who wield political power to legitimate their privileged positions and to maintain their power.

An attempt was made in this project to move away from a conceptualization of personhood in terms of a relatively bounded, self-contained centre of awareness. As part of this attempt, identity was conceptualized in terms of commitments and identifications. Identity in this sense is thoroughly interpersonal. To be committed to and identified with arguably militates against cynicism. This issue will be returned to in the next paragraph where 'affirmation' will be discussed. Does a conceptualization of identity in terms of commitments and identifications leave any room for irony and playfulness? To put this in other words: commitments and identifications seem to make for 'stability' and for some certainty about 'where one stands'. Irony, on the other

hand, seems to entail ambiguity and uncertainty about 'where one stands'. These aspects of personhood can probably not be integrated into something overarching and are probably inevitably incompatible.

Irony would appear to be incompatible with affirmation. It may be argued that, to affirm is to posit something. In this sense affirming something amounts to saying 'it is'. In accordance with this argument, affirmation in respect of personhood would probably entail the enumeration of a list of qualities or characteristics. Furthermore, from this point of view, to affirm another person would be to say 'you are x, y, & z'. 'Affirmation' may be regarded as an attempt to fill up an emptiness, to put something in place where there is a lack, a shortcoming. Arguably, affirmation in this sense is closely related to the western notion of the self as a bounded, integrated and self-contained centre of awareness standing over and against other such centres. Having created ourselves in that image we are also bound to be plagued by and pre-occupied with the afflictions of that creation, for instance, lack of self esteem, the need for positive regard and for positive self-regard, as well as the need for affirmation in the sense articulated above. Having conceived this creature, this self, we must nurture and feed 'it', and psychotherapy plays a vital role in this nurturing and feeding. The substantial self would seem to be in danger of running empty and this provides the basis for a new form of consumerism.

A metaphor for affirmation is 'building solid ground'. A metaphor for irony, on the other hand, is 'excavating' beneath one's own or another's feet. Whereas affirmation may be said to generate security, irony may be said to generate uncertainty and insecurity.

However, affirmation need not be thought of in terms of creating certainty. Furthermore, affirmation does not necessarily amount to enumerating a list of qualities and characteristics which 'belong' to one. 'It' can also be thought of in terms of remaining or becoming involved, in terms of not giving in to cynicism, and not becoming paralysed by despair. In this sense affirmation has to do with hope.

The data generated by this project is very rich indeed and can be analysed from a number of perspectives. One particularly interesting approach to the data would be from the perspective of developmental psychology. For

instance, in reconsidering the norm originator texts we may ask what it means to say - as some of the norm originators do - that the articulations of younger people make them depressed, that they are shocked by younger people being forgetful of history. To speculate: it is as though one's own life is passed over in the tellings of the young people; it loses its relevance, its very existence. This, in turn, can be defended against by generalizing, by explaining away the personal shock in talking about the 'amnesia of society'.

In reflecting on this project 'as a whole', two criticisms may be levelled against it from the author's point of view. The first criticism pertains to the empirical work and specifically to the analysis and interpretation of data. The author is aware that the data could have been interpreted and analysed very differently, also from within a similar theoretical framework. In this connection a number of (uncomfortable) questions arise, specifically in respect of the norm originators' reactions to the author's analysis of the first discussion. One significant response is silence. Another response consists in the suggestion that the first discussion was not quite as negative as the author's analysis seems to imply. Finally, the norm originators object to the abstract and the overly generalized nature of the analysis. This raises the following question: to what extent does the author's attempt to rescue the unsaid from the said amount to a power game and to an imposition? The norm originators are able to articulate objections to this, but another group might not have been able to do so. Furthermore, a completely different reality might have been created in the second norm originator discussion if the author's analysis of the first discussion had been different. If this is so, then the knowledge 'created' by this project must be contingent and very different from 'certainty'.

The second criticism may be directed at the theoretical level. This project draws on postmodern insights, on hermeneutics as well as on critical theory and social constructionism. This is a very wide range. However, all of these provide valuable entry points into and analytical tools for this particular project, for articulating difference and for texts of identity in post-independence Namibia.

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